

~ STEPS TO REVIVAL ~

by Pat Robertson
(Part 1)

I was living in New York City forty-five years ago when I met Jesus Christ as my Savior. As a young believer, I was a counselor during the Billy Graham Crusade in Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1957 where they sang a song called “*Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.*” The first stanza went as follows:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

There could be no better definition of revival. Heaven with its glory and grace invades our human condition, and in the light of God’s glory the allure of the world with its pleasures and material possessions loses its hold on us while our hearts are truly satisfied with the presence of God. As we draw closer to God, the sin in our lives which we first accepted as normal becomes distasteful, and then loathsome. As Job, considered the most righteous man of his generation, exclaimed, “*I have heard about You with my ears, but now I behold You with my eyes and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.*”

In revival, God first refines and purifies His people, then He fills them with His power. Then He places in their heart His love and compassion for those who are lost without God and without hope in the world. In revival, Christian people are not trying to work up the courage to testify about a historical figure they learned from a book—they radiate the knowledge of the One whose power is continually filling their lives.

Revival normally begins among God’s people, but soon it affects society. The power of God is so strong that prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, and those addicted to gambling, pornography, and lust are set free and gloriously converted. In past revivals, saloons are closed for lack of customers, jails are empty for lack of criminals, courts are empty for lack of disputes, dance halls and theaters are empty for lack of customers. Men and women are drawn to prayer meetings like iron filings to a magnet. Dealing with eternity becomes the uppermost concern in people’s lives. In revivals that took place in the Belgian Congo and also in China, young children had visions of heaven. Some saw the Second Coming of Christ. Some, who had never been taught these things, saw the rapture of the church at the end times and believers being taken to heaven.

In the Congo in this century and in the frontier revival in the United States at the beginning of the 19th Century, sinners entering prayer meetings fell to the ground where they lay for hours as the Holy Spirit brought their lives into conformity to His will. In the Book of Acts, we read that the building where the believers were gathered was shaken and they spoke forth the Word of God

with boldness. In Indonesia where believers were praying and worshipping God, it appeared to their enemies that the entire church building was engulfed in flames. In China during the Boxer Rebellion, missionaries huddled together to pray for God's intervention before an angry mob rushing on their building to kill them. Later when they inquired why the mob had suddenly slunk away in fear, they were told, "Your building was surrounded by flaming warriors with raised swords." Yes, in true revivals angels visit, young men see visions, and old men dream dreams. In true revivals, God's people are equipped with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and witness boldly about the wonderful works of the Lord.

During the past century in the United States, the term "revival" has normally meant a church-sponsored evangelistic meeting during which a visiting pastor or traveling evangelist will speak at special services for a week or two, and those in attendance are asked either to make a first-time decision for Christ or to rededicate their lives to Him. Although this type of meeting can indeed bring on a true Holy Spirit revival that can serve to transform society, usually its measure is very simply the number (few or many) of people whose lives are changed by responding to the evangelist's appeals.

The revival that America is crying for does not consist of good or even inspired evangelism. The revival we pray for transforms lives, empowers pastors, electrifies churches, and brings the reality of God to the entire population.

What then are the steps to revival? God gave the formula to Solomon, King of Israel, about 960 BC. God said, "*If my people, who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear their prayer, and forgive their sin, and heal their land.*" II Chronicles 7:14

1. The first step to revival is *humility*.

The first sin ever recorded was pride... Satan declared, "*I will exalt my throne above God.*" Humility is the reverse of pride.

The focus of pride is what "I will" do. My way, my will, my plan, my concept of God, my concept of righteousness.

Just like Satan at the beginning, we want to exalt our throne. God says a certain action is sin. We disagree. We justify ourselves. We point to our friends who do it. We point to others who are much less spiritual than we are. Everyone in society accepts this conduct—how unfair of God to criticize it. A line in a popular song goes, "*How could a love be wrong that feels so right?*" How indeed? With situational ethics, why could something that we enjoy so much be wrong? If she is unhappy with her spouse, what is wrong about breaking up her marriage so she can be happy with me? Some doctors say marijuana might be medicinal, so why are a few puffs wrong? My boss doesn't pay me what I am worth, so what is wrong with balancing the account with a few supplies from the office? My neighbor tried to hurt my dog. What is wrong with putting a few dents in his car in return?

Then there is pride of family, pride of finance and accomplishment, pride of material possessions, pride of nationality, pride of employment and position, pride of religious affiliation, pride of knowledge, and education.

If we want revival, we must acknowledge that we are made of the dust of the earth. That before God we are all alike—weak sinners, and that there is nothing that we have that has not been given us by God. We must realize that our pride before God is like pus-filled sores on a leper. We must ask God to forgive us of the pride in our lives in whatever form it has taken.

The publican in one of the parables of Jesus would not even look up to heaven, but smote his breast and said, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” Jesus said that the publican went home justified, but a bragging, prideful Pharisee did not.

We start revival prayer by humbling ourselves, then throwing ourselves on the mercy of God asking for His forgiveness. Never should we resist God or insist that He is wrong and our concept of righteousness is correct.

In the New Testament, we read that John the Baptist speaking in God’s name called the people to repent and be baptized as a cleansing from sin. The Bible gives this amazing assessment of what the people did in response... “*They justified God being baptized with the Baptism of John.*” [Luke 7:29 (NIV) 29 “*All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John.*”] We can either justify God or justify ourselves. One attitude leads to revival—the other to spiritual deadness.

2. The second step after humility is *prayer*.

In the Book of Acts we read that prayer was made “earnestly, intently, without ceasing” by the church for him. (Apostle Peter in prison facing execution.) These people did not pray aimlessly, nor were they distracted by stock market quotes or the latest news bulletin. Their beloved friend and apostle was to be executed, so they prayed with every fiber of their being for Peter’s release.

Jesus told us to pray without ceasing, and gave us examples of what is called desperate or importunate prayer.

In one story that Jesus gave to illustrate this point, a family had gone to bed and was possibly asleep when they were disturbed by a neighbor pounding at their door in desperation. The homeowner looked out to learn that the neighbor needed some bread to feed a guest who had suddenly arrived. The homeowner angrily slammed the window shut because he and his family were down for the night. But the neighbor would not be denied. He kept on pounding and shouting until, in order to shut him up, the homeowner descended, shoved some bread out of the door, then went back to bed.

The moral of this story: It was not the neighbor’s need nor was it neighborly friendship that prevailed. It was desperation—importunity—that won the day!

So Jesus said, *“Keep on asking and you will receive. Keep on seeking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened.”*

If we want revival, we must pray in desperation, like our lives depend on it. Given the terrorist threat to America, our lives may indeed depend on it.

In the Old Testament we are told by God, *“You will seek me and find me when you seek for me with all your heart.”*

DISCUSSION AND PRAYER TIME

1. Why do we need to be revived?
2. What does it mean to humble yourself?
3. Why is it important that this is the first step to revival?
4. Read Luke 18:9-14 (NIV) 9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."
 - a. Describe the difference between the Pharisee and the tax collector.
 - b. Why do you think that God prefers the attitude of the tax collector?
5. How can we demonstrate our humility before God?
6. What is prayer?
7. What is the most important reason to pray?
8. Read Luke 11:5-8 (NIV) 5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' 7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness/persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs."
 - a. Some people wrongly believe that this story teaches us that if we bug God enough about something, he will do it for us. What does praying boldly or with persistence really mean?

9. Why is praying with boldness or persistence essential for revival?
10. Spend five minutes in silent prayer as the Lord leads you.
11. Take turns praying aloud (if you feel comfortable praying that way) as the Lord leads you. Don't take time to share prayer requests first; just pray aloud for those needs yourself. Also include prayers for your own revival, for the revival of other Christians in our church and community, for the salvation of the spiritually lost in our church and community, for the health of the sick, for our Pastor and others in our church who teach and lead, for us to fulfill God's vision for our church: "to glorify God by developing Kingdom-focused Disciples in our area who have an intimate loving relationship with God and one another, who are growing in their knowledge of Him, and who are actively serving Christ in our community and throughout the world," and any other needs that God brings to mind.