

# Chapel of the Air - Interview With Dr. Orr (Part 3)

by J. Edwin Orr

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*Dr. J. Edwin Orr discusses the nature of revival, its significance in the church, and the necessary conditions for its occurrence.*

**Duration:** 15:28

**Scripture:** Joel 2:28, Matthew 5:21

**Topics:** "Interview"

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## Description

In this sermon, Dr. J. Edwin Orr discusses the importance of unity among churches and the need to prioritize the kingdom of God over personal agendas and reputations. He shares an example of a pastor who tried to organize a prayer meeting for ministers, but no one showed up, highlighting the lack of commitment and the lowering of the standard of righteousness in the church. Dr. Orr also mentions that the number of people claiming to be born again has increased, but there is little difference in the lifestyle of the church and the community. He emphasizes the need for revival and shares a personal experience of witnessing genuine revival in a Lutheran church in California, where the pastor and congregation experienced a measure of blessing and saw significant growth in membership.

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## Transcript

If you are a long-time listener, you know that our August emphasis is always that of revival. And if you tuned in the past two days, you are aware that this marks my third visit with Dr. J. Edwin Orr, who has lectured on this topic at countless college and university campuses around the world. He has also authored scores of publications on the topic of revival.

So welcome to the Chapel of the Air. Part of Dr. Orr's most popular book is Full Surrender, which has now been translated into 15 languages. He also wrote the revival hymn Search Me, O God.

I remember seeing that even when I was younger and growing up in the church. Has all of your creativity gone into this one topic, Dr. Orr? Not altogether. I did have a ministry in the Air Force during the war, which wasn't a revival ministry, and it led to ministry in universities and colleges, where I developed a kind of evangelistic apologetics.

But apart from that, my main interest has been in revival. Let's talk about revival as it relates to a local church. When we speak of revival in a given church, what are we not talking about? We're not talking about a week of meetings for the accomplishment of the membership or evangelism.

We're talking about a week of meetings for the deepening of the spiritual life. When you say deepening of the spiritual life, do you mean perfection of the spiritual life or not? Both perfection and deepening. I use the word deepening in the sense that people who have been shallow in their Christianity will become more profound.

Are you using the word perfection in the sense that all of the problems of the church will be solved if they experience revival? Not all of the problems, but a great number of them. I like the way you say that very much. Can you either define for us or picture what revival in a local church would look like? Well, in one sense, if any congregation of God's people were to obey the light that they presently have, they would enjoy a measure of revival.

In that sense, Finley is right when he says revival is nothing more than the right use of the appropriate means. But I don't believe it's a matter of just simply organizing, choosing dates. I think Finley's illustrations are rather unfortunate.

Just as a farmer chooses a day to plow the field and chooses a day to sow the seed and chooses a day to reap the harvest, so you can choose the time to have a revival. I don't believe that. I believe you're dealing with a person, the Holy Spirit.

But in one sense, any church that puts things right to the extent of their knowledge would enjoy a measure of revival. But as far as ongoing revival is concerned, I think there are other factors come into play. Okay.

Share a personal experience from your long ministry, Dr. Rowe. Would you believe a local church actually knew genuine revival and you were there to see it? I remember in, I think it was probably 1950, in a Lutheran church in Longwood in California, the pastor and his wife were hungry for a measure of blessing in their own souls and hungry for something in their own congregation. And they did a rather, shall I say, risky thing, inviting a Baptist preacher to come and preach in a Lutheran church.

But the ministry, God blessed. And by the Wednesday, we were continuing on until 10 and 11 at night with the full church. Were you preaching that long? Yes.

Well, I would preach and then turn it over to the people. They would respond and be having questions and testimonies and a general open meeting following that particular pattern. There was such revival that it stood into evangelism.

He took in 1,400 new members in the next year. I'm glad it happened that way. I'm not a statistic collector.

I don't go around saying so many were converted in our meetings and so forth. I'm far happier to see an ongoing revival like that. And that lasts quite a number of years.

That's thrilling. You mentioned the pastor. Is the pastor usually a key in terms of revival in a given church? I believe so.

I think if the pastor is set against it, there will be no revival. And the people may have to pray that either God will change his heart or remove him. Historically, has this been a pattern where oftentimes ministers

have opposed the working of God in revival? Yes, because sometimes pastors feel that the element of confession that comes into revival may expose their lower standards of Christian living.

Is confession usually a normal part of revival or an essential part? I don't believe in indiscriminate confession. I've always given it a maxim, let the circle of the sin be the circle of the confession. I think I need you to define that further.

Say exactly what you're telling us. Well, if a person sins secretly, let him put it right with God, who alone knows about it. If he's sinned privately and it's hurt someone else, he ought to put it right with the person he's hurt.

He doesn't need to tell the choir about the lie he had with his wife. He needs to put it right with his wife. But then if sin is known openly, he ought to put it right as far as it is known.

How did you say that back at the beginning about the circle again? Let the circle of the sin be the circle of the confession. Okay, that's very, very helpful. If you were to preach a revival series, and we'll say that we'll call it that anyway in a given church, where would you begin? What things would you pick up just to lay a base for what you're talking about? I would preach first on the first word of the gospel.

It's the word repent, and that means to change. It doesn't mean to feel sorry. The word metanoia means to change their attitude.

I preach on repentance as the first word of the gospel. Then I speak on what way they have to change when we deal with the subject of sin. One typical way, for instance, if you take the standards of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord spoke, you shall not commit murder, but I'm telling you, don't raise your temper with your brother.

That's a strange comparison. But you see, bad temper is murder in the heart. In other words, it's not enough not to commit murder, but don't have any murder in your heart.

It's not enough just not to commit adultery, but don't have any adultery in your heart. The standards for Christians are higher than the standards for the world outside. So, preach on sin.

Preach on the law. I mean, I like the Lutheran emphasis there, law and grace. But then to preach on forgiveness, on confession, and all the rest of it.

Leading up to total commitment, which is the crisis of sanctification. Would you say one of the signs that revival is desperately needed is the lowering of the standard of righteousness in the church today? Yes, of course. It's a wider problem than that.

George Gallup told me the other day that the number of people who claim to be born again has risen from 46% to 53% of the population. I quoted this to 50,000 people in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, and some started to applaud. I said, I don't believe this.

I've lived in the same house for 35 years in California. You couldn't kid me that more than half of my neighbors are born again. Then George Gallup today has brought out a new comparison, that there isn't much difference in the lifestyle of the church and the community today.

That sounds like ancient Israel, doesn't it? So I would say that the problem is not really the local church. I'm going to say something else in case we miss it. Someone asked me, a member of a very prominent

denomination, wouldn't it be wonderful if God started with us? I said, I don't think he would.

I said, it would be nice if he would, but you're about the least ready to share it with anyone else. And there's a factor. Some pastors think revival means success for me, success for my church.

But God's concerned with all the churches in the community. That's why I like to see Armand Guestwine go around and get pastors of different denominations to pray together. That's very interesting.

So there's almost a necessity of coming together of the various churches and putting aside one's personal agenda and one's own reputation and the holding up of the kingdom or the broad base of the work of Christ. I can illustrate that. During the times of revival in 1949 in California, there was a pastor who came down from the San Joaquin Valley and told one of the ministers of prayer meetings, this is what we need.

He went back to his hometown and sent out notices by postcard to all the pastors, saying there would be a minister's prayer meeting on Thursday mornings. Nobody showed up. Then he called them all individually.

He thought he hadn't been personal enough. They all began with one consent to make excuse. The best excuse was one fellow who said, I've got a good sermon prayer, but I'm too busy to come to your prayer meeting.

I'll come and give it sometime, though. That's wild. But he thought, well, I'd better start with someone.

So he thought, that was a Presbyterian. He thought, no, the Baptist man's a good man, but a bit narrow-minded. I'll go along and see him.

So he went to greet the Baptist pastor and said, I've come to pray with you. There was no way out of this, so they prayed together. But the next week, they got him in Nazarene, and then the Episcopal rector, and all 17 ministers.

Then they started United Evangelistic Meetings on Saturday nights, and then bigger attendance in the population at the time. But this is what the Presbyterian minister said. He said, I was talking to that Baptist the other day, and he said, you know, brother, before the Lord revived my heart, when I met someone that didn't see the trust of believers in baptism and the way the Baptist teach it, I treated him like a heathen and a tax collector.

But he says, Lord revived my heart. Now I'm quite willing to let him be wrong. That's beautiful.

That's beautiful. From your studies, Dr. R., is there any group in a local church that kind of characteristically is touched first by the Spirit, like the young people or the women or the older people or whatever? You can go back in your mind and your studies. I'm wondering about this.

I find that as far as being touched to pray, it's often the older ladies. But I find that as far as the first movement is concerned, it's always the young people. So it's the younger people who respond to the message.

It's part of the scripture, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. That's really true. In fact, even Jonathan Edwards' ministry, isn't it? It's the young people of town who first began to respond to what he was saying.

Some people say to me, but it was Peter that did the preaching. I say, if Peter said, this is that which is spoken of by the prophet Joel, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, that must have been happening at Pentecost. That's interesting.

How close to a revival do you picture the average American or Canadian church being? I think they're far away. I do think there are signs of a movement, but most don't know what the word means and they don't know what price to pay. But there seems to be a wistfulness, and I think I find in my studies of revivals that before God sends a general revival, maybe even ten years before, there are little local revivals break out which demonstrate what he can do and also raise up a leadership for the general movement that's yet to come.

That's interesting. Now, are you seeing that ten-year cycle begin or not? I think it's begun. Uh-huh.

So that means there could be good things ahead, but at the same time you're reserved to be able to say too much right now. Maybe it's too early to call the game, huh? Well, it's just that I don't think a lot of them have started even yet. Far too many pastors worship success rather than revival.

Now, Lord, help us in that area. It's very much a part of the day. I don't doubt what you're saying at all.

How will general revival in the churches of the United States and Canada affect the rest of the world and what God is doing in other countries? We mustn't forget that we've got a very large missionary force from North America, probably the bulk of the missionary force in the world. So it would affect through the missionary enterprise. But on the other hand, God is capable of working quite independently.

I suppose one of the great centers of revival today would be the province of Hunan in China, where the latest word I've had is that they're sending pastors and missionaries to other provinces in China. There's been such a movement in Kaifeng and around that way. It's incredible.

I've never even heard of such a thing. Now, I don't have any time to pursue it, but this is in Hunan, China? Yes, in the province of Hunan. We should have another broadcast.

My sincere thanks to Dr. J. Edwin R. for these visits. Later this month, you'll hear from another man whose name has long been associated with revival, Leonard Ravenhill. Recently, I was in Texas and recorded three interviews with him.

My thanks also to Back to the Bible broadcast for allowing me to use their studios in Lincoln, Nebraska for these three visits with Dr. Orr. Now, it's back to Ted Seely in our chapel studio in Lincoln, Illinois. Wherever there's spoken, David, in China, California, or Nebraska, words about revival challenge and encourage me.

Be sure to join us on Monday when our director, David Maines, begins a three-week investigation of the physical and spiritual drought in Israel during the time of Elijah. For Elijah, a little cloud like a man's hand signaled the coming season of spiritual refreshing. Here at the chapel, we've prepared a card full of hand-shaped clouds.

Actually, they're cloud symbols imprinted on pressure-sensitive stickers of various sizes. They're designed to help you remember to pray persistently for the cloud of revival to soon appear on our horizons. Request these cloud like a man's hand reminders when you write to us at the Chapel of the Air, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189.

In Canada, the Chapel of the Air, Box 2000, Watertown, Ontario, LOR2HO. Your financial support for this broadcast also demonstrates a commitment. We greatly appreciate each gift that enables us to continue issuing an insistent call to significant Christianity, especially during these financially dry August days.

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Please join us for these powerful broadcasts here in the Chapel of the Air.

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