



Prayer Resources

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The Duty Of A Pastor Desiring Revival

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come... Acts 2:1

While revival is the sovereign work of God, both Biblical and Church histories confirm that God works conditionally among His people to bring about cleansing and renewal with an impact upon a community and a culture. One of those Biblical revivals, the Day of Pentecost, not only bears record of this fact, but it also reveals specific actions on the part of those in leadership that created an atmosphere for revival. These actions clearly outline the duty of a pastor who desires revival among his people.

The pastor must restore prayer as the top priority in his church. In Acts 1:4 and 14, the leaders of the early church were commissioned by Jesus to place prayer as their priority. They followed His counsel to continue in prayer and supplication in anticipation of the promise of the Father. Choosing prayer over human effort is a challenge for every pastor. Once the choice is made his passion for the priority must permeate every aspect of his life. That passion will impact his creativity in communication and implementation of corporate prayer times. The personal praying of his congregation will be challenged by his message and his leadership of public praying. The absence of corporate prayer meetings in today's local churches is an indication of pastors who have no passion for personal prayer.

The pastor must return to Biblical, expository preaching. In Acts 2, Peter expounded the Word of God from the book of Joel as his life had been touched by the text. Choosing sermons that flow out of the Scripture text into his personal life over sermons that flow out of life experiences with a Scripture verse attached is a challenge for every pastor. The first requires time with God, the second merely a knowledge of God's Word. The first produces new life in the hearers, the second usually produces pride of knowledge. The first creates an atmosphere for revival, the second creates boredom.

The pastor must reflect upon revival principles. Peter and the other Apostles discerned revival principles from Joel and other prophets who had experienced revival. They frequently referred to and quoted from these prophets. Choosing to be thoroughly knowledgeable of revival history and principles over simply using a reference book for revival illustrations is a challenge for every pastor. By studying the Biblical revivals and the works of William Burns, J. Edwin Orr, Richard Owen Roberts, Charles Finney, and others the pastor's heart begins to beat contagiously for revival. He also gains discernment that will shield him and his congregation from error that often arises in the midst of revival.

The pastor must respect the gift of the revivalist and the evangelist. The men who gave leadership to Pentecost were not all pastors! They were various gifts given to the church referred to later by Paul in Ephesians chapter four as apostles (missionaries), prophets (revivalists), evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Choosing to utilize God's designed gifts of itinerant

ministers over merely inviting a pastor-friend (who hopefully will reciprocate the invitation) is a challenge for every pastor. God has called and gifted men for the work of revival and evangelism and He will bless their ministries accordingly. Various denominational histories bear record that when pastors have failed to utilize the revivalists and evangelists, their presence have dwindled and the denominations have become liberal and lifeless.

The pastor must refurbish the ordinances of the Lord's Supper, baptism, and ordination. In Acts 1 and 2, the church continued in breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), baptizing new converts, and ordaining men to the ministry. Choosing fresh, meaningful communication at the observance of these ordinances over meaningless formality of their practice is a challenge for every pastor. Creativity of approach requires time with the Lord. The serious, heart-searching observance of the Lord's Supper served as a catalyst for many historical Scottish revivals. Salvation testimonies at times of baptism have impacted friends and family who are present at the church only for this personal solemn occasion. Ordinations have challenged whole congregations to God's personal call to ministry. The Lord's purposes for these ordinances were not meant to be distractions from sermon series or goal attainments, but to be catalysts for renewal.

The pastor must redeem the time for revival. In Joel 1:14, Joel called for a fast, a solemn assembly, a gathering of the elders and people, and a crying out to the Lord for revival – all time consuming activities. An often overlooked detail of the solemn assembly recorded in Second Chronicles 7:9 is the preparation of seven days in the presence of the Lord in prayer and preaching. Between the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the believers waited before the Lord in prayer for fifty days. Choosing to call church members from their regularly scheduled activities of work, recreation, and even church duties for the purpose of revival over merely fitting in a one-day revival emphasis is a challenge for every pastor. Sacrificial participation communicates to God, other believers, and the lost community the desperate need for revival. Routine participation in "revival" not only fails to create an atmosphere for authentic revival, but serves as an inoculation for genuine hunger for revival!

The pastor must reissue a call for confession. In Joel 2:15, the prophet stated, *Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.* The men of Israel dealt with their sin three times annually at required feasts in Jerusalem. Believers are challenged to examine themselves at the regular observance of the Lord's Supper. Choosing to call regularly, specifically, and creatively for confession of personal and corporate sin over simply allowing time to heal sinful situations is a challenge for every pastor. Dealing with sin is painful, but its fruit is an atmosphere for revival.

The pastor must reinstate church discipline. In Acts 1, the early church replaced Judas with Mattias. In Acts 5, Peter exercised church discipline with Ananias and Sapphira and great fear of the Lord was upon the church. Choosing to discipline personal sin within the church over tolerating it for the sake of peace is a challenge for every pastor. Without the fear of the Lord that comes through church discipline, there can be no revival atmosphere.

The pastor must refresh the fellowship. In Acts 2, the early church continued in fellowship centered on the deep things of God that produced deep commitment to each other. Joel refers to old men sharing their dreams and young men preaching. God was moving from the old to the young throughout the fellowship. Choosing to refresh the fellowship of a congregation through the deep things of God over building relationships through sports and social activities is a challenge for every pastor. Creatively encouraging the older members to recall past revivals and the youth to tell of their aspirations for revival will provide a congregation with an exciting atmosphere for revival.

The pastor must reconfirm the use of testimonies. In Acts 7, Stephen testified mightily! This testimony resulted in more conversions, notably among them was Saul of Tarsus! Choosing to motivate and utilize testimonies regularly in a church service over maintaining the streamlined order of service is a challenge for every pastor. Churches who function in the atmosphere of revival must schedule their worship services to allow additional time for testimony sharing.

The pastor must respond to revival's wake. Acts 2:42-47 enumerates many changes that took place within the early church following Pentecost. It was as though new wine was being poured into new wine-

skins. The church was flexible enough to contain the fresh work of the Spirit. Choosing to embrace Holy Spirit ordained change in the midst of revival over maintaining the status quo to please unmoved church members is a challenge for every pastor. The Apostles discerned through the Holy Spirit which pre-Pentecost practices to maintain and which new practices to embrace. The discovery of revival requires a deeper level of discernment and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit than did the desire for revival!

The pastor must recognize his own need for revival.

Peter and the Apostles were in dismal spiritual condition following the crucifixion of Christ. Before the church could experience Pentecost, they needed personal revival. Joel 1:13 states, *Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my*

God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. In Acts 6:7, a great company of priests (pastors) came to know the Lord through the revival of Pentecost. In 2 Chronicles 6:41 during Solomon's revival the same thing happened. Choosing to give time and discipline for personal revival over time for sermons encouraging congregational revival is a challenge for every pastor. It was to the pastors of the five out of seven churches in Asia Minor to whom the Lord said, *Repent!*

What about you, Pastor? Are your choices a hindrance to your church experiencing revival? Will your unrevived life disable your good choices? You have a duty if you have a desire for revival. May God give us pastors who will choose the activities that create an atmosphere for revival!