

PASTORING REVIVAL

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When revival breaks out in a local church, a new vitality comes to God's people, but corporate renewal can also bring major shifts and changes. Revival can be unsettling. Revival upsets the status quo. In such times, it is especially important for congregational leaders to provide oversight and guidance. As Pastor Rod Parsley emphasizes, both glory and government are needed in a culture of revival.

Five-fold Oversight

Part of the needed government or oversight is found in the function of the five-fold equipping gifts: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists.¹ Apostles provide general leadership in cultivating kingdom culture. They keep everyone looking at the big picture. Prophets help the church to hear and speak what God is saying. Pastors maintain the unity and health of the local body in the midst of the revival movement. Teachers help everyone to understand what is going on from a biblical point of view. Evangelists prevent the revival from becoming introverted by keeping the focus on the world harvest of souls.

Not all lead pastors are actually functioning in a pastoral gifting, as far as a five-fold understanding of leadership is concerned. Many lead pastors are actually apostles. Some are prophets, some are teachers, and some are evangelists. If the primary congregational leader is an *apostle*, that leader should be surrounded by prophetic, pastoral, teaching and evangelistic leaders. If the primary leader is a *prophet*, that leader should sustain accountable and supportive connections with pastors, teachers, evangelists and at least one apostle. If the primary leader is a *pastor*, that leader's team should include prophets, teachers, evangelists and an apostle. If the primary leader is a *teacher*, that leader's team should include pastors, prophets, evangelists and an apostle. If the primary leader is an *evangelist*, he or she should have significant relational ties with the other four equipping gifts.

Empowerment of Others

Revival is not about the senior leaders becoming the anointed men and women of God to whom everyone else comes flocking. Anointed leaders are essential to revival, but becoming the anointed leader of a congregation or of a movement is not the objective. The reason that leaders need the anointing is for the purpose of empowering others to fulfill their function. Apostles empower the church to be apostolic. Prophets empower the church to be prophetic. Pastors

¹ Ephesians 4:11-14.

empower believers to be pastoral. Teachers empower them to be proficient with Scripture. Evangelists empower the church to be evangelistic. Revival is about the empowerment of God's people to bring the kingdom of heaven to the world.

In my years of ministry as a lead pastor, there were many worship services where I was *not* the person through whom God worked to manifest a healing or a breakthrough. My purpose was to empower and deploy others to do the work of the ministry. I trained qualified congregants to minister in prayer, healing and the prophetic. Then when it came to altar ministry time, I released them to do what they had been gifted and trained to do.

Maintaining Normal Church Life

When revival starts happening in your church, do not wear out your staff or your congregation with revival. They may love it, but they still have jobs to work, schools to attend and families to attend to. Revival is so supernaturally life-giving that it may seem for awhile that tending to the normal things of life may not be all that important. Here is where we need a little bit of realism. Find ways to facilitate and sustain revival that do not wear your people out.

In the late 1990's my wife, Kerry, attended a conference at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF)—the site of the Toronto Blessing. She decided to stay beyond the conference just to see what a normal Sunday morning was like for the local TACF congregation. Everything about the morning service was great, but prior to the service, Kerry had a conversation with a woman sitting behind her. Kerry said to her, "It must be exciting to be part of a church that is hosting a global revival." The woman's blank stare and simple response was revealing. "I suppose," she said. "It's all good, but it's hard on those of us who live here and have made this our church home."

Over the years I have found the same challenge to be true of my own congregation in times of revival. I have heard my own members say, "It's all good, pastor, but with all of these new things happening and all of these new people arriving, it's hard to figure out where I belong anymore. It's feeling like a different place. Sometimes I feel like saying, 'What has happened to my church?'"

None of this is to say that these people are right or wrong in feeling the way they do. The point is that we need to be aware of the fact that not everyone is going to be excited about all of the changes that revival brings, and even those who are excited may begin to feel lost in the midst of all of the newness.

Cultivating Community

I once heard Bill Johnson say that there were two things that were of equal importance to him as far as the life of the local church is concerned: revival and community. Revival is all about love, and love is all about relationships. Yes, it is about the vertical relationship that we have with God: the receiving of the Father's extravagant love and the quickening of a vibrant passion for

Jesus. However, it is also about the nurturing of the horizontal relationships that we have with one another. May the amazing *passion* for Jesus that is so characteristic of revival always manifest itself through *compassion* for others—a love for the body of Christ and a love for the world beyond the church.

Promoting a Multi-Generational Mindset

Even outside of revival culture, a multi-generational mindset is important to the sustained health of the church. Those who are young should honor the older generation, and the older generation should bless those who are young. This mindset is especially critical in the advancement of revival culture.

I like to view this dynamic through the metaphor of a relay race. It is all about passing and receiving the baton. In a relay race, one runner runs with the baton in hand, anticipating passing it off to the next runner. For a few moments, the first runner and the second runner run together as the baton is passed from one to the other. For a split second, both of their hands are on the baton at the same time. Then when the first runner is assured that the second runner has the baton securely in hand, the first runner releases it. The baton is released with the expectation that the second runner will carry the baton much further than the first runner was going to go.

So it is in revival culture. One generation runs carrying a spiritual legacy, anticipating passing it on to the next generation. For a season, both the old and the young run together—spiritual fathers and mothers running with their spiritual sons and daughters. The former generation has a sense of responsibility to make sure that their legacy is securely placed in the hands of the rising generation. As the legacy is passed on, older believers are full of hope knowing that the younger ones will carry the fire of revival much further. The old bless the young, and the young honor those who are older. At the finish, all generations will rejoice together.

Identifying Core Values

In the midst of revival, a local congregation would do well to identify its core values and work to sustain them. Of course, the in-breaking of God's kingdom may require some revision, but that process needs to be carefully guided by the leaders of the church. Wisdom from God is needed to make sure that things truly sacred are not compromised. Wisdom is also needed to make sure that "sacred cows"—antiquated traditions—are not retained. Some of the old things may need to stay, and other old things will have to go. Without a doubt, there will be new things to embrace. Revival typically brings with it what some call "aspirational values"—new values that should be introduced into the church's culture.

Stewarding Testimonies

Elsewhere in this text, attention has been given to the power of testimony. Part of pastoring revival involves stewarding the testimonies of what God is doing in the midst of the revival.

Appoint someone as the chronicler, historian or scribe. When significant supernatural things have happened, make record of those occurrences. Give opportunity for some of these stories to be publicly shared. In doing so, Jesus will be glorified, and others will be encouraged to trust God for similar happenings in their own lives.

Coordinating Logistics

Revival typically attracts more people and new people. Revival requires more space and even new spaces. Revival involves shifting schedules and the addition of new times to gather. Revival requires training of workers, discipleship of converts, and the assimilation of new members. Coordinating the logistics associated with all of these changing dynamics is part of pastoring revival.

Dealing with Disorder and Unusual Manifestations

It may be unfair to place “disorder” and “unusual manifestations” in the same section, because many unusual manifestations are not necessarily out of order. The point here is that people in the congregation may need help processing unusual manifestations when they occur. For instance, how do church members deal with seeing a seeker at the altar break out into laughter? A church leader may need to point out that the Holy Spirit has just manifested supernatural joy in that person’s life. How are observers to deal with seeing someone vibrating on the floor? Someone may need to point out that God’s power is upon that person. Just a simple explanation will often put people at ease.

Sometimes unusual things happen that can only be classified as disorder. Simply stated, it should not be allowed to continue. Here is where designated personnel (e.g., ushers, deacons, elders) will have to inconspicuously and kindly step in to correct the situation. Confrontations should be conducted redemptively and without humiliating the individual.

Responding to the Critics

Even a casual reading of the Gospels will quickly reveal that whenever Jesus shows up, critics will show up as well. How are we to respond? If the church took time to respond to every criticism that comes along, they would never get anything else accomplished for the sake of the kingdom. Nehemiah’s response to his opponents provides a good example to follow:

When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.²

Care needs to be taken to distinguish between those who are committed to the opposition of revival and those who are merely questioning. People who question what is going on are not necessarily enemies. Many of them are truly in pursuit of truth, and their pursuit will likely lead to them becoming participants in what God is doing.

Sustaining Revival

How can a genuine revival be sustained? Often God will go as far as we want Him to go in a revival movement. If we hunger and thirst for Him, He will fill us. If we schedule more time and provide more space for Him to work, He will fill that time and space. If we obey every instruction He gives, He will give us even greater instructions. If we are faithful over a little, He will entrust us with much more.

When revival is met with criticism, persecution and other forms of spiritual backlash, church leaders can feel tempted to tone down the revival and even change directions. It can also be the case that prolonged revivals can bring on this thought: "Maybe we have done this long enough. Perhaps we should move on to some other emphasis." I like what Bill Johnson has said on multiple occasions regarding sustaining revival: "Do not change the subject." Stay with the spiritual momentum. Go with what God is doing. Do not stop until He stops, and even then, it is permissible to cry out for more.

² Nehemiah 6:1-4.