

(Revival) What Is Revival - Part 1

by Michael L. Brown

Revival is a supernatural and God-glorifying movement that brings something back to life, wakes things up, and leaves a lasting impact on the community.

Duration: 34:03

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 85:6, Isaiah 64:1, Joel 2:28, Habakkuk 3:2, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 5:14

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Gods Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing what we don't know. He uses examples of a person unaware of a storm damaging their belongings and an employee unaware of their impending termination to illustrate how ignorance can lead to a false sense of security. The speaker then applies this concept to the spiritual realm, stating that many Christians are unaware of how little they are walking in God's purpose and plan. Revival is described as a means to wake the body of believers from their spiritual lethargy and restore truth and obedience. The speaker concludes by urging listeners to realize their limitations and seek a deeper understanding of God's ways.

Transcript

before you. We set our hearts on you, Lord. We set our attention on you, Father.

We set our desires on you, Lord. Lord, as we approach the subject of revival, this is your territory, Lord. This is your turf.

We talk about your acts when we talk about revival, the works of God and nothing less than that. And Father, we need your wisdom. We need your spirit.

We need the reality of your power to come into these classes. Lord, we're not here for dead or dry academics. We're not here to hear about history.

We're here to hear about you and what you do and how you move in revival power and what it will take for us to move in that power and to see true revival in our day, in our age, in our lives. So, Lord, we open ourselves up to you, Lord. We don't know all the directions that you're going to take us in.

We don't know all the things that you'll speak to us or do in us, but we open ourselves. Each of us presents ourselves to you, O God, as an open vessel, as a willing vessel, ready, O God, to respond, ready to hear, ready to say, Lord, work on me, send me, use me. Father, our hearts are in tune with you.

Speak to us in these weeks to come. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. You can be seated. When we talk about revival, really, to different people, it means different things because we've heard different definitions of it.

We've heard of revival in terms of great works and movings of God and past history, and some say, oh, we've never had one in our day. Others talk about revival just being any good series of meetings, things livened up in the congregation, things began to happen. We're, quote, having revival.

Others just talk about revival when you have a special speaker for a period of time, and you're having revival services. But when we talk about revival here, we're not talking about the smaller or the lesser things, little movements here and there, someone being revived, the congregation coming to life. We're talking about the great historic movings of God, the history-changing movings of God, the works of God, the outpourings of the Spirit that have left their mark on subsequent generations.

Now, it's important that we understand the term revival, that we come to some basic definitions, and then I want you to understand the thrust and purpose of this course. You will learn about some of the great revivals that have been recorded. You'll learn some historical facts.

You'll get some information. You'll find out about the great major characteristics of revival. You'll find out what it takes to bring about revival.

You'll find out about hindrances to revival, what has stopped revival, why we don't see more of God in our day. But putting all these things together, the key thing you'll do is have a hunger for life, have something planted in you that you'll know and understand that there is more than we have presently been experiencing. And you will be one of the people that God can then impress to pray, to fast, to seek His face, to see revival come and sweep our country and sweep our lives.

So you'll find out about revival, but not in an external, outside way. You'll find out about revival as it pertains to your life, as it pertains to your congregation, and this country, and the world. The first revival, what is it? What are we talking about? There are a few basic definitions that I want us to look at, and Winky Pratt in his book on revival mentions some of these beginning on page 12.

What is the basic meaning of the word revive? Just start from the beginning. In the English language, what does the word revive mean? And he cites Webster's Dictionary as saying, one definition, first definition is return, recall, or recovery to life from death or apparent death as the revival of a drowned person. Revival brings something back to life that is either now dead or seemingly dead.

Revival is not for something that has never lived at all. If something wasn't born of God, if something never moved in God, and there was no spiritual history to it, and no spiritual life, it doesn't need revival. The only thing you can revive is something that was once alive.

A rock does not need revival. A piece of wood that's laying there doesn't need revival, but something that was alive and that ought to be alive needs revival. You also have to understand that revival is not just adding more to an excellent, growing, living situation.

Revival presupposes that things are not where they're supposed to be. When we say we need a revival in our land or we need a revival in our congregation, we are saying that things are not where they are supposed to be, that there is more, and that there is something that we need to be brought back to. The

second definition is return or recall to activity from a state of languor as the revival of spirits.

Revival brings a holy shock to apathy and carelessness. Revival doesn't just come quietly and in a way that no one notices. Revival isn't just sneaking little by little and add blessing to what's there.

Revival wakes things up. Revival shakes things. Revival confronts things in a state of spiritual lethargy and shakes them.

It's just like having a sleeping person, and you're trying to wake that person up, and they're sleeping heavily. You shake them. You do what you need to do.

You pour cold water over them, whatever it takes to wake them out of their sleep. That's what revival does to the body. Revival wakes the body out of its sleeping state.

Then the third definition, recall, return, or recovery from a state of neglect, oblivion, obscurity, or depression. As the revival of letters are learning, revival restores truth and recalls to obedience that which has been forgotten. Now, a basic principle that you need to understand is that you don't know what you don't know.

I've said that many times, and you may say, right, I understand. Well, make sure you understand. You don't know what you don't know.

You may think that everything is perfectly fine back at your house. Why? Because you don't know what you don't know. Maybe you don't know that there was a window left open, there was a huge storm, and a real expensive heirloom that you had sitting next to the window just got stopped.

Well, you don't know what you don't know. A lot of times we don't have a concern about something because we don't know anything about it. There's a worker on his job feeling great.

Why? Because he doesn't know what he doesn't know. He doesn't know that in five days he's going to be fired from his jobs. Therefore, he's relaxed and feels fine about it.

What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that we don't know how much we don't have. We don't know how much we don't know in terms of the body. We don't know how little we are walking in in terms of God's purpose and God's plan.

Why? Because this is all that we know. Let's say, for example, that human beings were built to fly, and we never knew it. Or we read about flying and people flying, but we thought that there was just kind of a figure of speech because everybody we know walks, and no human beings can fly on their own.

Well, if all of a sudden somebody began to fly and someone else found out they could fly, then you'd find out, man, how limited we were. And the state of the body as such today is that we do not realize how much we don't have. We do not realize how far we have fallen from biblical ideals.

We don't see it because we're the ones involved with it, and we don't know what we don't know. But when revival comes, all of a sudden you say, oh man, look at this. We were totally blind here.

We were totally backwards here. We were totally missing it here. We were totally out in left field.

We were calling this biblical faith or the messianic lifestyle, and we were saying we were full of God, and where is it? We were just out there doing nothing. That's what happens when revival comes. Another definition of revive is renewed and more active attention to religion, an awakening of men to their spiritual concerns.

Revival accomplishes what our best spiritual efforts cannot. And then quoting Arthur Wallace, revival is necessary to counteract spiritual decline and to create spiritual momentum. You've got to see that revival is above the norm.

You can pray, you can fast, you can preach, you can lay hands on people, you can work for God day and night for 50 years. But when revival comes in one month's time, you can get more done than in the previous 50 years put together. Smith Wigglesworth, after he was filled with the Spirit, said he could get 15 years spiritual work done as compared to one year.

He could do it in one year now, now that he was full of the Spirit. Frank Barlowman, caught up in the Azusa Street revival at the turn of the century, would just say how living six months or a year now is worth far more than 50 years. You can get far more for God done now.

You know, just to this in recent times, there was missionary work in Cambodia for years and years and years with almost no success. But when the government began to turn on the populace and there was great genocide and slaughter of millions of people, and they cried out to their gods and they saw their Buddhist temples destroyed, people began to realize that there was more. And within a few short years, more Cambodians were won to Jesus than in centuries before that.

It's almost like you're standing there with a sprinkler over your head trying to get yourself wet and you're standing there for 10 years, as opposed to the flood, the tidal wave comes up the block. Revival is the tidal wave of God. Revival is the life of God breaking out in unrestrained fashion among people.

Revival does what the Word of God tells us must be done, which is above and beyond our own ability and effort. Now there are just a few other definitions from different writers about revival, and I just want to quote them to you. One man says, numerous writings on the subject preserved confirm that revival is divine intervention in the normal course of spiritual things.

It is God revealing himself to man in awesome holiness and irresistible power. It is such a manifest working of God that human personalities are overshadowed and human programs abandoned. It is man retiring into the background because God has taken the field.

It is the Lord working an extraordinary power on saint and sinner. None of us have experienced the types of revival that we're going to refer to because none of these revivals have happened in our day and our age in this country. We've had outpourings of the Spirit.

We've had revivals of different things, revivals of the baptism in the Spirit, revivals of healing, but in terms of a comprehensive revival, we haven't had it in our generation in this country. But you're talking about God breaking in just as surely and suddenly and powerfully as if a tidal wave came and broke through the walls of this building, just as definitely, just as irresistibly. Another writer says that revival is a movement of the Holy Spirit bringing about a revival of New Testament Christianity and the Church of Christ and its related community.

All those who recognize Jesus as Messiah, when you read scripture, recognize that we don't have what the early believers were walking in, that we don't have the power, that we don't have the unity, that we don't have the consecration. Revival brings you back to the New Covenant faith, to the New Covenant lifestyle. Another quote, revival is that which changes the moral climate of a community.

Revival must of necessity make an impact on the community, and this is one means by which we may distinguish it from the more usual operations of the Holy Spirit. In other words, if revival does not affect the moral climate of the community in which you live, then it's not revival. If it does not have an impact on the moral climate, it's not revival.

If it doesn't have an impact on the moral attitude of people, if it doesn't have an impact in terms of restoring God to our society, it's not revival. When revivals have broken in the past, you have accounts of people just going on about their business, and all of a sudden getting stricken with conviction. It's just there, it's in the air, the angels of God are there all around, and there's a sense of the presence of God, there's an awe for heavenly things, and people go about on their business, and all of a sudden just get stricken with conviction, and finally just fall on the ground and cry out to God to have mercy on them.

Accounts of people that would be riding in years back on horseback, or in horse and buggy, and fall off and be found laying there on the ground for several days, prostrate, waiting for someone to lead them to the Lord. You're talking about extraordinary actions of God. You're talking about things that affect the course of history.

Just to give you an example, there was a great awakening, a great revival that broke in the United States around 1857. That revival, and the conviction that it brought, and the godly fear that it put into people's hearts, in very many ways is directly responsible for the abolition of slavery in the United States. You're talking one of the most important things in the history of our country, and yet it was a revival, a spiritual awakening that brought it to pass.

There are scholars who don't believe in God, who have no sympathy for the Bible whatsoever, and yet when they look at American history, or world history, they'll talk about, this happened, this economic development, this political change, all these things improved and increased because of spiritual revival. It's not something that's done in the corner that's hidden, that people just say, we had a great revival. Did you hear about it? No, I didn't hear about it.

Well, then it's not revival. If people aren't hearing about it, and talking about it, and shaking by it, and confronted by it on the streets, then it's not revival. And I want to hammer these things home to cause you to see and understand how little we have experienced the real outpouring of God in our generation, and how much it's been something that has just about totally been done within the local body, within the local assembly, and it's had very little impact on the community as a whole.

We can have the greatest meetings here, and sin can abound all around us, and it's never touched or challenged. Something is wrong. And of course, you've got to recognize and understand that something is wrong before you're going to get the thing right.

You've got to realize that something is lacking before you're going to come into the wholeness and the fullness of what God's promised. Well, what are some of the major characteristics of revival? Some of the major characteristics of revival. Again, let me just read you a few quotes.

James Burns raised the question, do we really want a revival? And he says to the church, the body, a revival means humiliation, a bitter knowledge of unworthiness, and an open, humiliating confession of sin on the part of her ministers and people. It is not the easy and glorious thing many think it to be, who imagine it fills the pews and reinstates the church in power and authority. It comes to scorch before it heals.

It comes to condemn ministers and people for their unfaithful witness, for their selfish living, for their neglect of the cross, and to call it to daily renunciation, to an evangelical poverty, and to a deep and daily consecration. That is why a revival has ever been unpopular with large numbers within the church, because it says nothing to them of power, such as they have learned to love, or of ease, or of success. It accuses them of sin.

It tells them they are dead. It calls them to awake, to renounce the world, and to follow Messiah. Well, that's pretty blunt and pretty clear, but I just want to give you that as an overview of what we're dealing with.

We're dealing with something that is totally unpleasant on the flesh. We're dealing with something that is contrary to the way man would do it. We're dealing with something that upsets all religious establishments, that totally turns the religious establishment upside down.

We're talking about something that leaves no room for the flesh to boast, and God alone gets the glory. Well, what are some of the major characteristics of revival? First, it is absolutely supernatural and God glorified. It has a quality which no one can write off.

Now, look, you've got to understand critics are always there. All the revivals that have taken place have had critics, have had people skeptical and mocking. That's always going to be there, but the fact of the matter is that God moves in such a way that unless people harden their heart and resist God, they have to acknowledge it's God.

It's such a pervasive, supernatural influence that it can't just be humanly explained to somebody working it up. You know, I'll just give you an example of what happens in the throes of revival. This was in Ulster in 1857.

Just listen to this account. Again, to give you an idea of the supernatural element of revival, the fact that God alone gets glory, that no denomination can take credit, that no man can claim that he did it. It says, a schoolboy in class became so troubled about his soul that the schoolmaster sent him home.

An older boy, a Christian, went with him, and before they had gone far, led him to Christ. Returning at once to school, this new convert testified to his teacher, Oh, I am so happy. I have the Lord Jesus in my heart.

These simple words had an astonishing effect. Boy after boy rose silently and left the room. Going outside, the teacher found these boys all on their knees in a row along the wall of the playground.

Schoolboys. Very soon their silent prayer became a bitter cry. It was heard by another class inside and pierced their hearts.

They fell on their knees and their cry for mercy was in turn heard by a girl's class above. In a few moments, the whole school was on their knees. Neighbors and passersby came flocking in, and as they

crossed the threshold, they all came under the same convicting power.

Every room was filled with men, women, and children seeking God. Nobody can take credit for that. The only one that gets glory for that is God.

You can't contain that. You can't box that in. It's a moving of God's Spirit.

So a major characteristic, a primary one, is that it is absolutely supernatural and God-glorifying, and that no flesh can glory in its presence. It's too much God for man to exalt his head. The greater the presence of God, the more difficult it is for people to exalt themselves, the more difficult it is for people to draw attention to themselves.

You say, well, what are you saying then in our society when we've got so much personality in front of us, when we've got so much human acts and showmanship in front of us, and when the body of Messiah is filled with all types of gospel enterprises to the glory of man, what does that tell us? It tells us we have very little of the real thing, because when you have the fullness of God, there isn't room for man to exalt himself. Now, in the book of Isaiah, the book of Isaiah is talking about God pouring out his judgments in the early chapters of the book, and some scholars think that he was prophesying the great earthquake that took place during the reign of King Uzziah. In Isaiah, the second chapter, this is what God says in terms of his judgment being poured out.

The end of verse 9, or verse 9 says, man will be brought low and mankind humble. Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the Lord in the splendor of his majesty. The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted, and they will be humble. Verse 17, the arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humble. The Lord alone will be exalted in that day and the idols will totally disappear.

If you understand that idol is anything made by man and worshipped, anything man-made that is then worshipped is an idol. You understand that when revival power comes, all idols are destroyed. And when God arises, it has one effect on all of the works of man.

It crushes them. And you just think of all of the pride that could exist in the human heart and all of the pride of a prosperous civilization. And all the pride of being God's people and all the things we've built and done.

Think of how all that pride could come crumbling down in light of a massive earthquake. Just in terms of God's physical judgment. Think in terms of a spiritual earthquake.

Think in terms of a spiritual humbling, a spiritual outpouring. And where is the pride of man? Where is the flesh? See, on the day we stand before God, stand before his throne, the idea of a human being boasting or taking credit or drawing attention to themselves would be utterly and totally and completely impossible, wouldn't it? I mean, just the thought of standing before Almighty God and taking credit and lifting ourselves up and having people look at us would be impossible to conceive. And yet it's so easy for us to do it here.

So easy for people to think that we're somebody. But when revival comes, God is so glorified. God is so manifestly there that the flesh can't stand.

Frank Bartleman says that during the Azusa Street outpouring in subsequent years, that people would come in, he said, preachers in particular, and they'd want to be heard and God would flatten them. God would just flatten them. They'd get up to speak and the people just keep praying.

And all of a sudden they couldn't think. Their minds would get unclear and they'd just have to sit down because God wasn't going to let flesh glory in his presence. Just another description of the God-glorifying character of a revival move of the Spirit.

A movement bears this mark of spontaneity when men cannot account for what is taking place in terms of personalities, organizations, meetings, preaching, or any other consecrated activity. And when the work continues unabated without any human control, as soon as a movement becomes controlled or organized, it has ceased to be spontaneous. It is no longer a revival.

The course of the 1904 revival has been outlined thus. God began to work. Then the devil began to work in opposition.

Then God began to work all the harder. Then men began to work and the revival came to an end. Most of what we have accomplished in our country can be accounted for by means of human effort, human ingenuity, human strength, human professionalism, human use of media, with the blessing of God added in.

Most of our building we have built with God's help, as opposed to God building with our help. There's an increasing conviction coming up within me as I just look at so much of our magazine coverage of the great and big meetings and all the posters of this man of God and this woman of God and this anointed servant and that anointed servant, and so-and-so with 9,000 in his congregation or 15,000 a week coming to the Lord through his or her ministry. Now some of those people are some of the finest men and women on the planet serving God, devoted to God, humble before Him.

But others you look at and it's just so much flesh that just hits you. Something on the inside of you gets offended. You don't see the Lord.

You don't judge them, but something just doesn't seem right. And you ask the question, I wonder out of all these great numbers, these large congregations, and thank God for large, thank God for small, but you wonder in terms of these large congregations, how many of the people would stand up for the Lord in the face of persecution? How many of the people can keep a one-week commitment to keep their television off or fast for three days without having anything but water? How many of these people show up for the prayer meeting or get up early to seek the face of God if you say, well, very, very, very few? Well, then all the big numbers don't mean anything. We're so flesh-oriented when revival comes, it just changes it completely and entirely.

Revival is supernatural and God-glorifying in that it is sudden and spontaneous. It is sudden and spontaneous. Let's say we had our big announced meeting six months in advance, and everybody's been praying for it, everybody's been inviting people out for it, and everybody's been getting ready for it, and you've been working on your message for six months, and you get up to preach, and it's a great message, and it's a great night, and people are tremendously blessed, and lives are changed.

Well, thank God for it, but you can explain that somehow. God gets glory out of it, but man, the one that brought that message, they may get a lot of glory also, or the workers that work so hard, they get a lot of

credit for it also. But if you just happen to be at somebody's house one day and both kind of feeling a little tired and not even in the mood to pray, and you just say, well, let me just pray a little bit, and the next thing, neighbors start knocking on your door.

What's going on? I saw fire over your house. What's going on in here? Something's wrong. I don't feel right.

I feel terrible, guilty. What's going on? And they start flocking to you. You say, hey, God did it.

Only a fool would take credit for that. So revival has that supernatural quality because it's sudden and spontaneous. It also has that supernatural quality because it's uncontrollable and uncontainable.

If you can control it and box it, it's no longer revival. And I'll tell you the temptation, it's happened over and over and over again. We've only seen a small fraction of the true revivals that God's begun.

Because even though it's uncontrollable, uncontainable, once people start to put their name on it and decide when it happens and how, God moves on. He pours out his spirit in other circles. Now, Charles Finney, in his revival lecture, says that one of the key things for revival is that people get out of the way.

Now, he gives specific ways as to how to bring about revival through prayer and preaching and witnessing and consecration. And he says a revival is no more a miracle than a crop of wheat is. In other words, when you'll participate with God and do what he tells you to do and follow his laws, revival will come suddenly, spontaneously, supernaturally.

Only God could do it. But you've got to cooperate. But he says here, revival may be expected when ministers and believers are willing to have God promoted by whatsoever instruments he pleases.

Sometimes ministers are not willing to have a revival unless they can have the management of it or unless their agency can be conspicuous in promoting it. They wish to prescribe to God what he shall direct and bless and what men he shall put forward. They will have no new measures.

And then in Finney's kind of gentle style, he says, such men will sleep on until they are awakened by the judgment trumpet without a revival unless they are willing that God should come in his own way, unless they are willing to have anything or anybody employed that will do the most good. One thing we'll see is that when revival comes, it always comes with religious stumbling blocks. What does that mean? It always comes with something added in that you didn't ask for and that really offends you.

Something that's just too humbling, something that's just too much against what you think is a good way for God to work. People pray for the outpouring of the spirit. God pours out of spirit.

People start speaking in tongues. They say, well, we want God, but none of that tongue stuff or demons start leaving people. People start getting delivered in the middle of a nice service with a nice, prestigious guest speaker from out of state.

People start getting delivered and convulsing in the aisles. And well, they're changed. That person was an alcoholic and drug addict for 30 years.

They're instantly changed. But that doesn't matter because you don't like it within the building. Revival will always come with religious stumbling blocks.

And the fact is, people will always try and pick and choose. But the only way to handle it is, God, you move however you want. Now, I'll tell you something interesting.

I've been involved in a major outpouring of the spirit about seven years ago and a quick, small, minor outpouring that began to take place when I was at Christ for the Nations about five years ago. Otherwise, I've had movings of God and stirrings of God, but everything else I know about revival is through reading the word and through reading books about it. But I felt, you know, after all these years of experiencing certain things and reading certain things, that I have prepared myself for any potential religious stumbling block.

In other words, whatever it is, I don't care. I'm going to go with the spirit. If anything tries to get in the way, I don't care.

I'm going to go with the spirit. I'm going to do it God's way. It doesn't matter.

And I really convinced myself of that, that I have kind of immunized myself against religious stumbling blocks because I've let my reputation go out the window, because I let people hate me or think whatever they want to think of me if I follow the Lord anyhow, because I've humbled myself in terms of the scholarly pursuits that I wanted to have in that reputation. I said, forget it. I don't want it.

Whatever God wants, that's fine. So I figured that I got myself immunized so that I couldn't catch that terrible plague of stumbling over something that God did in a spiritual way that I didn't like. And I basically had myself convinced of that until a couple weeks ago I read a book by a brother who talked about the outpouring of the spirit.

Actually, he called it revival. He said it was the last great revival and that it started already. Now, this guy's a good fellow.

He loves the Lord. He's anointed by God. God uses him in many miraculous ways.

So I wasn't doubting him or questioning him per se. But what happened was he talked about the revival that broke already

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13577.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-l-brown/revival-what-is-revival-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net