

~ STEPS TO REVIVAL ~

by Pat Robertson
(Part 2)

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV) 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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

[Words in brackets were added by WLJ to clarify the author's biblical interpretation.]

3. The third step of revival is *seeking God's face*.

Obviously, [one of the most common types of] prayer is a petition to God, and most of us would think that prayer and "seeking God's face" are the same thing, but they are not.

[Petitionary] Prayer is asking for something. We pray for wisdom, for health, for finances, for the salvation of loved ones, for our nation, and for a host of things too numerous to mention. Of course, we pray for revival.

In the Old Testament we learn that God instructed Aaron, the high priest, to bless the people with the following words:

*"The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord cause His face to shine upon you
And be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you
And give you His peace."*

The ultimate—what the medieval theologians called the *Summum Bonum*—the greatest good—is to know God and stand in His presence. This is not asking God to "do" something, it is asking for God's very presence.

We might think that this is unattainable, but if it is unattainable, why would God command it? The Bible tells us, [*"Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always."* Psalm 105:4 (NIV)].¹

God wants us to enter into a new relation with Him. Not just like a little child, full of requests for things from his father, but as a mature son or daughter who knows the Father,

¹ Author's original Scripture choice was "*When you said seek my face, Thy face, O Lord, will I seek.*" from Ps. 27:8 (KJV). This Scripture is about how our hearts as Believers tell us to seek God's face, and is not about God commanding us to seek His face.

is in tune with the Father's will, begins to think and act like the Father, and can take responsibility in the Father's kingdom.

God wants us to move beyond the petition stage, to a time when the ultimate good—in fact the only good—is being in communion with God. We are told in Genesis that after creation God walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening. There He communed with the humans that He had made in His image. He talked to them and they to Him. They saw Him because there was no sin to obscure their vision of Him. To “seek God's face” is to strive to restore that mystical bond of fellowship between God and man that goes back to creation.

In the calligraphy of the Chinese language, there are symbols that date back some 3300 years before Christ. One is the symbol for “happiness.” Amazingly, the literal rendering is “man in a garden in the presence of God” (Shang-ti).

The opening chapter of John's Gospel tells us that “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” The Greek word translated “with” is *pros*, which [in some contexts] means more precisely “face-to-face.” So we might write it, “*In the beginning the Word (Jesus) was face-to-face with the Father.*” Is this not the relationship we should earnestly seek as we seek revival?

4. The fourth step in revival is to ***turn from our wicked ways.***

How is this to be accomplished? The prophet Hosea wrote this, “*Break up your fallow ground that the Lord may come and rain righteousness upon you. Sow in righteousness, reap in steadfast love.*” [Hosea 10:12 (NIV) 12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.]

What does it mean to break up your fallow (unplowed) ground? If a field is left idle without planting or cultivation, it will develop a hard crust. The action of the rain, the sun, and the wind makes it progressively harder. If seed is sown on it, the seed will not penetrate. Before long, moisture will not soak in, but will roll off into gullies and streams.

In order to bring such a field into cultivation, a massive turning plow must be run through it, followed by crisscross disking to break the clods into fine earth suitable to receive seed and moisture.

The spiritual life of people is like that. First there is a lack of Bible reading and prayer. Then attendance at worship begins to slip. Things that once caused our spirits pain now are tolerated. Instead of desiring the approval of God and fellowship with Jesus, we want money, things, and more and bigger possessions. We fill our minds with worldly pictures, sounds, and concepts. Our language gets coarser. We associate more and more with those who are rebels against God. We can hear preaching or Christian music, but it doesn't move us. Some begin conduct that they clearly know is wrong, but the conscience which for so long gave warning doesn't seem to work anymore.

Our hearts are hardened and that crust must be broken. How do we begin? The way is simple. We don't sin in generalities, so we should not repent in generalities. A prayer, "Oh God, pardon my sins and transgressions for they are many" won't cut it in my opinion.

Here is the plan. Take a writing pad and a pen or pencil. Get on your knees and tell God that you have come to Him to repent of your sins and ask His forgiveness. Don't be in a hurry. This process may take hours—even days—and may require repeating.

Mention the prayers of the Psalmist, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*"

Then, "*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.*"

Then, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart, and see if there is any wicked way in me.*" Allow the Holy Spirit to begin the process of bringing to mind what you should write. As you write, be brutal on yourself. Don't excuse anything even vaguely wrong. The object is to confess—forsake—find mercy and forgiveness—then enter the presence of the Lord. I repeat, don't hurry!

First, we start with the great commandment... "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, all your mind, all your strength.* We have all broken this one, so write it down.

Second, there has been deadness and coldness in your prayer life. You have neglected study of the Bible. You have lost your first love. Write it down clearly.

Third, Jesus said when we stand praying if we have ought [or, anything] against any, forgive. Think now of the people who have really mistreated you, that you resent, perhaps hate. Write their names down, forgive them, and ask forgiveness for hating them.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. What lies have you got outstanding? This can be painful, but write them down, all of them. You may have some fixing to do on these, but you will find honesty brings relief.

By the way, this does not mean telling your spouse every romantic escapade before your marriage. Some things are under the blood of Jesus...leave them there.

Fifth, the chances are there is something lurking in your spirit dealing with sexual sin. There is an overpowering amount of sexual solicitation in our world aimed at the carnal nature of every adult. Your heavenly Father understands the temptation, but He still wants you to lay before Him your sins and failures. The Bible says, "*He made a show of them openly, triumphing in His cross.*"

Write down the temptations, the transgressions, the problems privately between you and God. Then tell Satan that this is all covered by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that Satan has wasted his effort to destroy you.

Sixth, slander is a terrible sin, but one which we all take lightly. Write down who you have slandered and when. Again, do not give yourself the benefit of the doubt. Your heavenly Father knows it all...He just waits for you to come to Him openly and honestly so that He can forgive you.

Seventh, let the Holy Spirit show you the times when your words have grieved Him, the times that you have disobeyed Him, the times that you have wounded others, the times that you have been insensitive to the spiritual or physical need of someone you could have helped. Think of the resentment that you have caused in others by your conduct. Think of people that you have cheated or abused. Think of what you may have taken that is not yours. Think of the times when your life and actions have actually damaged someone else's faith. Write all these things down. Take your time. Not only will this exercise bring God's power into your life, it will serve as a welcome catharsis to your mind and spirit.

Eighth, the Bible tells men to make peace with their wives lest their prayers be hindered. There is no way that you can enter into God's presence while harboring anger, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, or unforgiveness against your spouse. Write down the problems and your offenses against your mate. Remember this is not a blame game against another, it is confessing honestly your sin and your guilt. You must be honest with yourself and about yourself. Do not try to justify your actions. God knows what is right and what is wrong.

The Bible says, *"A broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, Thou will not despise."* *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

As you remember and write down the wrongs done to your mate, think also the wrongs done to your children. Have you loved them? Have you brought them up in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord? Have you been so rigid and authoritarian that they have rebelled against you and the Lord? Have you been available to talk, to listen carefully to them, and to understand their problems, hopes, and dreams?

For children, of course, think of your attitude toward your parents. For those with elderly parents, have you loved them and cared for them, and showed them the attention they deserve?

When you have finished writing, you may have quite a long list. Go through it again point by point. At each one, earnestly ask God's forgiveness. Where an ongoing wrong is still in progress, promise yourself and the Lord that you will make it right.

Then take the list and say, "Lord, all of these sins and transgressions I place under the blood of Jesus Christ. I accept your gracious forgiveness and praise you for setting me free. I humbly ask that I may walk in your presence, that you may hear my prayer, and send revival to heal my land. In Jesus name. Amen."

Then take a match and burn your list before the Lord. *"As far as the east is from the west, that's how far He will remove your transgressions from you."*

Then spend time worshipping and adoring God for who He is and what He has done for you. God has forgiven you. The price for your sin has been paid once and for all by Jesus Christ. You are free. You are cleansed. The Bible tells us that we have been cleansed from a guilty conscience to serve the living God. God does not want you to be engaged in morbid introspection for all of your life. He wants you to enter joyously into His service as a full-fledged member of His holy family.

As we live our lives in His presence, there is an ongoing cleansing from sin. The Apostle John said it this way, *“As we walk in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses us of all sin.”* Now that your conscience has been made tender before the Lord, you will naturally walk with Him in His light. But keep short accounts with God. If you sin, confess it immediately and put it behind you. The Bible tells us that *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

He has prepared you for revival!

DISCUSSION AND PRAYER TIME

1. The Bible says that God is spirit. Therefore, He doesn't have a "face" or any other physical human feature. Although the Bible forbade creating a physical image of God, it did not forbid using human features to describe Him. What do you think "seeking the face of God" means? Why is that a great way of describing it?
2. Read Psalm 24:1-6 (NIV) 1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. 3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. 5 He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. 6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.
 - a. According to Psalm 24, who qualifies to "stand" (be) in God's presence?
 - b. What does it mean to have "clean hands?" What does it mean to have "a pure heart?" What does it mean to "not lift up his soul to an idol?" What does it mean to not "swear by what is false?"
 - c. What does God grant those who are singularly devoted to Him, who strive to follow His will, and who have sincerely sought forgiveness when they sin?
3. Read Isaiah 1:15-20 (NIV) 15 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; 16 wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, 17 learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. 18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best

from the land; 20 but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

- a. Compare the Psalm 24:1-6 passage with this passage from Isaiah 1:15-20.
4. Read Psalm 27:4 (NIV) One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.
 - a. David had one desire, one ambition, one all-consuming goal. What was it?
 - b. It is apparent from David's life that in this verse he wasn't talking about living inside the physical temple every day of his life, nor does this verse mean that we should live inside the church building. What does it mean?
5. As Pat Robertson explained, a farmer has to break up the top soil in his fields annually before he can plant his crops. Once the crops have begun to grow, he may even have to run a smaller type of plow called a cultivator close to the crop rows in order to uproot weeds that have sprung up. Analyze and compare what the farmer has to do to his fields in order to grow crops with what God has to do with our spiritual conditions. Why is it necessary? What "crop" is God trying to grow in us?
6. What must we do to facilitate the process?
7. How often should we ask God to forgive us for sinning? Explain.
8. Read 1 John 1:9 (NIV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Psalm 103:12 (NIV) As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
 - a. According to these Scriptures, what happens when we sincerely ask God to forgive our sins?
 - b. Do we need to keep asking Him to forgive past sins?
9. Make time this week to do the sin inventory suggested in Step 4 above. It can be done over several days and revised as you go. Do this only for sins for which you have not already asked God for forgiveness. This is between you and God; no one needs to see this list. And once you ask God for forgiveness for these sins, you should destroy the list—God has!
10. Spend five minutes now in silent prayer as the Lord leads you.
11. Now 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. 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.