How To Have A Revival
by Richard W. De Haan

Sent By God

Many believers around the world are deeply concerned about the spiritual coldness and lethargy in the church. They might pray, in the words of that old, familiar hymn by William P. Mackay:

Revive us again—
Fill each heart with Thy love;
May each soul be rekindled
With fire from above.
Hallelujah, Thine the glory!
Hallelujah, amen!
Hallelujah, Thine the glory!
Revive us again.

That’s a wonderful prayer! Every child of God should be longing for the windows of heaven to open with a special outpouring of revival blessings. Another hymnwriter, Daniel W. Whittle, expressed it with the words, “Mercy-drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead.”
Questions arise, however. Does the Bible have anything to say about revival? Does it always come when we meet certain conditions? In other words, is there a “revival formula” that guarantees a spiritual awakening? It is my prayer that this booklet will answer these questions.

As you will soon discover, what I have to say is somewhat different from what is heard in most revival sermons. I expect that many will disagree with me. I may be severely criticized. I’m willing to take that risk, however, to share with you what I am persuaded is a proper and sensible approach to revival.

**THE NATURE OF REVIVAL**

The first thing we should do is clarify what we mean when we speak about revival. Some Christians think of it as a series of special meetings intended to win souls to Christ. I am convinced, however, that that is not revival. We should be zealous in the work of evangelism, of course. We should be burdened for those who are lost in sin. And we should be active, through our personal witness and in endeavors with other believers, in working to lead lost souls to Christ. That is evangelism—but it is not revival.

Let me compare evangelism with revival. Evangelism relates to the unsaved; revival relates to those who are born again. Evangelism involves the giving of life to those who are dead in sin; revival involves a spiritual awakening of those who are alive in Christ. When we speak of revival, therefore, we have in mind that special season of heartsearching when many believers simultaneously experience a
deep, Holy Spirit conviction of sin. It results in their confession and renunciation of sin (sometimes publicly). It culminates in a renewal of their dedication to the Lord. And the whole experience often bears fruit in the salvation of sinners.

Revival is a special season of heartsearching when many believers simultaneously experience a deep, Holy Spirit conviction of sin.

With this in mind, I would like to point out an important fact. Even though great spiritual awakenings have occurred from time to time, they have not come in fulfillment of any Bible promise relating to them. There is no “revival formula” prescribed for us in the Scriptures. In fact, you will not find the word revival anywhere in the New Testament.

Furthermore, in the two instances where the word revived is used, it does not relate to revival as we are thinking of it. In Romans 7:9, for instance, the apostle Paul wrote, “When the commandment came, sin revived.” Here the apostle was speaking about sin. And in Romans 14:9 he said, “Christ both died, and rose, and revived” (KJV). Here he was referring to the death and resurrection of Christ. In neither place does the word revived pertain to revival as we understand that term in these lessons—a deep moving of the Spirit of God in the lives of believers, convicting them of sin and shaking them out of their lethargy.
I am not saying this to deny the reality of revivals. Rather, I want to emphasize that even though revivals are a historical reality, they are not a biblical certainty. The church age has no revival promises. The Scriptures give us no outline or procedure which, if followed, will guarantee a revival.

What I have said, of course, is contrary to the thinking in many Christian circles today. We have been led to believe that great spiritual awakenings can be engineered into existence if believers will simply employ a certain method or meet the right conditions. Let me repeat: Even though revivals are a historical reality, they are not a biblical certainty. They are not promised as a result of following any so-called “pattern of revival.” Rather (and this is important), revivals are divinely appointed and God-sent, and they occur at the time of His own choosing. True, they may come in response to the faithful prayers of God’s children, according to His will. But the Lord cannot be forced to send revival by anything that we might do. Revival is not the calculated result of bringing into play a combination of religious exercises. Instead, it is a blessing that the God of grace, in keeping with His all-wise purposes, may send upon believers in times of deep spiritual need.

I trust that you will not misunderstand. I agree with those who say that we are in desperate need of revival. I sincerely pray for it. I rejoice at every report of a genuine spiritual awakening. But I do object to a wrong approach to revival. I take exception to the claim that revival is guaranteed if only we as believers will follow certain guidelines. That just isn’t so!
PERSONAL REVIVAL

I do believe, however, that there is a special blessing for the individual Christian who is willing to meet the proper conditions. As you examine your own heart and make an honest confession of sin, you can experience a personal revival as the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work within you. And then, if the Lord in His own time and according to His all-wise purpose does send revival to your church, your community, or the whole nation, praise God! If not, your responsibility is to make sure that you as an individual have carried out His will for your life. You see, we don’t have to wait for some spectacular moving of the Spirit of God in a mighty heaven-sent revival. Right now, this very moment, you can experience a special refreshing from the Lord in your own life.

A. W. Tozer, in his excellent book *The Pursuit Of God*, spoke of a “great sickness that is upon us.” He described the church as being afflicted with “an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul.” He went on to say that it’s going to “require a determined heart and more than a little courage to wrench ourselves loose from the grip of our times and return to biblical ways.”

He also made this comment: “History has recorded several large-scale returns, led by such men as St. Francis, Martin Luther, and George Fox. Unfortunately, there seems to be no Luther or Fox on the horizon at present.”

Tozer continued, “What God in His sovereignty may yet do on a world scale I do not claim to know: but what He will do for the plain man or woman who seeks His face I believe I do know and
can tell others. Let any
man turn to God in earnest,
let him begin to exercise
himself unto godliness,
let him seek to develop
his powers of spiritual
receptivity by trust and
obedience and humility,
and the results will exceed
anything he may have
hoped in his leaner and
weaker days. Any man who
by repentance and sincere
return to God will break
himself out of the mold in
which he has been held and
who will go to the Bible
itself for his spiritual
standards will be delighted
with what he finds there.”

Let me quote one more
paragraph from Tozer’s
book. “Let us say it again:
The Universal Presence is a
fact. God is here. The whole
universe is alive with His
life. And He is no strange
or foreign God, but the
familiar Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ whose love has
for these thousands of years
enfolded the sinful race
of men. And always He is
trying to get our attention,
to reveal Himself to us, to
communicate with us. We
have within us the ability
to know Him if we will but
respond to His overtures.
(And this we call pursuing
God!) We will know Him in
increasing degree as our
receptivity becomes more
perfect by faith and love
and practice.”

Tozer hit the nail right
on the head. In fact, he
summed up beautifully and
most effectively my main
emphasis in presenting
these lessons on revival. I
repeat his statement: “What
God in His sovereignty may
yet do on a world scale I do
not claim to know: but what
He will do for the plain man
or woman who seeks His
face I believe I do know
and can tell others.”

Remember, then,
personal cleansing from
sin, restoration to fellowship

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with the Lord, and the blessings of His peace, joy, and victory can be experienced by the individual believer who avails himself of God’s gracious provisions.

Christian friend, won’t you today confess your sins, turn from them, and let the Lord have His way in your life? This is how to have a revival—a personal revival.

Rather than waiting for some earth-shaking, spectacular moving of the Spirit of God upon the church at large, get right with God yourself this very moment!

First John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Then, having been made right with the Lord yourself, you’ll want to join with hymnwriter Bessie Porter Head in praying for believers everywhere:

O Breath of Life,
come sweeping through us,
Revive Thy church
with life and power;
O Breath of Life,
come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit Thy church
to meet this hour.

Before concluding this lesson, let me say a word to you who have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. The blessings of sins forgiven and a proper relationship with God are enjoyed only by those who
have been born again through faith in Christ. Therefore, if you have never received the Lord Jesus, your first need is not revival, it’s regeneration. You must be born again. When the sin question is settled and you are at peace with God, you can know the peace of God as you commit your way to Him, obey His Word, and experience daily cleansing from sin.

Before you can know the peace of God, you must first of all find peace with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I would therefore ask you this: Have you ever by faith received Christ as your Savior? The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23 that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” And Romans 6:23 says that “the wages of sin is death.” The Bible makes it clear that we can never save ourselves (see Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9).

How then can a person know forgiveness of sin and become a child of God? John 1:12 has the answer.

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

Breathe a prayer to the Lord Jesus. Admit to Him that you know you are a sinner and that you cannot save yourself. Tell Him you believe what the Bible says about Him. Tell Him that you believe He died for you, shed His blood for your sins, and arose from the dead. Tell Him that you are receiving Him as your Savior, your only hope of salvation. Then claim this wonderful promise:

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).
At God’s Own Choosing

Can a person who desperately wants churchwide or national revival claim 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a guarantee that God will send it? We saw in the previous lesson that there is no “revival formula” as such. There is no guarantee that if believers follow a prescribed pattern and meet certain conditions, a general reviving in the church will take place. Revivals are not the sure result of bringing into play a combination of proper spiritual exercises. Rather, they are God-sent, and they come at the time of His choosing.

When we speak of revival, we have in mind the seasons of spiritual refreshing that come upon the church. The windows of heaven seem to open. Showers of blessing are poured out. Believers are moved through a deep, Holy Spirit conviction of sin to make private (and sometimes public) confession. It results in a renewal of their dedication to God. And often it is accompanied by the salvation of many souls.

Even though this is true, we should also recognize that revival may come in answer to the persistent prayers of believers who are distressed over lethargy and lukewarmness within the church. We would therefore encourage everyone who names the name of Christ to join in prayer for revival. But in doing so, let’s keep the truth in mind that revivals are not predictable. No promise in the Bible assures us that they will come if only we meet the right conditions. Nor do they occur as the result of following a certain pattern. They come as the blessing...
of God’s grace upon an undeserving church.

I can imagine someone saying, “What about 2 Chronicles 7:14? Isn’t that God’s promise to send revival if certain conditions are met?” I would like to consider this verse with you in this lesson. It reads:

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

The significance of this passage can be appreciated only if it is studied in its context. Notice what the two verses that precede it have to say:

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: “I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people” (2 Chr. 7:12-13).

In verses 19-20, the Lord said this to Solomon:

But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

Notice that these verses contain God’s promise specifically to King Solomon. They indicate how the nation of Israel might enjoy the Lord’s favor, but
they also show how the Jews might become the objects of His wrath. We have in 2 Chronicles 7, then, a message that relates primarily to King Solomon, the nation of Israel, and the land God had given to them for an everlasting possession. If the Jews would disobey the Lord, His judgment would certainly fall on them. They would be plucked up by the roots out of the land He had given to them. If they would “turn from their wicked ways,” however, they had God’s word that He would “heal their land.”

Remember, then, that 2 Chronicles 7:14 pertains to Solomon, to Israel, and to the land which the Lord Himself had given to the Jews. This passage was not given as a promise for revival in the church. Rather, in a very real sense it was given as a pattern for the survival of a nation—the nation of Israel.

Even though this is true, some valuable lessons are suggested in that verse for believers today. The Lord God gave His word that if His people (Israel) would humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their evil ways, He would “forgive their sin.” And He

Second Chronicles 7:14 was not given as a promise for revival in the church but for the survival of a nation—Israel.

will do the same for us today as individual members of the body of Christ. The apostle John assured us that “if we confess our sins, He is
faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9). This verse does not give us the assurance that God will heal our land if we confess our sins. But it does assure us of personal cleansing.

Then too, according to 2 Chronicles 7:14, the children of Israel, in order to know God’s favor, were to “humble themselves.” In the New Testament, James said, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (Jas. 4:10).

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, the Lord also gave His word to Israel that He would “hear from heaven” if the Israelites would meet the conditions He prescribed. We Christians also have the assurance that God hears us, for John wrote:

\[ \text{Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to} \]

\[ \text{His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him} \]

\[ (1 \text{ Jn. 5:14-15}) \]

Even though some lessons for today are suggested in 2 Chronicles 7:14, this verse was not intended as a revival formula for the church. Rather, it pertains to God’s dealings with Israel and to their enjoyment of the land He had given them.

To interpret the Scriptures properly, we must determine when they were written, to whom they were written, and for what purpose they were written. The right answers to those questions, when applied to 2 Chronicles 7:14, will keep us from falsely concluding that God would have to bless our “land” (the United States or Canada, for example) if only believers
would humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways. Please don’t misunderstand me, I am not saying that God will not do so. I am simply indicating that He is not compelled to do so on the basis of His promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

I must emphasize, however, that God is sovereign. He is free to act according to His own will. We can be thankful that He does answer the prayers of His children when they are in harmony with His all-wise purposes. And He does withhold His judgment on the wicked, at times, for the sake of a godly minority. A “land” may therefore be “healed” or be benefited because of its righteous citizens.

I’m thinking about Sodom. When Abraham heard the Lord’s pronouncement of judgment on that evil city, he prayed as follows:

*Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? (Gen. 18:23-24).*

Here is God’s answer:

*If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes (v.26).*

As you know, the aged patriarch continued to intercede for Sodom until he finally said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?” God said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten” (v.32).

Yes, if only a small minority, if only 10 righteous souls had been found in Sodom, the Lord would have spared the city.
He wasn’t obligated to do so, but He was ready to show mercy for the sake of a godly few.

It is also true of God that when any nation as a whole turns to Him, He will spare His hand of judgment upon it. A good illustration of this can be found in the book of Jonah, where the Lord is described as changing His mind when the Ninevites repented. The prophet Jonah had warned the Ninevites that God would destroy their city in 40 days. But they turned to the Lord, and therefore we are told:

God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it (Jon. 3:10).

Speaking through Jeremiah, the Lord said:

The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it (Jer. 18:7-10).

A national turning to God and the repentance of a minority are two different things. A general spiritual awakening of an entire population will bring the Lord’s favor. A partial reviving on the part of a faithful few may stay God’s judgment.

Let’s be careful how we interpret 2 Chronicles 7:14. Don’t make it say too much. As a believer, humble yourself before God, pray, seek His face, and turn from
your wicked ways. This is how to have a revival—a personal refreshing from the Lord. It may not be earthshaking or spectacular. It may not change your church, community, or

As a believer, humble yourself before God, pray, seek His face, and turn from wickedness—to experience personal revival!

nation. But it will result in God’s blessing, His peace, and His power in your life. Yes, Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me!

Let’s consider one more question: Should we today be looking for the fulfillment of Joel 2? Some Christians, having that passage in mind, are expecting a great outpouring and moving of the Spirit of God with revival blessings. Look at Joel 2 more closely. The Lord is speaking and He says:

It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord (Joel 2:28-31).
You will recall that when Peter referred to what took place on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, he said, “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (v.16). We know, however, that only a portion of Joel’s prophecy came to pass at Pentecost. Some of its predictions remain unfulfilled. The complete realization of his prophecy, we believe, will not occur until after the rapture of the church.

The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh during the tribulation period and millennial kingdom. It is then that Joel’s words in chapter 2 will fully come to pass. Therefore, we are not expecting the fulfillment of Joel 2 in this present church age. The Holy Spirit does dwell within us right now as believers. We know His presence. And we can also know His power and His fullness as we surrender to His control.

In the light of what we’ve been considering together, let us pray as never before for our beloved nation. For those in positions of authority. For righteousness to prevail. For justice to be carried out. For compassion on the underprivileged. For love and understanding. For God’s judgment on evil. For the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. For God’s purifying work. And yes, let’s pray for revival!

Remember, as far as your own personal “revival” is concerned, the next move is yours. As you confess your sin, rededicate yourself to doing God’s will, and look to Him for guidance and strength to live for Him, you will know and experience for yourself the refreshing, quickening work of the Spirit of God.
Individual Revival

Could it be that what many people assume to be the causes of revival are actually the results of revival? Many books have been written on the subject of revival. Even though they have been authored by a variety of Bible students, the majority of them have one thing in common—they prescribe what could be called a revival formula. They outline a pattern which, if followed, is supposed to open the windows of heaven and cause showers of blessing to pour out in abundance on a barren and impotent church. Yes, we are told that if Christians would only pray, confess their sins, and obey God’s Word, we would have revival. In fact, I’ve heard it said that if only two or three people who really mean business with the Lord would earnestly pray for revival, it would surely follow.

Nothing is wrong, of course, with encouraging believers to pray, to acknowledge their sins, and to walk in obedience to the Lord. That’s what every Christian should be doing. But to indicate that these things are elements of a “revival formula” that is guaranteed to produce a widespread spiritual awakening is misleading. It may even result in disappointment and frustration. To say that we must engage in certain spiritual exercises in order to bring revival is in a sense “putting the cart before the horse.” These so-called conditions to produce revival are actually the results of revival. In fact, the elements often found in prescriptions for revival are actually the qualities that
should characterize the normal Christian life.

We all fail to measure up to God’s expectations for us. Tragically, we are often unaware of just how spiritually cold and indifferent we have become. For that reason, the Lord sometimes sends revival. An entire congregation or Christian community may come under a deep, Holy Spirit conviction of sin. Both private and public confession take place. And the entire experience raises the spiritual level of believers to a much higher plane.

Becoming aware of our shortcomings, you see, is not the cause of revival, it is the result of revival. We are given a new desire to pray, to study the Bible, to make things right with fellow Christians, and to lead the unsaved to Christ. These things do not bring revival; rather, they are the fruit of a reviving work of the Spirit of God. Yes, when believers grow cold and indifferent, the Lord sometimes sends revival to shake them up,

Prayer, Bible study, making things right with fellow Christians, and witnessing don’t cause revival—they’re the result of it.

to arouse them, and to encourage them to live the normal Christian life—one that is controlled and filled by the Spirit. That kind of living is God’s standard for every believer. It is what God expects from all of us.

I shall never forget a very special chapel service during my college days. As I
entered the auditorium that particular morning, I had no sense of expectation. As far as I was concerned, it was just another meeting. I was there simply because it was required that all students attend. But how glad I am that I didn’t miss that particular service! I will always remember the deep moving of the Spirit of God. An almost unbearable conviction of sin came upon my heart during that hour. It made even simple trivial matters that Christians usually regard as inoffensive loom up as huge, mountainous sins against a thrice-holy and righteous God. I was in the midst of a great revival!

Because of the low spiritual tide in that Christian college, the Holy Spirit brought about a conviction of sin so deep that it defies description. I had never been so miserable in all my life. Sin had never seemed so awful, and the Holy Spirit’s convicting power had never seemed greater. The chapel service extended right on through the lunch period, the afternoon, the dinner hour, and into the evening. Many students forgot all about meals, and they remained in the auditorium the entire day. On the following morning, they continued to acknowledge their sins, making public confession and renouncing the evil in their lives. Some outsiders, of course, criticized the events of those days, charging the student body with being overly emotional. Be that as it may, I know that the Lord did a work in my heart during those never-to-be-forgotten hours, and its effect is felt in my life even to the present time.

As a result of that revival, I was filled with a new desire to pray, I
received a fresh interest in the Word, and I was given a burden for lost souls. I experienced a deeper love for fellow Christians and a genuine hatred for sin. I determined from that day forward to obey God’s Word and to allow my life to be conformed to His will. Those things were all the result of a genuine spiritual quickening, a great moving of the Spirit of God.

That revival did not come because a few believers had followed a prescribed revival formula. It came in God’s own time and according to His sovereign will. The spiritual transformation in the lives of that student body came as a result of a God-sent awakening. According to His own will, and at the time of His own choosing, God had graciously visited that campus. And I shall always be grateful for the way it changed my life.

I might digress here to say that revival is generally thought of as a great, grand, and wonderful experience. And it is—when it’s all over. Even so, those who have felt the deep conviction that attends a true revival will agree that it can be one of the most intense and painful ordeals a Christian ever experiences. The memories of that time of heartsearching during the revival of my college days haunt me even to the present. So severe is the awareness of sin that I am sure many who plead for revival might stop their praying if they only knew the agony of soul it would entail for them. The results are marvelous, to be sure. But the feelings of guilt are beyond description. They seem almost unbearable until there is confession of sin and full surrender to the will of God. How much better to walk with the Lord
day by day, in obedience to His will, so that it is never necessary for us to be awakened to our spiritual need through the pain of chastisement or the travail of a revival!

Most revival sermons put the cart before the horse. Their so-called conditions to bring revival are actually the results produced by a genuine spiritual awakening.

Revivals should not be necessary. Such a high spiritual level of living ought to be maintained by every trusting child of God so that spiritual awakenings are never called for. By confessing our sins, obeying God’s will, renouncing evil, and appropriating by faith our riches in Christ, we can have the highest joy, the deepest peace, and the fullest measure of God’s power every day of our lives. The victorious life is really the norm for the child of God. The Lord considers it to be standard procedure. It is not reserved exclusively for the mountaintop experience related to revival.

The majority of Christians, however, live on a sub-standard level. They leave their first love. They grow spiritually cold. They become powerless. Losing sight of that which is heavenly and eternal, they become enamored with the earthly and the temporal. The Lord therefore sends revival to raise them from their subnormal spiritual level to the normal. God’s standard for all Christians is a manner of living that is characterized by implicit faith, unswerving obedience, and loving service.

When we fail to appropriate the Lord’s help for the victorious life and become careless, He may send a revival to shake us up, arouse us from our spiritual slumber, and give
us a spiritual awakening. In so doing, He uses an abnormal means to bring His subnormal children into a normal Christian walk. And that, as we have indicated, is a walk that is characterized by faith, obedience, and joy. If believers were always faithful in doing the will of God, they would never need such drastic treatment. The very fact that we do need it so desperately is a rebuke to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe in revival. We pray for a dynamic working of the Spirit of God in the church. But whether the Lord sees fit to send one or not, you as an individual child of God can live on such a high spiritual plane that it’s like having a perpetual revival. You can know and enjoy the presence, the power, and the blessing of God every day.

That may come as a surprise to those people who liken the Christian life to a rechargeable battery. They have the idea that it’s perfectly normal for believers to “run down” and to need a “spiritual charge” from time to time. They perceive the Christian life as a continuing series of spiritual highs and lows. But this is not what God intended for His children. Rather, they are expected to maintain a consistently high level of spiritual power. There is no excuse for being rundown. With God’s help, it
is possible to live a life of faith and victory on a daily and continuing basis.

Sorry to say, however, few believers live up to that potential. The majority of Christians live on a substandard level.

I would like to emphasize again that even though we should pray for revival in the church at large, you don’t have to wait for a spectacular moving of God’s Spirit in a general, area-wide spiritual awakening to experience His power in your own life. The Lord is waiting right now to bless you as you meet His conditions.

Even though there is no “formula” that assures revival, there is a definite pattern for individual believers to follow in order to be revived. If your heart has grown cold, if you’ve become indifferent to the Lord, if the things of earth and the pleasures of this life have taken precedence over the heavenly and the eternal, I encourage you to follow these steps to have your own personal revival:

1. **Acknowledge your spiritual need.** “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8).

2. **Confess your sins and accept God’s pardon.** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

3. **Spend time daily in God’s Word.** “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:11). The Word of God is a means by which the Lord shows you His will. You will never be a victorious Christian if you neglect the Bible.

4. **Talk to the Lord in prayer.** Commune with Him. Worship Him. Thank
Him for His many blessings. And tell Him of your needs. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

5. Resist sin. Say no to every temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Take comfort in the fact that even though Satan is more powerful than you, with God on your side you can defeat your spiritual foes. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us is more powerful than Satan and all the forces of sin combined. “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4).

I wonder, have you been faithful in following these guidelines? If you don’t confess your sins, you will miss the blessing of full communion and fellowship with the Lord. If you don’t read the Bible and saturate yourself with the Word of God, you will not have spiritual victory. If you don’t spend time in prayer, you will never really experience God’s best for you.

So don’t sit back and wait for some spectacular moving work of the Spirit of God in a great revival.

Right now, you can personally appropriate God’s provision for spiritual power, victory, and joy.
Worldwide Revival Ahead?

As this age draws to a close, will it be marked by spiritual improvement and revival or by worldwide moral decline? Are we justified in expecting a great, worldwide endtime revival? Will millions of people be swept into the kingdom of God as the coming of Christ draws near? And will things improve spiritually as the age progresses?

These questions naturally arise when revival is discussed. In this concluding lesson of How To Have A Revival, I would like us to consider what we can expect in the present dispensation.

But before we do, let’s review what we mean when we speak about revival. When we use the word revival, we are referring to special seasons of spiritual refreshing that come upon the church—times when the windows of heaven seem to open and showers of blessing are poured out in abundance. When these seasons occur, believers who are moved by deep, Holy Spirit conviction make private (and sometimes public) confession of sin. They renew their dedication to the Lord. And the whole experience is often accompanied by the salvation of lost souls. Yes, revival is that which Almighty God sends upon the church in times of spiritual darkness and lethargy. And it may come in answer to the persistent pleading of praying believers.

We turn now to these questions. Can we expect revival on a large scale? Will there be a great, worldwide, spiritual renewal? Will a transforming work of the Spirit of God within the
church result in the turning of vast multitudes to Christ for salvation?

You cannot find a single promise in the Bible pertaining to revival in the church. To be sure, in recent days there have been spiritual awakenings for which we praise God. But they did not come because God promised them, nor because some person or group of people followed a “formula” that guaranteed them. No, God sends revival as He chooses, and in keeping with His all-wise purpose.

No question about it, we do desperately need revival! In spite of its great necessity and our own desire to see it, we are not expecting any worldwide spiritual awakening in which the majority of men and women will turn to Christ. Rather, the Bible says that we will see an increase in violence, wickedness, and godlessness as the end of the age approaches. We will see a general spiritual decline, not increasing moral perfection.

The apostle Paul wrote:

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\text{Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:1-4).}
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A few verses later, Paul continued:

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\text{Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (v.13).}
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It is also true, as Jesus indicated in Matthew 7, that most of the world’s population will not be converted.
Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Mt. 7:13-14). I can imagine someone saying, “That certainly doesn’t give us much incentive for witnessing. In fact, it’s discouraging. Why spend so much money and such great effort in trying to reach the world for Christ?” The answer is simple: We do so, if for no other reason, out of obedience to the command of Christ Himself. Jesus said:

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

In Matthew 28, the Lord Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Mt. 28:19-20).

Yes, even if no one ever believed the message, and if everyone’s ears were closed to the truth, we would preach the gospel anyway—and for the best possible reason. The Lord Jesus Christ told His followers to do so.

I am reminded of Isaiah, who received a strange commission from God. The Lord said to the prophet:

Go, and tell this people: “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.” Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their
heart, and return and be healed (Isa. 6:9-10).

Now, this was not an easy thing to do! Isaiah was instructed by the Lord to preach to a people who, he was told beforehand, would not perceive or believe what he said to them.

He knew very well that his message would fall on deaf ears, that the great majority would not receive what he said. We are not at all surprised, then, to hear Isaiah cry out in verse 11, “Lord, how long?” The Lord replied as follows:

Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it (vv.11-13).

Isaiah was to preach God’s message faithfully, realizing that most of his audience would not receive what he said. At the most, only a minority would take him seriously.

If no one ever believed the message, we would preach the gospel anyway—because Jesus told us to do so.

We too must go “into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” knowing full well that the majority of those who hear the message will not accept it. They will hear, but they will “not understand.” They will see, but they will “not perceive.” We must be diligent in holding forth the Word of life. Why? Because of our love for and devotion
to Christ, and for the sake of those who do choose to believe. It is not necessarily our responsibility to be successful. Rather, “It is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

The world in general is spinning madly on its downward course. God is calling out of it a minority, a people for Himself, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. When that body is completed, the Lord Jesus will come again and receive us to Himself. Until that time, our privilege and sacred duty as His followers is to preach the gospel and leave the results with Him. Our reward, remember, will be based on faithfulness—not on numbers!

It may be that you are discouraged today. You have tried to be a witness for Christ. You have been zealous in praying for the lost. Yet you have seen such meager results from the efforts that you are just about ready to “throw in the towel.” If that’s your case, I would remind you that our Lord Jesus did not tell us to go into all the world and convert the world. No, we are to go into all the world and “preach the gospel.” That’s our responsibility! We do the preaching, and then we leave the outcome with the Lord. Even so, we know that faithful service will be rewarded. Let us therefore “not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:9).

The results of our service for Christ may be disappointing at times. We are thankful, however, that even though the spiritual harvest is meager and the work is discouraging, the Lord does drop for us “handfuls on purpose.” In the story of Ruth, we are told that “when she rose up
to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also, let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her’ (Ruth 2:15-16). As Ruth went out to glean in the field of Boaz, the men who worked for him were instructed to drop handfuls of grain on purpose for her. How wonderful! How generous of Boaz! And how encouraging for poor Ruth!

The Lord does something like that for the church too. As we glean in the harvest fields of the world, “grain from the bundles fall purposely” from His hand. He sends revivals. He gives us fruit for our labors. He encourages us in the work of the gospel.

We could well be living in the last days of this church age. The time of reaping may soon be over. Even so, the Lord is still dropping, here and there, “handfuls on purpose.”

No, it is not our business to convert the world. It’s our mission to preach the gospel. This world is not going to improve spiritually and morally as the present age draws to a close. And we are not looking for a great worldwide revival.

No matter how cold, indifferent, and powerless the church in general may be, that does not excuse the individual believer from being everything God wants him to be. As I have
emphasized again and again in these lessons, we as born-again Christians do not have to wait for some unusual, earthshaking, heaven-sent revival to make us what God wants us to be. Whenever we appropriate the gracious provisions God has made for us, we can experience the joy and blessing of the victorious, Spirit-filled Christian life.

Remember, revival is necessary only when we fail to live the normal Christian life. When God’s children grow cold spiritually and become insensitive to His will, He has to “shake them up” and restore them to fellowship. But that should never be necessary.

With God’s help, you as a Christian can be what He wants you to be right now. So don’t wait for some great revival to transform your life. Recognizing your own spiritual need, confess your sin. Accept God’s forgiveness. Read His Word. Study it. Obey it. And don’t forget to pray. In fact, as long as you continue to do those things, you will experience without interruption the blessed peace and power of God in your life every day.

So what are you waiting for? If you have sensed a coldness, an apathy, a spiritual indifference in your life, I urge you to do something about it, and do it now!

Begin by confessing your sins to the Lord. The Bible gives us this promise:

> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).

Determine to walk in obedience to the revealed will of God. We are told in 1 John 1:7 that “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship...
with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Surrender yourself completely to the Lord, as the apostle Paul urged:

**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).**

Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you. Let Him use you for the glory of God.

**Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).**

Yes, this is how to have a revival—and to stay revived!

Hymnwriter Bessie Porter Head wrote:

**O Heart of Christ, once broken for us, 'Tis there we find our strength and rest; Our broken, contrite hearts now solace, And let Thy waiting church be blest. Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating While harvest fields are vast and white? Revive us, Lord—the world is waiting! Equip Thy church to spread the light.**

This booklet is taken from messages taught by Richard W. De Haan on the Day Of Discovery television program in 1984. Richard was president and teacher of Radio Bible Class (now RBC Ministries) from 1964 to 1984.

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