

# 'God's Characteristics of Revival'

by Mark D. Partin

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*Revival is initiated by God, and it is His divine appointment, and we can ready ourselves for revival by integrating essential characteristics such as God's Word, prayer, and conviction of sin into our lives.*

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 27:14, Psalm 139:23, Acts 1:8, Acts 3:19, Ephesians 3:20, Hebrews 10:22, James 5:16, 1 Peter 1:15

**Topics:** "Revival Preparation", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

Mark D. Partin preaches about the necessity of God's initiation for true revival, emphasizing that man cannot plan or facilitate it, but must humbly wait for God's divine timing and chosen people. He stresses the importance of readiness and alignment with God's desires, highlighting the need for holiness, repentance, and a deep longing for God's cleansing and purification. The sermon delves into the essential characteristics for preparing for revival, focusing on God's Word, prayer, expectations, conviction of sin, confession of sin, conscious awareness of God's presence, and the manifestation of God's power.

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## Transcript

There is not a step-by-step process that can be followed to initiate a revival. There is not a "How to Manual" on hosting a revival in which God will choose to be present and lives will be changed forever. Man cannot plan for or facilitate a revival. Only God can initiate a true revival. It will be in His timing and with His selected people. After all it is His divine appointment, and we can only humble ourselves and wait to be invited to His banquet table.

With that being said, it is our duty to ready ourselves for such an occasion when God will call. God's desire is for all mankind to walk in alignment with Him. That is why He created us. He has not called us to live as the majority of our world lives today: with no regard to His laws; with our youth being raised without knowledge of Him; with the ultimate pursuit of man being to please self and gain the riches of this world; with man compromising conviction with complacency and comfort; with people being more concerned with "political rights" instead of "God's rights." It was not God's intent for children to be raised in broken homes; for men to kill their fellow brother out of anger or greed; for the sanctity of love to be tarnished with multiple lovers, prostitution, or homosexuality; for His people to pursue the "joy of salvation" through drugs, alcohol, or material belongings; for His people to replace time with Him for activity for Him. I do not believe that I am being falsely judgmental to say that our world is in dire need of revival.

Our self-righteous world, including Christians and spiritual leaders, would like to believe that God has an appointed time that He will cause a revival among His people. God's self-appointed time will be a time of judgment, not revival. When He returns it will be to judge, not to revive!

It is our calling, as Christians, to be heartbroken over the state of our world. It is when we have wearied of the world "spitting in the face of God, our Creator," that we will fall to our faces crying out to God. It is when we beg Him to end the corruption and to release the chains of bondage in which we have become so comfortably entangled. Revival will come when we, ourselves, are ready to pay the price of conviction. It will come when our utmost desire is to be cleansed and purified, to be made holy. This is when God will answer the pleas of His people. This is when, and only when, He will heal our land.

When will we, God's people, claim His desire for revival? When will we crave a revival of holiness, as it is only when holiness is ministered that there will be revival? When will we no longer be satisfied with talking about how demoralized our world is and engage God's calling to take action? When will we quit trying to fix things on our own with politics, self-improvement guides, and "feel-good" religion? When will we realize that we are doing nothing until we seek the face of God and allow Him to manifest His Presence and His Ways?

How can we seek the face of God so that He will initiate revival? We simply lay our lives down and surrender our all to God. There are not specific "how to" steps that can lead the way. But I do believe that by integrating the following characteristics throughout our lives, we will be prepared for His timing; and God will initiate revival.

## ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

### GOD'S WORD

The core of the revival was the Word of God. For me, it began with personal Bible study while preparing the sermons I thought were to be used in my church. And it began with Mark Douglas being fully immersed in God's word while on a four month sabbatical from his preaching duties and responsibilities. God speaks through His Word. God can be heard in personal quiet time and communion with Him. How can one know God's heart without knowing and loving His Word?

The use of the Word of God in the revival was central. Mark Douglas and I preached only the Truth from His Word as God gave it to us. We did not waiver on God's decrees. We did not present a watered-down, feel-good message that lacked in personal accountability. Some may misconstrue this as condemning, but only God can bring about condemnation and conviction. If we were never convicted of our sin, feeling the need to repent, what would have been the purpose of Jesus' torturous death? God cannot use vessels cluttered with sin and worldly lusts. One must be empty of self and of this world in order for God to pour Himself in, fueling a vessel with His wisdom and His discernment.

Mark Douglas and I sought God daily for the message that we were to deliver. Oftentimes, we would not return from church until well after midnight only to be awakened by God in the wee hours of the morning. He would provide us with the next day's message. And once we had received a Word from God it was handled with great caution. We took heed to the handling of the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament. When mishandled, men immediately fell dead. But when handled with care and reverence many blessings were bestowed. We were careful to handle God's Word with great care and reverence.

The attentiveness and response from the people regarding God's Word was also very pivotal during the revival. People relinquished their guard and opened their hearts to hearing God's Word. They heard the Truth and allowed it to settle within the framework of their own personal lives as well as their lives as they function in the corporate body. Pride and fear were eliminated by a greater desire to be cleansed by God. God's Word purifies our lives. It builds our lives allowing us to grow in Him. His Word provides direction and gives us assurance and security through His many promises. His Word is essential!

## Prayer

I don't know that I have ever truly witnessed such a time of unrelenting prayer. We, as a church body, began praying corporately weeks prior to the revival. As Mark Douglas arrived in Tennessee we again met at the church on a Saturday petitioning God in prayer. We opened the first service in prayer and it was from that point forward that prayers were endlessly lifted up to God for 40 days. Prayers were accompanied with fasting. You could audibly hear the prayers. You could consciously feel the prayers. You could visually see the answers to prayers. And we all witnessed the unleashing of God's power in response to heartfelt prayers.

There were prayers of thanksgiving; prayers of praise; prayers of confession and repentance; prayers of salvation; prayers for healing; prayers for restoration; prayers for submission to His will; prayers for obedience; prayers for guidance and direction; prayers for double portions of the Holy Spirit; prayers for wisdom and discernment; intercessory prayers for others; prayers for protection from evil; prayers of petition; prayers of deliverance from addictions; prayers of adoration; prayers of humble silence; and so many more.

When the heavens opened and it was evident that God was reigning over Indiana Avenue, a few moments or even a few hours of prayer a day became insufficient. Our greatest desire was to maintain the intimate connection we were experiencing with our Father; and prayer was our greatest means of doing so.

Revival services typically lasted until late at night with families getting home between 11:00 p.m. and 12:00 midnight. I heard many accounts that after arriving home, families gathered in their own homes once again praying to the Father. I as well as other people would awaken in the middle of the night and immediately begin praying and communing with God. The church staff would arrive at the church at 9:00 in the morning to find people waiting to be let in the sanctuary to resume their prayers from the night before. All throughout the day people could be seen knelt at the altar. People would be there for only a few minutes while on their lunch hour; or for maybe an hour after leaving work prior to going home and before returning to service; and some for long extended periods of time. Occasionally the staff would hear murmurs of group prayers; shouts of praise and joy; or the weeping of a broken soul. These sounds were of astounding lyrical quality knowing that it was the music being orchestrated by God's holy movement. I now have a new appreciation for the musical phrase, "How sweet the sound."

How vital were these prayers to the overall revival experience? I believe it was these deep, heartfelt prayers that continued to fuel His power and presence. It was these prayers that plunged us into an even deeper, more intimate relationship with Him. It was because of these prayers that God allowed us the glory of experiencing an open stairway to heaven.

## EXPECTATIONS

I think as a corporate body we began the revival with minimal expectations. We looked forward to the "additional" time (what we thought would be a few days) that we would be spending with God. But I don't think we really expected anything other than the ordinary. I think there was an expectation of God's presence, but the actual experience of God's presence being poured upon us via an open heaven was far beyond any expectations or even any conceptions.

As we experienced God's mighty movement and felt His breath of life swirling about our church and amongst His people, our expectations began to expand. We left after the first few nights thinking, "It couldn't possibly get any better; it couldn't possibly be more real; that this extreme feeling of spiritual intimacy with God could not possibly be sustained." But night after night it was phenomenal how God was revealed. As He peeled back the layers of our flesh, God was exposed in a new, fresh way. It is similar to the inexplicable astonishment of seeing a newly born baby minutes out of the womb. All of a sudden, before your eyes you are a witness to a new life that has been created; a life that is yet untainted and unabashedly pure. A life filled only with promise and purpose. A life with a brand new beginning. We were witnessing the rebirth of souls!

How could we not begin to expect a mighty movement from God? Our questionable thoughts and limited expectations quickly changed into a deliberate confidence that God was going to do the unimaginable each night. We approached God knowing that His presence would be strong; that He had a specific message and calling for us; and that His hand was upon our church, upon our lives. We learned not to limit our expectations to our human thoughts; that God is so much more. We knew that God would be present and would do mighty things. We simply needed to show up with open minds and hearts. We prayed. We trusted. We waited on God.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope." Psalm 131:5

## CONVICTION OF SIN

These verses in John clearly state that it is the Holy Spirit that convicts man of sin; and that conviction is based upon the Truth; the Word of God. It is oftentimes a misnomer that it is a preacher doing the convicting; and therefore there is no need to respond. To believe this philosophy is to deny the Holy Spirit, which is essentially denying the resurrection of Christ, which is denying God.

It is also a common misperception that conviction of sin is a negative, corrupting act of exploitation. I think people have formed this opinion because conviction, as in criminal conviction, is often associated with shame, guilt and corrupt behavior. However, it was powerfully evidenced in our revival that conviction of sin is actually an act of tremendous love. Scripture also substantiates this impression.

Conviction of sin is a gift of love exclusively granted by God so that He may minister to us His holiness. The word "holy" is often rejected today and even absent in many churches. It has the connotation of being extremely conservative to the point of traditionalism. It is as if holiness has no place in today's society. People have no desire to engage in holiness believing it is "old fashioned" and prohibits a life of fun and enjoyment. It has also become wrongly associated with moral conduct. People believe that to live a "holy" life is to abstain from morally unacceptable behaviors such as drunkenness, sexual immoralities, greed, financial embezzlement, etc. When we accept this definition, it places the action upon us. It is as if man can choose whether or not to be holy. Holiness is not an action that man can institute. It is only by God's grace that we can be filled with holiness. We are called to holiness, both internally and externally, long before being called to moral goodness.

Real holiness is the pursuit of sanctification. To be sanctified by Christ is to be "set apart." It is submitting to His leadership and control by the Holy Spirit. To claim holiness is to claim the position of belonging to God; to claim being God's child. God ministers holiness to us with the conviction of sin. It is through holiness that God desires to be united with us; which can only be done when we are clean and pure; both in action and in thoughts. When God ministers holiness, He is readying us to be used in the way He intended.

Conviction of sin, both corporately and individually, began weeks prior to the revival with the revelation of the 30 manifestations of pride. Once the Holy Spirit revealed our corporate sin of pride and arrogance, and people came before God in genuine repentance, it was as if a dam had been released allowing the living waters of God to once again flow throughout our church. This conviction of sin spearheaded our entire church body's spiritual transformation and the beginnings of such a life-changing revival.

Throughout the entire revival experience people were called into God's presence through the conviction of sin. Some people felt a light tug at their heart and knew they had sinned before God; while others grieved and wailed over the realization that they had gone against God's Word. People's consciousnesses were awakened to sins of their youth, their teenage years, and their early and late adulthood. The sins were of present day and as far back as fifty years.

It was difficult for people to face the conviction of their sin knowing they had gravely disappointed the God that created them; and that they had severed their relationship with Him. But each time someone "paid the price" and emptied their lives of sin; God was faithful to immediately begin pouring in His love. You could see their physical demeanor completely change becoming more relaxed and free from tension. Their tears of humiliation and shame turned to tears of joy, gratitude and cleansing. Their complete brokenness put them in a position to be built up and to be used more effectively by God. They were lovingly embraced and prayed with by friends and family members. You could sense the feeling of freedom that now released them. And we have since seen many blessings flow from people's lives that responded to their convictions and sought God.

## CONFESSION OF SIN

As mentioned earlier, confession of sin began in the solemn assemblies prior to revival. It was then that deep within people's hearts a yearning began to grow igniting a desire to be completely clean and pure before God. Once revival began and God rained down His presence, the embers flamed into gulfs of conviction that destroyed all pride, embarrassment, and/or shame. God's sweet breath fueled the confessions while also providing the breath of life necessary to sustain the heartache and humiliation. People wept at the altar broken from their sin. People fell to their faces in repentance on the floor beneath their seats.

Middle-aged Christian women, that were spouses and mothers, stood bravely before the church seeking freedom from the sins of fornication they had committed in their teens. They had forsaken the love of Christ and instead trusted the ill-fated love of a mere boy. When cast aside for someone better they were callously stripped of their purity, self-worth, self-confidence, dignity, and ability to trust. They were tired of struggling with the resulting depression and emotional turmoil that had consumed them and their current relationships for over twenty years. They begged God for forgiveness and earnestly sought release from the bondage that had so intensely gripped their souls. They desired to feel the light upon their lives once again.

A man came forward, tears streaming down his face as he said, "I must confess my sin. I have babies in heaven that I had aborted." The brutal honesty and intensity of this sin shook my body to the inner core. I cried with my broken brother and told him that he didn't have to do this. He said, "I have to if I am ever going to be free." When I asked if his wife knew, he replied no. He turned to his wife to tell her first. In the most astonishing and amazing manifestation of God's Spirit, this Godly woman bows at her husband's feet and begins praying for the healing of the mothers with whom he had aborted children. Several days later, another man stands broken at the altar confessing the same sin.

On a Sunday morning, a lady stood amongst the congregation confessing sin of sexual immorality. She had conceived a child out of wedlock and quickly married attempting to cover the sin. Having never told her beautiful daughter, now 8 years old, she now sought real freedom and release from the sin. She wanted to be reunited with God.

The Praise Team in our church consists of 8 singers that lead the larger choir, sing musical specials, etc. One Sunday morning in the middle of service a member of the Praise Team took his microphone and said, "I must share my confession." The next thing I witnessed was this 55 year old, retired teacher lying on his face at the altar. He was pleading with God to spare his life in spite of his disobedience. God had called him to preach when he was 19 years old; and he told God no. He begged God for mercy.

God impressed upon me my personal sin of greed, which I vehemently denied. I explained to God (as if He didn't know) that I had faithfully tithed since the age of 10. I often gave an offering above my tithe and gave to those in need. God must have scoffed as He then clearly showed me my greed. It was greed that caused me to begrudgingly tip waitresses when I thought the service was only mediocre. It broke my heart to acknowledge that this was true and that my actions had been disappointing to God. I too shared my confession and need for repentance before my church.

God also dealt with our corporate sins. He knew that we must be cleansed individually and as a Body of Christ before we could move forward. I had asked the church several times prior to revival, "What is our sin?" Upon the third time of asking, silence fell and people began saying, "We are full of pride. We are arrogant." After each confession we prayed to the Father asking for forgiveness.

Our church also confessed that we lacked reverence. We had been entering the church with the intent to socialize and gossip. The furthest thing from our minds was preparing our hearts to enter into the presence of the Lord; to hear His slightest whisper and to feel His breath upon us. We were ridden with guilt and shame about how we had been mishandling God's glory. We asked for forgiveness and began to give God the respect He so rightfully deserved. People entered the church in total silence; some even removing their shoes as if walking on holy ground. Instead of going to their seats, people heaped at the altar readying themselves to receive God's glory. This reverence and preparation went beyond the hours set aside for revival.

Sins were confessed that had taken place fifty years in the past, twenty years in the past, or even days earlier. Sins were confessed that had been buried so deep that they had been sincerely forgotten about. With each confession you could literally see souls being released from bondage. You could sense the release of a heavy burden being replaced with the freedom that comes with knowing God's forgiveness. You could see the restoration that comes with the joy of salvation.

Night after night, hour after hour, people publicly confessed sin one right after another. It is vitally important to be aware that no one had asked for public confession; no one had even suggested it. It was

God that drew people to the altar to plead publicly. It was as if God's gentle hand was leading them one by one to seek His forgiveness; to come before His people demonstrating their love and obedience for Him. Once they were completely broken and empty, God so lovingly began to fill them with His Spirit; with His love, with His ways.

Under ordinary circumstances, confession is encouraged to be only as broad as the sin and then shared accordingly in public, if appropriate. However, when God works in such deep conviction, there is a much greater sense of transparent honesty and desire to be fully open to God's people in order to relate how God is dealing with them. Public confession played a vital role in the revival we experienced. However, the critical and necessary component to revival is simply confession, either public or private.

As a corporate body, we were strengthened by the outpouring of honesty and obedience to God. We felt empathy for our brothers and sisters in Christ and wholeheartedly lifted them to the Lord in prayer. As the worldly flesh of individuals was left at the altar, we were rebuilt as one united body more accurately reflecting God's image. There was an indescribable closeness and trust for one another. People lingered after church talking, embracing, sharing, praying, crying, and laughing. We simply didn't want to part from each other. Experiencing the strong movement and presence of God began forging us more tightly together as one body; one unit that together was being equipped to further His Kingdom in a mighty way.

#### Conscious awareness of the presence of God

When I think about how strong the presence of God was during the revival, I am overwhelmed with the knowledge that I am not worthy or capable of trying to capture it in words. I am putting words here only because I feel compelled to write "something," as it was the most critical characteristic of the revival. In all honesty, God's presence was the revival!

I cannot begin to describe God's presence and therefore I pray that God, Himself, will reveal to you the magnitude of this characteristic. What I can describe is what I saw reflected from God's Presence, and is as follows:

After the first few nights and many, many hours of conviction and confession there was a feeling that the roof of our church was being ripped and split open to allow God's presence to rain down; to allow God to reign. It was a very unexpected and astoundingly real feeling. There was one particular area upon the altar in which His presence was so strong and so magnified. It was an area with a circumference of about 10 feet. When standing in this area, it felt as if the body was being elevated to another level. It felt as if this was the bottom opening of a stairway leading to heaven. People were naturally drawn to this area. In was in this area that the most desperate of the broken were restored. This area was saturated with more tears than any other. This area and the entire altar became holy ground; a place of extreme reverence; a place of sanctification; a place of refuge; and a place of release. It was place of comfort; a place of hope and a place of union with God.

God's presence was manifested as an expression of joy that was so evident throughout everyone. It was an expression greater than those typically witnessed at important life events such as a marriage or a baby's birth. It was so much more! This joy was cultivated by an unquenchable longing for worship, praise, and preaching.

God's presence was exalted as the main focus and priority of everyone's life. The normal demands of life, careers and children were not of importance. People were dedicated to making time for God, not fitting

God into their time. It was amazing how people did not focus on the responsibilities of life such as jobs, news, laundry, and grocery shopping; but all of these responsibilities were taken care of. There were no worries that something was being left undone or unattended to. God blessed and met people's needs. He was even faithful to provide rest for those that worked all day and came to worship for hours into the night. Children were blessed with restful souls, as night after night they were awake hours after their bedtime. Desiring to be in the presence of God superseded anything and everything else in life.

## 7. God's Power

"Seeing is believing" is a phrase familiar to most. There is much truth to these words. A person is more likely to believe something when they have personally experienced it as compared to when they have only heard or read about something. This has never been more evidenced than as in the New Testament. Jesus performed many miracles to visually demonstrate His power to His followers. Many chose to follow Him after being an eyewitness to a supernatural miracle. He even gave the power to perform miracles to His disciples in order to reach and witness to a greater number of people.

Christ is still the same today. He still uses His power to draw people to Him, to increase faith, and to empower His people. We saw God's power manifested in many ways during the revival. Power has many definitions, one of which is "the ability to act or produce an effect<sup>1</sup>." Oh, how we saw God's power, generated by the Spirit, produce many effects. Being a witness to the countless convictions and confessions were some of the most amazing manifestations of God's power. Only God's power could have caused such torment to hearts through conviction and brokenness of spirits.

Only God's power could have caused people to reveal the deepest sins of their heart in a public forum. Only God's power could have restored lives that had been void of His Spirit for years. Only God's power could have caused the lost to claim Christ as their Lord and Savior. Another definition of power is the possession of control, authority or influence over others<sup>1</sup>. God was definitely in control of this revival. It was His reign for 40 days. Quite frankly, I think it would be impossible for man to convince anyone to halt every aspect of their personal lives in order to attend worship services for 40 consecutive days, for hours upon hours each night.

It was God's power that influenced the people of this revival to desire Him with an insatiable appetite. It was His power that claimed all authority of our lives so that we exalted Him as priority over everything. The final definition of power is to be a source or means of supplying power<sup>1</sup>. I cannot begin to express how God's power has flowed through people's lives. His power has supplied power to further His Kingdom. Adult men and young men have accepted their call to preach.

College students have initiated their own ministries. People have utilized their giftedness and talents for God's purpose; including teaching, healing, preaching and praying. People have forgone their own desires in order to make sacrifices for the Lord, including time, money, and commitments. New Bible studies have been initiated from within the church. God's power has fueled more fervent prayer; deeper relationships with the Lord; more passionate worship; and a greater desire to know and pursue God's purpose, both individually and corporately.

The power of God has sent testimony of this revival throughout our community, to surrounding counties, to Africa in 2007 and now to Ireland in 2008. And these are just the initial fruits of God's power! Many churches in America have committed to having everything. They have amazing sanctuaries, some even larger than professional sports arenas complete with Jumbo Trons. They have many services to

accommodate people's busy schedules. They have multipurpose rooms for large fellowship gatherings, sporting events, and other activities.

They have workout centers so that people can maintain their bodies as temples for God. They implement a variety of Bible studies or discipleship classes to appeal to all needs and levels of spiritual maturity. They have plans and programs for all ages. They have outreach programs to witness to the lost. They have mission teams to go all throughout the world. And they have vast numbers of people in attendance each week. Many churches in America have all of this, but so many of these same churches are lacking the Power of God.

Therefore it doesn't matter how big or how many people, without God's power the church has lost its effectiveness. Dead churches and complacent Christians are one of the biggest obstacles in preventing the movement of God, preventing revival among His people.

God's power is immeasurable! God's power is sensational! We too have access to the same power that brought instant healing to ten lepers; raised the dead; calmed the storm; parted the Red Sea; called a small shepherd boy to kill a giant; kept a man from being devoured by lions; fed multitudes of 5000; kept men alive in a fiery furnace; and so much more. Ultimately we have access to the same incredible power that delivered Jesus Christ from the cross. God gave us this power through the Holy Spirit. Why are we not using it?

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