

Revival Forum 89: Revival Happened

by George Middebrook

Revival is a process of coming back to life, and it requires genuine transformation, obedience, and faith in God's presence and blessing.

Duration: 27:34

Scripture: Psalm 139:23

Topics: "Revival History"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about facing a lawsuit and feeling trapped by the legal system. He compares his situation to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, emphasizing their disobedience and grumbling. However, when they finally exercised faith and crossed the Jordan River, God asked them to observe the Passover and be circumcised. The speaker relates this to his own need for revival and a fresh understanding of what God had given him in Christ. He shares how God used the ministry of Life Action Ministries to bring about a revival in his life, leading him to confess his wrongdoing to a judge and seek mercy. Despite his initial resistance, the speaker ultimately realizes the importance of obedience and surrendering to God's will.

Transcript

One of the questions I think I get asked most often is, does revival really last? Is it just an emotional experience that is short-lived, or is it something that when it is genuine and it comes, that it lasts? And how do you know if it lasts? And I have learned that I could try to argue that point day and night and convince no one, but the moment I can point to an individual life that God has radically transformed and changed in the midst of his presence and revival, and it's not just a day later or two days later or two months later, but they can share out of their life how many months later the change that was wrought not only continued, but they've even gone far beyond that in their walk with God. Not too many years ago now, or months ago, God brought across our pathway in a crusade a young businessman from Nacogdoches, Texas, who met with God in revival, and as a result, it's lasted, he's growing, he's going on with God. A very unique testimony from a lay person, and what revival has met in their life.

George Middlebrook from Nacogdoches, Texas. Why don't you come and take some time to share with these individuals what God did in your life in revival. This week I've had the opportunity to listen to so many testimonies from God's people of what they've done in their own lives, and God has really taken a fresh spotlight on my heart this week and really revealed what kind of person I really am.

I guess this is as difficult a time as I've ever had of sharing what God has done in my life, and I just pray that you might be praying with me that I could just give God all the glory and all the credit for what he's done. We talk about revival. I guess that's one of those things that's as elusive as anything.

We try to make a definition for it, but it's hard to determine what it is. But God, by His grace, allowed me to see what revival could do in my heart and in the life of a believer. Eighteen months ago, if you'd asked me what revival was, I probably would have told you that it had something to do when a preacher came, maybe in the fall and in the spring, and maybe a few people got saved.

But that's a long way from what revival is. The dictionary tells us this, that the revival is that process of coming back to life again. It's as if something had been alive at some point in time, but had come to a place of almost death.

And that's where God found me. I might have been bought with the price of Christ's blood. It might have for me an eternal life in heaven.

But God found me a place that I was almost dead, and the greatest need in my heart and my life was a revival. I had come back to a freshness of that, what God had given to me, and realized what was mine in Christ. God used the ministry of Life Action Ministries to come and use that instrument to minister to my life.

The first time I had an exposure to that was one day. I was going down. I guess I was susceptible.

I didn't know what was happening. My pastor came and handed me a little envelope. He just said, I want you to take this and take it home with you and read through it.

In a few days, we'll get back together and talk about the contents of that envelope. I just stuck it in my Bible, and I didn't look at it until I got home that day. I started looking through that and had a bunch of information about some ministry called Life Action Ministries.

Some were way up in Michigan I never heard of. How they'd bring 20 or 30 people into your church and stay two or three weeks. I really didn't know what to think.

I thought my pastor might have gone crazy or something. I really didn't know at that time. I thought maybe that's the way they did it in Michigan or some foreign country like Texas.

We think everywhere else is a foreign country. That's not the way we did it in our home, but I soon found out that God could use that in our lives. Byron Paulus came a few weeks before our crusade started, and we were called to a time of prayer.

He's a good deacon, and as I thought I was in my church, I decided I'd get in on that. I began to pray. God began to show me something.

I want to share it with you, and I don't find it in the Bible, but I believe it to be true. Our prayers have a whole lot more to do than just the words that we might speak with our mouth. But I believe more importantly it's what we're thinking in our heart and what we're thinking in our mind while we're praying.

The second night of our crusade, I had to stand up just as I'm before you this morning, and I had to confess something to my church family. And what I had to confess to them was that what I'd been speaking in my mouth in prayer wasn't the same thing I was thinking in my mind. You see, what I'd been

thinking in my mind was if all those people that sit on the back row in my church, if they could just make God a revival and get right with God to spiritual people in my church, which I included myself among the chief of them, you know, we could get something done in our church.

These young people that sit out in front and they come to church, and I think the only thing they were caring about was who was there that Sunday, who they could sit by. If they could meet God, we could really have revival. And my children, who I brought to church every Sunday faithfully, if they could just get to know God and have revival, then I could be the Father.

I needed to be. And I could begin to be the witness and the testimony in my home, and it was them holding me back. I guess the worst thing I was thinking was in my wife, that she could just get right with God, and I could be the husband I needed to be.

But God broke my heart that night, and He showed me it wasn't those people in that back row, or these young people, or my kids. And least of all, it was my wife that needed to get honest with God. It was me.

One time in my life, God just spoke to me, and He said, if you're ever going to see revival in your home and this church is ever going to know you, it was all right here. And I was going to have to meet Him. I came to that place that night, and I told my church, it's not my brother and it's not my sister, but it's me, oh Lord.

Standing in need of prayer, and I guess if there's any key to revival, we're going to have to come individually, one-on-one, to the place that that psalmist came to. When he said, search me, oh God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts to see if there be any wicked way in me.

And lead me in a way everlasting. And that's where I came, and I believe probably that's where my revival began. It's funny, you know, how we pray for revival.

I began to pray for revival, and I think the way we pray sometimes it's almost as if we're saying to God, oh God, we don't believe that you even want to bring revival. We doubt it. And we not only doubt that you want to bring it, we're not even sure that you're able to bring it.

We pray in so much doubt we don't have faith in what God wants to do. But the God that we serve is not only more than able to bring us revival, He's more than willing. He wants to see God's people.

He bought us with a price. And He wants more desire for our heart revival than you do. We don't even have the capability to ask Him for revival the way He wants to.

The problem isn't so much of God giving us an opportunity, it's us getting in on that opportunity. God gave me an opportunity that first night of our revival after I went home and got in bed. I laid down and I tried to go to sleep, but I couldn't.

I rolled and tumbled all night long. Finally, early in the morning before daylight, I got up out of my bed because I couldn't sleep and God was dealing with me something. I went in my office in my home and I got down on my knees and God began to talk in my mind about what He wanted me to do.

You see, about a year before that, I had been called to be a witness in a federal lawsuit in Tyler, Texas. The court of William Wayne Justice, perhaps, I believe, the most powerful man in our state because of the position he has as a federal judge. Before I went to give the testimony, I really had in my mind what they

were going to ask me and I really knew how I knew the outcome of that case was going to need to be come out.

I decided if I could just give my testimony in such a way that it might turn out the way I thought it needed to come out, I would help the whole process. I would help that jury and I would help that judge no matter what it was I should say. I got on that stand and I swore under oath to God that I would tell the truth and I began to answer the questions with phrases like this, I think so and maybe and I'm not sure but probably.

God showed me on my knees that morning in my office to answer those questions where yes, I'm sure, I'm positive beyond a shadow of a doubt. God showed me what I'd been calling clever testimony. God called it a lie in my heart.

And I began to confess that to God and I said, God, I'm sorry, I know I'm a sinner, will you forgive me? He said, I forgive you, but you're going to have to do something about that. You're going to have to call that judge up and you're going to have to confess to him what you did and you're going to have to seek his mercy and put yourself at his disposal. And I tell you, that was the hardest thing that God ever asked me to do in my life and I didn't know what to do.

I began to argue with God and try to come up with every kind of evidence and every time I'd argue, he'd say, call that judge. I told God like I knew what I was saying. I said, God, you don't know that judge.

You just knew that judge like I knew him. Everybody else in Texas knew him. You wouldn't dare ask me to go do that.

And I even quoted him a little scripture. I said, God, you said if I would confess my sins that you'd be able to remove them as far as the east as from the west. And I said, God, if you just forget about that this morning, I'll forget about it and I can go on to some parts of my life that I know they're bad.

I need to deal with it. He just said, son, if you ever want to know me, if you just ever want to go on with me, this is the line we're going to draw. There's no going on past this point until we deal right here in this one area of your life.

That's the opportunity God gives to us. I continued to argue with God and I came up with something that I thought was mighty clever. And I said, God, I said, you just don't understand.

I said, what you're doing and want me to do is a great idea and I'll go along with you. But your timing's all wrong. Two, three, four weeks from now, I'll do it.

We just started to revile our church today, yesterday. And if I come and I get picked up and taken to jail and my name's all over the front of the paper, that's just going to ruin everything we're trying to do down at church. That didn't matter to God.

He said, if you want to go on with me, you call that judge. You confess to him what you did. I guess there's no other point in my life that I've ever come to the place I was that morning.

And I really don't have the words to describe to you the distraughtness and the stretch of where I was. And I guess I could describe it as I was the end of myself. And there wasn't anything else in my whole life from the time I was born that ever mattered but that moment in God, what He wanted me to do.

I finally, in utter desperation, I called out to Almighty God and I said, God, you've asked me to do so many things I've done before and if you just ask me anything this morning to do, I'll do it. You name it. But God, you finally asked me one thing in my life I cannot do.

It was in that very moment of time as if time had stopped. I said, God, I don't think I can do it. I said, Lord, I can't do it.

It was as if a big smile came across my heavenly Father as He looked down at me and He just nodded His head and said, that's right, son. You can't do anything about it. That's been your problem.

Every time I come to you and provide for you an opportunity to know me and fellowship with me and seek me and follow me in obedience, you blow it by just letting you do it on your own. I told the Lord. I said, Lord, I can't do it, but I'm willing to do it if you'll do it.

In that moment, revival began in my heart and I got up off my knees and I went in the kitchen of my home. I confessed to my wife what I'd done. I went back in my office and called that judge up and asked him, tried to reach him to confess to him what I'd done.

Surprising to me, I couldn't get a hold of him. Then I got a secretary and she said, I'm sorry, nobody can talk to the judge. He's in Houston, Texas recovering from surgery.

Nobody talked to him at least for a week. I kind of was set back on my heels. I didn't know.

I said, God, I did what you said I'd do and the man's not there. I can't even confess to him what I'd done. But you see, I told God his timing was wrong.

But God's timing is always right. He just wanted to provide for me an opportunity of a week to see if I was serious about being serious with him. A week went by and God prompted my heart again.

He said, call that judge. And I called him up and wasn't able to talk to him, but I was able to tell the assistant what I'd done. And they set up a meeting with the attorneys in the case.

And this past September I had the opportunity to sit around a table with six or seven attorneys and share with them the truth that I should have done the first time. Those attorneys, I don't believe, were quite so interested in what I said as they were interested in why a perfectly sound, apparently human being would call a federal judge up and confess that he lied in his court. For you see, I knew all the time when God was dealing with me if I called him that I'd go to jail.

And those people in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit would turn around and sue me instead of each other. That's what I was facing. And I had an opportunity to tell those lawyers around that table that morning what had happened when man meets God in obedience and fellowship.

I'm reminded every time I think about what God did in my life of the story of how the Israelite nation, as they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness in disobedience and grumbling and complaining to God, finally came to the Jordan River. And by faith, they exercised faith and they crossed over into the Promised Land. When they got in there, God asked them to do two things.

He asked them to observe the Passover and to allow every man to be circumcised who hadn't previously been circumcised. And I believe, perhaps, probably for the first time in 40 years since they left Egypt, that they had done two things in a row God asked them to do. And you remember what happened? God

blessees my heart every time I think about the story.

He sent his own angel to stand in their midst. And when Joshua asked him who he was, to identify himself, he said, I'm the captain and the host of God's army. Theologians and scholars say that that was a pre-incarnation of Jesus Christ Himself come to stand in their midst.

That's what obedience and revival is all about. When we come to a place of obedience in my life, I felt the very presence of God Himself coming and standing next to me. And I've never felt it in my life before.

That's what revival is all about. Revival doesn't end there. Revival is a process of coming back to life.

And friends, I'm still in the process of coming back to know Him. But that's where revival began, in obedience of my part to God. I wish I had some words to describe to you how I've come to know God and be able to stand and actually be able to reach out and touch Him and experience Him.

God, in His mercy, I've come to know Him. And as God's revealed a little bit more of myself and I've seen myself and I've dealt with it, He's allowed me to see a little more of Him. God has worked a work in my marriage.

And in 18 years of marriage, I've never had the relationship I've had with my wife. I really didn't know that one human being could know another human being like I've come to know my wife. I regret that probably more than anything else in my life is that I spent 18 years not knowing the person I'm married to.

But God's allowed us to fellowship together. And when I see her, I look in her eyes and I see a love for me that I've never seen before. And I see Jesus in her eyes.

When she looks in my eyes, she doesn't see me anymore. She sees a love that I have for her, that Jesus has for her, because I couldn't manufacture that love. But our God has not only, I found out, discovered and interested in our spiritual relationship with Him on a spiritual level, but He's a practical God.

I just thank God every day in the morning when I get up and at night because He's given me an illustration in my life to let me know. This morning, when I got out of bed, He reminded me of how He loves me and how He wants me to walk in obedience. I want to share this story with you.

I have this problem I've had ever since I've been married all my married life. I'm one of these people that pulls the sheets off their bed at night when I sleep, just in my own subconscious, I guess. Over the course of 18 years of marriage, it's really continued to get worse and worse.

The last few months before I met God, in a way, in revival, it had gotten so bad. It came to be the greatest distress, I guess, my marriage had ever had or could have. I got to a place where I'm not just one that pulls the sheets loose a little.

I take the mattress and the blanket and the sheet and pull them completely loose at the bottom and roll up in them, throw them on the floor. Come to a point in my marriage where my wife, I'd get up every morning just like she was in my throat and wanted to strangle me. I'd pull the bottom sheet and the mattress pad and get them all loose.

It was terrible. One morning, finally, not too long before I actually came to our church, I got up one morning and my wife, just in desperation, I thought she was going to kill me. Luckily, she didn't.

She said, I may have to be married to you, but I don't have to sleep in the same bed with you anymore and I'm not going to do it. I'm going to buy twin beds today. I'm going to tell you, there was just a point in our relationship that had just about severed our being able to communicate with each other.

Luckily, she cooled off that night and we continued to sleep together, but the problem got worse. After the first night of our revival, I got up to my church and confessed to them that I had been thinking about them instead of me and that I had met God that day in revival that morning. I went home that night and I got in bed unsuspecting of anything that might happen that night and went to sleep as usual.

The next morning when I got up, I really realized something was wrong before I even woke up and opened my eyes and I knew there was something wrong. I didn't know what exactly it was, but I just began to open one eye at a time and kind of look around and I noticed that my sheets were all tight on my bed. I didn't want to mess any good thing up, so I just kind of slithered out in front of that sheet and went and got dressed.

I kind of forgot about that day and the next morning I came back and got in bed the same way and the next morning the same thing happened. I just kind of slithered out and got dressed. I didn't want to say anything.

I knew my wife was noticing it, but she didn't want to jinx it and I didn't want to jinx it, so we went on. Third morning, same thing. It's been 18 months ago and every morning now when I get out of my bed, my sheets are just as tight as they were.

That probably to a lot of people sounds about the silliest story they've ever heard. Maybe it is. I go and I lay down in my bed at night and put my head on my pillow.

There's a peace that comes over me that I don't understand and I can't explain. God said He would give to us a peace that passes all understanding. That peace came about in one place in my life.

It came about in my place of obedience to God. I'm just thankful for Him to point out to me, myself, that I can't even see. I guess as I've experienced the process of revival in my own life, I guess at one time I thought it might be something that would just be a one-time experience, but even this week I've discovered how God continues to have to put that spotlight on our hearts and minds.

I guess that area in my life that has dealt me more problems and more misery than any other area, is that area of pride in my life. I guess during that crusade that if there was one thing I didn't think I had, it was pride. I just didn't think that was part of me.

God began to try to show me through things that were happening. There was a close friend of mine, a deacon in our church, who sat in front of me every Sunday morning. During the course of that revival, he came under conviction, and I had an opportunity to sit and witness him giving his heart and life to Jesus Christ, and I believe it was pride in his own life that had kept him from doing that.

As I saw my friend come to know the Lord and all that pride, I didn't ever think that that had anything to do with me. One night, God, in just a special way, was able to take his light and shine on my heart and show me pride in my life. For you see, there's an area of pride that is so slowly, subtly, just over a period of time, it crept up in my life so subtly that I was blinded to it.

I've got a son that's 11 years old, Andrew, and God has just blessed him in such a wonderful way and every way, academically and in athletics and every way. Over a period of time, I had come to look upon his abilities and what he'd done, and I just marveled in him in every sport that he'd practice or play, and he was just at the top on his team. God began to show me that my pride that I had thought had been in him and what God had done in him was my pride in me.

God began to show me that I thought in some way I was special and superhuman because I had produced this young person that was so good. God just began to break my heart and show me that I was going around looking for praise in men because of what my son had done. And the worst of all, he'd kept me from having the fellowship with him that I needed and kept me from being a father that I needed to be to him.

After our services one night, I went to him and just bore my heart to him, and I said, I said to Andrew, I said, The pride that I thought I had in you has been pride in me and all, and I seek your forgiveness of it. In his mercy, he forgave me. I was able to reestablish a relationship and a fellowship with my son, and I needed it.

It had been my fault that I hadn't had. But God went through talking about me. My life was so messed up with pride that he had to just paint me a picture.

In fact, it was a wall-to-wall mural of my life. And he started that night with Andrew, but there was another scene to that picture of that mural that he wanted to paint of me, and he wasn't through. But you see, there was another area in my life that I think happens to us as Christians.

Sometimes it slowly crept in. God had given me the opportunity on a number of occasions to share my faith with people and come to see them know the Lord. And I guess over time, I got to thinking that perhaps God had to have me, and it was my ability and being able to share my faith with people, and I began to think that I was something special.

But there was one person in all the world that I had on my heart to know the Lord, and that was my own son Andrew. All my other two children had come to know the Lord, but Andrew hadn't. On a lot of occasions, I'd go to Andrew and I'd say, Andrew, I wonder if I might speak to you about the Lord tonight.

He wouldn't even respond. He wouldn't even answer to me. He'd just kind of look the other way and walk off, and we wouldn't even get involved.

That's all we'd do. I'd wait two or three months, and I'd go back to him. Same response.

For you see, I thought that if my son came to know the Lord, it was going to be me that had to lead him. I didn't want some preacher scaring him into walking down an aisle or giving him some false theology that was wrong, that it was me. I had the answer for him.

If he ever came to know the Lord, I was going to have to share it with him. At night after I'd confessed my pride to Andrew, I went home that night. I went to his door and I knocked on his door and I said, Andrew, I wonder if I might come in and just talk with you for just a minute.

He said, sure, Dad, come on in. I went and I sat out on the side of his bed as he lay there in his bed. I said, Andrew, tonight I wonder if you'd mind if I talked to you just a minute about the Lord.

You know, his smile on his face. Sure, Dad, I'd like to hear it. And so I guess in a way that at the time I probably thought was very eloquent, that's when I began to share with him how heaven was a free gift and man was a sinner and that sinner separated us from the love of God, but God provided for us a salvation through the blood of His Son.

And by repenting of our sins in faith in Him, we could have eternal life. And I got through with a discourse that probably took 10-15 minutes that I thought was very eloquent. And I said, Andrew, does that make sense to you? He looked up at me and he said, yeah, Dad, that makes a lot of sense.

I guess in my mind I thought, alright, I'm ready to go in for the kill maybe. I said, Andrew, I wonder if tonight you'd like to ask Christ to come to your heart tonight as your personal Lord and Savior. As I asked that question to my son, God allowed him to take that paintbrush and paint those final strokes on that mural, that picture that he was trying to paint of me.

I said, Andrew, I wonder if you'd like to invite Christ in your heart tonight as your personal Savior. He looked right up at me, right in my eyes, and he said, Dad, a few weeks ago right here in my room I asked Christ to come to my heart, my personal Savior. Pride had so come and consumed my life that I couldn't even see myself.

Pride had consumed me that I didn't even realize that God didn't need me. Not only did God not need me, God couldn't even use me because I was so full of myself. If there's any prayer I have to God today, it's that He'd continue to paint me a picture every day of my life and allow me to see myself.

If there's anything I would say to anybody that's seeking revival in their own heart and life, it's this, that you might get on your knees and just beg God, beg Him to paint you a picture, not that person that you think you are and not that picture of that person that you hope to be, but a picture of that real person that you really are. If you ever get that picture, that real picture of yourself, and you'll deal with it before God, there'll be come in your life a revival that won't be end. God's not through with me, but God in His mercy allowed me that day to begin a revival in my heart, and God's blessed me through it.

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