

7 Important Ways to Steward Revival

by Shane Idleman

This sermon focuses on how to steward the atmosphere of revival, emphasizing the need for discernment, maintaining personal revival, balancing priorities, nurturing family relationships, delegating responsibilities, ensuring actions align with God's will, and promoting revival without seeking personal recognition.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:15, 1 Timothy 3:4, Exodus 18:17, James 1:5, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Stewarding Revival", "Discernment in Leadership"

Description

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Transcript

Pastors Unplugged. We do this maybe once a month or so on topics mainly for pastors, but you are obviously free to listen in, which I'm sure many of you are, and it's a very important topic, how to steward the atmosphere of revival. How to steward the atmosphere of revival.

Now, I've been holding off on this for quite a while because I feel, you know, who am I to offer thoughts and perspectives on this? I've never been part of a long-term revival. There's great resources. I know D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, I remember listening to his six-set audio cassette back when, you know, I'm dating myself here.

His thoughts on revival, I remember reading, gosh, he recommended a big, thick book from like the 1700s on revival. I mean, Jonathan Edwards, his works on what is a genuine revival. Those have actually experienced, I know Dr. Michael Brown, who's a contemporary of mine, still alive.

Everyone else I mentioned is not alive. Wrote a book on, you know, the revival handbook, and, you know, these people have experienced it, they've lived it, but I do have a taste of it in the sense that, you know, we've had services that were exactly what is going on in a lot of the revival hotspots, people being delivered and set free and healing and times at the altar and praying and fasting and seeking the heart of God. Also, as I'm recording this, I did a podcast with Billy Howell, a friend of mine with CBN News.

I would encourage you to listen to that. I might, if I remember, I might put it in the description of this one. It's just, I think, 10, 11 minutes long.

I talk about, you know, genuine revival and the pitfalls and the blessings and the things we have to watch out for. So I'm not gonna do that here, but I thought, you know, Lord, if you want me to put this together, give me some confirmation. And there's a lot of confirmation.

I won't get into details about, but as a pastor in a living, vibrant, spirit-filled church who has experienced seasons of revival from the day we started, I think I can offer some thoughts on this because also now we're dealing with the internet age and social media. I mean, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter. Of course, YouTube just blows everything up times a thousand but there are some key things I wanna talk about with you, with pastors, and you can forward this to a pastor, even if you're a church leader, or even if you're just a church member, this will be good to know.

Number one, I want to just, of course, throw it out there that we do have to discern. We have to discern, but not divide. And we have to make sure that our discernment is coming from a humble, broken, gracious, Christ-honoring, people-loving heart where we have removed the plank from our eye first to better be able to see.

The problem with a lot of these judgmental Jerry's, critical Cathy's, loud Larry's, I can keep going if you want, is they are quick to critique, they're quick to judge. They've never experienced a genuine move of God in their own heart, so they wanna shoot their brother or their sister. We call it friendly spiritual fire, friendly fire.

It's not good. But you do have to use discernment because as pastors, as shepherds, as overseers, as elders, you are actually, I'm gonna break the bad news to you here, you're actually responsible for the spiritual atmosphere of what God is doing at your church. And some people might say, oh, no, no, if it's just, it's God, we're not doing anything, we're just gonna go with the flow.

If it's odd, it's God. If it's weird, it's biblical. And we're just gonna kinda let people do what they want.

And man, I'm not gonna quench or grieve this. Well, that's, I don't think that's biblical, I don't think that's a good idea because we're called to steward this wonderful gift of revival that God has given us. That's our calling.

We're called to discern, we're called to encourage, and we're called to edify, we're called to convict, we're called to really be sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit, whether it's testimonies or prayer or preaching. And so we have to be discerning. It's not just throw caution to the wind and see what happens because you might be surprised at what happens.

But on the flip side, if we're too quick to critique, hey, that's, what are you doing? Why, that person's too loud at the altar. We don't wanna have people at the altar. It's too emotional.

Don't sing that song, any song more than six minutes, okay? Then you're gonna get into big trouble. So number one, we have to be discerning and we have to steward the atmosphere. I believe that's your calling, is to steward that atmosphere.

But here's where this will primarily come from. Your personal heart has to be aflame with the power and passion of God, the filling of the Holy Spirit. So you have to keep your own heart revived in conjunction with what God is doing.

It's your devotional time with the Lord, your repentance, your keeping a short account of besetting sin and repenting of it and not allowing it to come into your heart and fester there. You have to keep your devotional life alive. You have to keep your own walk with the Lord strong.

And I will tell you, I'll share with you, we've had seasons at our church, we actually call it Ren the Heavens. Ren the Heavens, our first one was two weeks long, every night, and by the second week, I mean the first week, and you can ask almost anybody, it was probably a turning point in the lives of many people. But by the second point time, I'm getting to bed much later than I had before, trying to prepare messages, we're preaching every night.

And my devotional life was not where it should have been. I mean, I didn't have time for God in the morning, we had to get up, we got to do things, laundry's backed up, I have to get to the bills, we've got issues going on, this problem, this dynamic, this demonic attack, opposition. And so that really caused my own flame to go out, in which I believe it affects the genuine atmosphere that's going on at the church.

But when I can keep my own flame, my own heart aflame with revival, then that will really help steward this environment we just talked about. And then the third point is you've got to make sure you maintain your priorities. You have to make sure you maintain priorities, what is first, and also I'll throw in here, you've got to balance.

Especially, I mean, you've got kids, I've got five kids, three teenagers. It's gonna be a lot different for me than, let's say at Asbury, where there's a 22 year old, not married, no kids, no job, her or his life is at the school. I mean, they're gonna be able to devote 12, 15 hours there.

But again, if God's moving, I mean, there's all night services are not uncommon. Prayer meetings, I know a church, a friend of mine had just a whole weekend, 24 hours, seven days a week worship. People coming in at all hours.

But he got really worn out too. So somehow, somehow you have to find that balance. Because your body is where your spirit lives.

So just try eating terrible for a few days, getting little sleep, and you tell me if it doesn't affect you. So this is where I would be really paying close attention to my diet. I'm trying to maintain in a relative fasting mode during this, intermittent fasting, whatever you wanna call it.

Just a very, a very deep season of seeking the Lord through fasting. Water fasting only, I like to do. But when you're busy and you don't feel good and you got responsibilities.

So just really keeping the flesh at bay, eating, trying to eat healthy, getting plenty of sleep. Because you hear of the famous Welsh Revival, correct? Many of you do, 1904, 1905. It was just amazing how it started.

I mean, I won't get into details. And sometimes you hear the name Evan Roberts. What many people don't know is he crashed and burned.

I mean, he made it about a year. And that was it. C'est la vie, see you later, I'm done.

And got kind of involved with this lady and his doctrine, I think got not sexually at all. I think just, I mean, who knows? But just more, she was influencing him. And again, the male, female, you know, spiritual

usurping the authority over the man.

And got him kind of sideways on theology. He just had to rest. I read some of his own account and just, man, he was just in bed a lot, kind of depressed.

Because your adrenal glands, your fatigue, the way you're designed, your hormone level, the stress, especially if you're gaining weight. And as we get older, too, and type two diabetes sets in. And your body is really affected by this type of schedule.

And so you have to keep a balance and a priority and put first things first. That might mean not taking many counseling appointments. That mean might having other people be your point people.

And you just focus on prayer and the study of God's word and this revival atmosphere. So priorities is number three on this list. Well, actually, they're not in order, but this is what we gotta do.

And then I think under priorities, I put this number four, but I think it would fit under priorities or it's separate heading. Make sure, and this is where I made the mistake, too. Make sure that your marriage and your relationship with your children is not falling to the wayside.

Now, there will be seasons to where that's not the priority because pursuing God is a priority. But you gotta reign it back in. And I think there was one night, I don't know, one of the ran the heavens, you know, I just didn't go.

I had the associate pastor help and I just stayed home with my family. And it was very healthy, very beneficial. Maybe the next day we'll say, hey, we're just gonna take this off as a family day.

You've gotta keep the marriage and the kids intact because you don't want your kids growing up thinking dad was too busy to spend time with them and was all about pursuing God. But I know when God becomes a priority, every other aspect of our life is put on the back burner. And I often think of like A.W. Tozer.

I love him, but all of us have cracks in the armor. One of his was he was not a family man. His wife said, I know Tozer loves the Lord, but I don't know if he loves me.

And you know, that pursuit of God, that pursuit of God. And I don't know, I'll let God judge. I mean, I love his writings, I love his works, but I also am reminded often that, you know, we've also have a responsibility to steward our marriage and our children as well.

And then also I put down for pastors, it's okay to hand off the baton, baton. I always have a challenge with this word. It's what happens with dyslexia.

Baton, right? Okay, hand it off. And that could be a deacon opening up and leading the prayer meeting. And you rest for a little while, or another elder or someone else.

And you don't have to be God's man of the hour every single day. Sometimes God might just want you to step back. That's one good thing about what is happening now.

I'm recording this, I think on February 20th, February 20th, 2023. Asbury is just exploding. And the interesting thing, there's no one lead person who started it.

There's, I mean, you normally have that. There's a flicker. There's somebody who from Evan Roberts to Jonathan Edwards, to George Whitfield, to Wesley, to Hal Harris, Griffin Jones, Daniel Rollins, and the Welsh Revivals, to Duncan Campbell and New Hebrides.

Even Robert Murray McShaney had a guest speaker come in in Scotland and that guy sparked Revival. And there's usually that light, that person, that preacher who lights the flame. But this one seems to be different, at least so far in what they're doing now.

But it's okay. Rest, hand off that mantle for a little while, hand up that responsibility for the day, let them run with it, empower them. And that is actually a way you can keep the church open longer.

We can go every day if we need to at certain hours because we have enough deacons and elders who can help us with that flow of the service. And on this, I didn't put it, but I think it's important. Make sure, let me see, this will be, I'm gonna do seven points, so this will be number six.

Make sure that a good thing, or I'm sorry, make sure that a God thing, let me back up a minute. When you do something, make sure it's a God thing and not a good thing, and just a good thing. Because we can be really busy doing good things but really get derailed, like a train, I think a train, because it's not a God thing.

Has God called me to do this? Is God wanting me to do this? Because God's in it, God's going to empower, God's going to equip. In my weakness, I am strong. But if it's just a good idea, I wanna try this out, then you could really burn yourself out.

So I try to really make sure God, and I won't get into a lot of details, but Lord, could you confirm this for me? I need confirmation. I trust you, I just don't trust me. Lord, give me confirmation.

Once I know it's His, Scripture confirms it, it's according to the will of God, there's confirmation, I bear witness in my spirit, man, I run with it. And you learn to say, okay, it's a God thing now that I'm doing it, it's not just a good thing. If it's a good thing, I might quit and give up.

But a God thing, you will see through and then see it through. And then finally, this one's important, especially right now, how do we promote a revival? And this is where we have to be careful. I remember Duncan Campbell, I think in one of his books, in, when was he, that was around 1950 or so, said there was no posters, no publicity, no nothing.

People were arrested and drawn by the power and presence of God. And so I think that's the side to err on. And I learned my lessons the hard way because what happens is you get so excited.

And man, look at what God's doing. You're taking pictures, you're uploading. Facey, look at Instagram and this.

And you have to be careful because you might start giving yourself the credit versus look at what God is doing. And then it becomes more for show. And man, if we can get 1,000 people here tonight and if we can get more likes and more views.

And I think God might withdraw when that begins to happen. So you want to be careful because on the flip side of this, I think it's okay, and I could be wrong, but I think it's okay to say, hey, we are gonna meet every night this week at 6 p.m. We'd love to see you here. We've got children's ministry nursery available.

We're just gonna seek the heart of God and leave it at that. Let's see what God does. If people take pictures, I try to do that now where our security or ushering or who knows, they'll send me pictures.

Oh man, look at this cool shot at the altar and look at this. And nine times out of 10, I don't post anything. It's just like, oh, well, that's cool, thank you.

But I know there was one. I don't know if I'll be able to put it up here. I don't think so.

But I took, I think one of our ushers got it. I was just at the altar and my little three-year-old came up next to me and that was so precious. I'll never forget it.

And I posted it and then of course, the Judge Meligeres and Critical Kathy's, oh, posting a picture of yourself and now you're trying to be super spiritual. I'm like, my goodness, folks, you don't even know my heart, number one. Number two, I didn't plan that.

I didn't picture it, but how cool is that when a three-year-old walks up there and kneels on the altar? So maybe I'll find that picture and somehow slide it in here. We've got a great media producer here that does our podcasts and different things. And so that would be it.

That would be the seven things I would try. I mean, you could keep, things are coming to my mind right now I could add to the list for sure about being open to deliverance. And another thing, possibly having a separate prayer room.

That's what we do. So we get people away from the altar if they're kind of going through something. We've had some incredible deliverances.

And again, I'm conservative. I like God in a box. I'm not emotional.

I've opened up before when one of the guys was having a tremendous deliverance. It was amazing. I was going, Lord, please, please have this guy be quiet.

God, what is going on? You're trying to embarrass me, aren't you? Lord, help me. And not realizing that this, you know, God was working and I shouldn't care what other people think. And that's always been a struggle of mine, low self-esteem and different things.

I've always been concerned about the opinions of others. Well, at least up until about 22 years ago when God mightily filled me with the spirit that became really, really low on my priority list. But that's another area of concern is, you know, make sure you've got prayer team members there who are ready and able and willing to help and that they know what that looks like and can get the person out and get them help and deliverance.

The gifts of the spirit, you might wanna talk about that with your staff. I know with our elders, although we believe in the supernatural gifts in a corporate worship setting where people could come in and think you're out of your mind and somebody is uninformed. And we're careful with that.

We make sure that they're filtered through our leadership team. And so there's a lot of things you can add to this, but I just wanna get you started with these core seven ways to make sure you steward revival correctly. And here's why this is so important.

If you are stewarding something the right way and you're honoring God and you're keeping this going, God will keep pouring out a measure of his spirit upon that work because he wants to bless a work that is remaining humble and open and gracious and is taking this responsibility of stewarding it. And so I think on the one hand where it's like, hey, I don't wanna say anything, let's just let anything happen. If it's odd, it's God.

I think that's more cowardly and you have to be careful there. And then the other side where I can probably, I probably gravitate more to this side where you don't wanna circus environment. I don't wanna cemetery, but I don't wanna circus.

I want God to give me discernment on what is disruptive. And see, that's the key. If it's disruptive, if somebody is disrupting worship, it's like, man, that's not really, that's disruptive.

Then I think we should handle it and be able to handle it, not quickly. I would err on the side of grace and waiting a little bit, but I ultimately would obviously make a decision with myself or the elder team. And, hey, let's try to prevent this.

Let's try to remove this disturbance, maybe get them in the prayer room where they can have counseling and one-on-one and some prayer. But if they're the Holy Spirit, when it says that the Holy Spirit, the fruit is self-control, it means we can't control ourself. But also when God is moving and a living, vibrant, powerful experience with the Holy Spirit takes place and sinful man is repenting and being broken, that's not always clean and tidy and nice, and nor should it be.

So anyway, hope that helps. So I'm gonna get these seven points out to you, hopefully later.

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