

~ STEPS TO REVIVAL ~

by Pat Robertson

I was living in New York City forty-five years ago when I met Jesus Christ as my Savior. As a young believer, I was a counselor during the Billy Graham Crusade in Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1957 where they sang a song called “*Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.*” The first stanza went as follows:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

There could be no better definition of revival. Heaven with its glory and grace invades our human condition, and in the light of God’s glory the allure of the world with its pleasures and material possessions loses its hold on us while our hearts are truly satisfied with the presence of God. As we draw closer to God, the sin in our lives which we first accepted as normal becomes distasteful, and then loathsome. As Job, considered the most righteous man of his generation, exclaimed, “*I have heard about You with my ears, but now I behold You with my eyes and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.*”

In revival, God first refines and purifies His people, then He fills them with His power. Then He places in their heart His love and compassion for those who are lost without God and without hope in the world. In revival, Christian people are not trying to work up the courage to testify about a historical figure they learned from a book—they radiate the knowledge of the One whose power is continually filling their lives.

Revival normally begins among God’s people, but soon it affects society. The power of God is so strong that prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, and those addicted to gambling, pornography, and lust are set free and gloriously converted. In past revivals, saloons are closed for lack of customers, jails are empty for lack of criminals, courts are empty for lack of disputes, dance halls and theaters are empty for lack of customers. Men and women are drawn to prayer meetings like iron filings to a magnet. Dealing with eternity becomes the uppermost concern in people’s lives.

In revivals that took place in the Belgian Congo and also in China, young children had visions of heaven. Some saw the Second Coming of Christ. Some, who had never been taught these things, saw the rapture of the church at the end times and believers being taken to heaven.

In the Congo in this century and in the frontier revival in the United States at the beginning of the 19th Century, sinners entering prayer meetings fell to the ground where they lay for hours as the Holy Spirit brought their lives into conformity to His will. In the Book of Acts, we read that the building where the believers were gathered was shaken and they spoke forth the Word of God with boldness. In Indonesia where believers were praying and worshipping God, it appeared to their enemies that the entire church building was engulfed in flames. In China during the Boxer Rebellion, missionaries huddled together to pray for God's intervention before an angry mob rushing on their building to kill them. Later when they inquired why the mob had suddenly slunk away in fear, they were told, "Your building was surrounded by flaming warriors with raised swords." Yes, in true revivals angels visit, young men see visions, and old men dream dreams. In true revivals, God's people are equipped with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and witness boldly about the wonderful works of the Lord.

During the past century in the United States, the term "revival" has normally meant a church-sponsored evangelistic meeting during which a visiting pastor or traveling evangelist will speak at special services for a week or two, and those in attendance are asked either to make a first-time decision for Christ or to rededicate their lives to Him. Although this type of meeting can indeed bring on a true Holy Spirit revival that can serve to transform society, usually its measure is very simply the number (few or many) of people whose lives are changed by responding to the evangelist's appeals.

The revival that America is crying for does not consist of good or even inspired evangelism. The revival we pray for transforms lives, empowers pastors, electrifies churches, and brings the reality of God to the entire population.

What then are the steps to revival? God gave the formula to Solomon, King of Israel, about 960 BC. God said, "*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 their prayer, and forgive their sin, and heal their land.*" II Chronicles 7:14

1. The first step to revival is **humility**.

The first sin ever recorded was pride... Satan declared, "*I will exalt my throne above God.*" Humility is the reverse of pride.

The focus of pride is what "I will" do. My way, my will, my plan, my concept of God, my concept of righteousness.

Just like Satan at the beginning, we want to exalt our throne. God says a certain action is sin. We disagree. We justify ourselves. We point to our friends who do it. We point to others who are much less spiritual than we are. Everyone in society accepts this conduct—how unfair of God to criticize it. A line in a popular song goes, "*How could a love be wrong that feels so right?*" How indeed? With situational ethics, why could something that we enjoy so much be wrong? If she is unhappy with her spouse, what is wrong about

breaking up her marriage so she can be happy with me? Some doctors say marijuana might be medicinal, so why are a few puffs wrong? My boss doesn't pay me what I am worth, so what is wrong with balancing the account with a few supplies from the office? My neighbor tried to hurt my dog. What is wrong with putting a few dents in his car in return?

Then there is pride of family, pride of finance and accomplishment, pride of material possessions, pride of nationality, pride of employment and position, pride of religious affiliation, pride of knowledge, and education.

If we want revival, we must acknowledge that we are made of the dust of the earth. That before God we are all alike—weak sinners, and that there is nothing that we have that has not been given us by God. We must realize that our pride before God is like pus-filled sores on a leper. We must ask God to forgive us of the pride in our lives in whatever form it has taken.

The publican in one of the parables of Jesus would not even look up to heaven, but smote his breast and said, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” Jesus said that the publican went home justified, but a bragging, prideful Pharisee did not.

We start revival prayer by humbling ourselves, then throwing ourselves on the mercy of God asking for His forgiveness. Never should we resist God or insist that He is wrong and our concept of righteousness is correct.

In the New Testament, we read that John the Baptist speaking in God's name called the people to repent and be baptized as a cleansing from sin. The Bible gives this amazing assessment of what the people did in response... “*They justified God being baptized with the Baptism of John.*” We can either justify God or justify ourselves. One attitude leads to revival—the other to spiritual deadness.

2. The second step after humility is **prayer**.

In the Book of Acts we read that prayer was made “stretch outedly” (literal Greek) by the church for him. (Apostle Peter in prison facing execution.) These people did not pray aimlessly, nor were they distracted by stock market quotes or the latest news bulletin. Their beloved friend and apostle was to be executed, so they prayed with every fiber of their being for Peter's release.

Jesus told us to pray without ceasing, and gave us examples of what is called desperate or importunate prayer.

In one story that Jesus gave to illustrate this point, a family had gone to bed and was possibly asleep when they were disturbed by a neighbor pounding at their door in desperation. The homeowner looked out to learn that the neighbor needed some bread to feed a guest who had suddenly arrived. The homeowner angrily slammed the window shut because he and his family were down for the night. But the neighbor would not be denied.

He kept on pounding and shouting until, in order to shut him up, the homeowner descended, shoved some bread out of the door, then went back to bed.

The moral of this story: It was not the neighbor's need nor was it neighborly friendship that prevailed. It was desperation—importunity—that won the day!

So Jesus said, *“Keep on asking and you will receive. Keep on seeking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened.”*

If we want revival, we must pray in desperation, like our lives depend on it. Given the terrorist threat to America, our lives may indeed depend on it.

In the Old Testament we are told by God, *“You will seek me and find me when you seek for me with all your heart.”*

3. The third step of revival is **seeking God's face**.

Obviously, prayer is a petition to God, and most of us would think that prayer and “seeking God's face” are the same thing, but they are not.

Prayer is asking for something. We pray for wisdom, for health, for finances, for the salvation of loved ones, for our nation, and for a host of things too numerous to mention. Of course, we pray for revival.

In the Old Testament we learn that God instructed Aaron, the high priest, to bless the people with the following words:

*“The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord cause His face to shine upon you
And be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you
And give you His peace.”*

The ultimate—what the medieval theologians called the *Summum Bonum*—the greatest good—is to know God and stand in His presence. This is not asking God to “do” something, it is asking for God's very presence.

We might think that this is unattainable, but if it is unattainable, why would God command it? The Bible tells us, *“When you said seek my face, Thy face, O Lord, will I seek.”*

God wants us to enter into a new relation with Him. Not just like a little child, full of requests for things from his father, but as a mature son or daughter who knows the Father, is in tune with the Father's will, begins to think and act like the Father, and can take responsibility in the Father's kingdom.

God wants us to move beyond the petition stage, to a time when the ultimate good—in fact the only good—is being in communion with God. We are told in Genesis that after creation God walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening. There He communed with the humans that He had made in His image. He talked to them and they to Him. They saw Him because there was no sin to obscure their vision of Him. To “seek God’s face” is to strive to restore that mystical bond of fellowship between God and man that goes back to creation.

In the calligraphy of the Chinese language, there are symbols that date back some 3300 years before Christ. One is the symbol for “happiness.” Amazingly, the literal rendering is “man in a garden in the presence of God” (Shang-ti).

The opening chapter of John’s Gospel tells us that “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” The Greek word translated “with” is pros, which means more precisely “face-to-face.” So we might write it, “*In the beginning the Word (Jesus) was face-to-face with the Father.*” Is this not the relationship we should earnestly seek as we seek revival?

4. The fourth step in revival is to **turn from our wicked ways.**

How is this to be accomplished? The prophet Hosea wrote this, “*Break up your fallow ground that the Lord may come and rain righteousness upon you. Sow in righteousness, reap in steadfast love.*”

What does it mean to break up your fallow (unplowed) ground? If a field is left idle without planting or cultivation, it will develop a hard crust. The action of the rain, the sun, and the wind makes it progressively harder. If seed is sown on it, the seed will not penetrate. Before long, moisture will not soak in, but will roll off into gullies and streams.

In order to bring such a field into cultivation, a massive turning plow must be run through it, followed by criss-cross discing to break the clods into fine earth suitable to receive seed and moisture.

The spiritual life of people is like that. First there is a lack of Bible reading and prayer. Then attendance at worship begins to slip. Things that once caused our spirits pain now are tolerated. Instead of desiring the approval of God and fellowship with Jesus, we want money, things, and more and bigger possessions. We fill our minds with worldly pictures, sounds, and concepts. Our language gets coarser. We associate more and more with those who are rebels against God. We can hear preaching or Christian music, but it doesn’t move us. Some begin conduct that they clearly know is wrong, but the conscience which for so long gave warning doesn’t seem to work anymore.

Our hearts are hardened and that crust must be broken. How do we begin? The way is simple. We don’t sin in generalities, so we should not repent in generalities. A prayer, “Oh God, pardon my sins and transgressions for they are many” won’t cut it in my opinion.

Here is the plan. Take a writing pad and a pen or pencil. Get on your knees and tell God that you have come to Him to repent of your sins and ask His forgiveness. Don't be in a hurry. This process may take hours—even days—and may require repeating.

Mention the prayers of the Psalmist, *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”*

Then, *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”*

Then, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart, and see if there is any wicked way in me.”*

Allow the Holy Spirit to begin the process of bringing to mind what you should write. As you write, be brutal on yourself. Don't excuse anything even vaguely wrong. The object is to confess—forsake—find mercy and forgiveness—then enter the presence of the Lord. I repeat, don't hurry!

First, we start with the great commandment... *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, all your mind, all your strength.”* We have all broken this one, so write it down.

Second, there has been deadness and coldness in your prayer life. You have neglected study of the Bible. You have lost your first love. Write it down clearly.

Third, Jesus said when we stand praying if we have ought against any, forgive. Think now of the people who have really mistreated you, that you resent, perhaps hate. Write their names down, forgive them, and ask forgiveness for hating them.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. What lies have you got outstanding? This can be painful, but write them down, all of them. You may have some fixing to do on these, but you will find honesty brings relief.

By the way, this does not mean telling your spouse every romantic escapade before your marriage. Some things are under the blood of Jesus...leave them there.

Fifth, the chances are there is something lurking in your spirit dealing with sexual sin. There is an overpowering amount of sexual solicitation in our world aimed at the carnal nature of every adult. Your heavenly Father understands the temptation, but He still wants you to lay before Him your sins and failures. The Bible says, *“He made a show of them openly, triumphing in His cross.”*

Write down the temptations, the transgressions, the problems privately between you and God. Then tell Satan that this is all covered by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that Satan has wasted his effort to destroy you.

Sixth, slander is a terrible sin, but one which we all take lightly. Write down who you have slandered and when. Again, do not give yourself the benefit of the doubt. Your heavenly Father knows it all...He just waits for you to come to Him openly and honestly so that He can forgive you.

Seventh, let the Holy Spirit show you the times when your words have grieved Him, the times that you have disobeyed Him, the times that you have wounded others, the times that you have been insensitive to the spiritual or physical need of someone you could have helped. Think of the resentment that you have caused in others by your conduct. Think of people that you have cheated or abused. Think of what you may have taken that is not yours. Think of the times when your life and actions have actually damaged someone else's faith. Write all these things down. Take your time. Not only will this exercise bring God's power into your life, it will serve as a welcome catharsis to your mind and spirit.

Eighth, the Bible tells men to make peace with their wives lest their prayers be hindered. There is no way that you can enter into God's presence while harboring anger, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, or unforgiveness against your spouse. Write down the problems and your offenses against your mate. Remember this is not a blame game against another, it is confessing honestly your sin and your guilt. You must be honest with yourself and about yourself. Do not try to justify your actions. God knows what is right and what is wrong.

The Bible says, *"A broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, Thou will not despise." "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

As you remember and write down the wrongs done to your mate, think also the wrongs done to your children. Have you loved them? Have you brought them up in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord? Have you been so rigid and authoritarian that they have rebelled against you and the Lord? Have you been available to talk, to listen carefully to them, and to understand their problems, hopes, and dreams?

For children, of course, think of your attitude toward your parents. For those with elderly parents, have you loved them and cared for them, and showed them the attention they deserve?

When you have finished writing, you may have quite a long list. Go through it again point by point. At each one, earnestly ask God's forgiveness. Where an ongoing wrong is still in progress, promise yourself and the Lord that you will make it right.

Then take the list and say, "Lord, all of these sins and transgressions I place under the blood of Jesus Christ. I accept your gracious forgiveness and praise you for setting me free. I humbly ask that I may walk in your presence, that you may hear my prayer, and send revival to heal my land. In Jesus name. Amen."

Then take a match and burn your list before the Lord. *"As far as the east is from the west, that's how far He will remove your transgressions from you."*

Then spend time worshipping and adoring God for who He is and what He has done for you. God has forgiven you. The price for your sin has been paid once and for all by Jesus Christ. You are free. You are cleansed. The Bible tells us that we have been cleansed from a guilty conscience to serve the living God. God does not want you to be engaged in morbid introspection for all of your life. He wants you to enter joyously into His service as a full-fledged member of His holy family.

As we live our lives in His presence, there is an ongoing cleansing from sin. The Apostle John said it this way, *“As we walk in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses us of all sin.”* Now that your conscience has been made tender before the Lord, you will naturally walk with Him in His light. But keep short accounts with God. If you sin, confess it immediately and put it behind you. The Bible tells us that *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

He has prepared you for revival!

5. The fifth step to revival is **unity**.

Jesus told His disciples that *“If two or more of you agree on earth as touching anything that they will ask it will be done for them by my Father which is in heaven.”* *“For,”* he continued, *“where two or more gather together in my name there am I in the midst of them.”*

We also read that on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were together in one accord in one place.

The Bible tells us *“not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the custom of some is.”*

Although each of us needs to do the deep soul searching I am suggesting in a private place of quiet, every classic revival of which I am aware took place when the believers had gathered together in one accord in one place, whether that place was a church, a tabernacle, a barn, or a clearing in the woods.

Obviously, the leaders need to spend large amounts of time alone in earnest prayer and study. Evan Roberts, the leader of the Welsh revival, had a glorious encounter with the fire of the living God at 1:00 o'clock in the morning as he was praying in his bedroom. Charles Finney, America's foremost advocate of revival met the Holy Spirit while he was praying in his study. He reported the glorious experience as if “giant wings fanned his face.” Then he was lifted into a new experience of the presence of God. John Hyde of India prayed alone for six or eight hours a day. It was said that James, the Lord's brother, had knees like a camel because of the hours that he spent alone in prayer.

Each of us can and must spend time alone with the Lord, but the visitation from God we are seeking will only come when believers are praying together.

To begin, there can be a small core of those whose hearts are knit together in their desire for personal holiness and their hunger for a visitation of God. It would be unwise to expect everyone who professes to be a Christian to share your zeal. They will come later.

The goal is a group, small or large, gathered together in one accord. Petty differences among participants must be put aside along with disputes over fine points of doctrine. Whether someone's eschatology makes him premillennial, postmillennial, or amillennial is of absolutely no consequence if that individual is crying to God for a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit.

As prayer for revival begins, the time is right to ask forgiveness of those you have offended, and to openly forgive those who have offended you. Put aside the petty spite and jealousy that may have characterized your relations with other members of your church assembly. God is love. As you seek God, let His love work through you to tear down all the barriers that keep you from loving your brothers and sisters in Christ.

When the power of God falls, all those things that appear reasons for us to be separated from each other fade into insignificance in the light of God's glory.

Remember also God's solemn assessment of the human unity he observed at the tower of Babel. "*These people have one mind and they speak one language, now nothing that they propose to do will be impossible to them.*" Just think of the incredible power of human endeavor when those involved were united even in rebellion against God. Then think of the awesome power that our unity can produce when energized by the power of the Holy Spirit in revival. This is the power to change a nation and to frustrate the plans of those who wish to destroy us.

Is it any wonder that Satan, who knows full well what a unified church empowered by the Holy Spirit can accomplish, does everything in his power to cause rancor and division among Christians to break their unity while he entices them to commit sin so that the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives will be lifted?

In my opinion, on September 11, 2001, Satan overplayed his hand. Out of the tragedy caused by hate, the church of Jesus Christ will arise as the mighty spiritual force that God intended, and, in the words of our Lord, "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

6. The sixth step to revival is **perseverance**.

After Jesus had risen from the dead, He instructed His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high.

We learn that these men and women, whose very lives were in grave danger, gathered in an upper room to wait and pray for the promise of the Father. Day one passed and no miracle occurred. Then day two—nothing. Then day three—nothing. The same on days four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine. Imagine their impatience. Imagine their fear. Imagine that their faith was wavering. Imagine the restless boredom of sitting in one place day after day with nothing happening.

Was their hope merely an illusion? Jesus was not there in person. Had he deceived them? Was their prayer vigil merely a vain hope? Other doubts may have assailed them, but yet they waited and prayed as they had been instructed to do. They believed that the promise given by their Lord was valid and they clutched it tightly to their hearts.

Then when the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after the Passover, had finally come, the miracle happened. The Bible tells us that there was a sound like a rushing mighty wind that filled the room where they were sitting, and cloven tongues of fire separated and appeared over the heads of each one there. Then they were each filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The noise was so loud that a crowd gathered made up of people from all over the Roman Empire. They listened in amazement to simple, uneducated Galileans speaking in each of their native languages.

Some made fun of the believers, but most of the crowd were so overwhelmed with God's power, that they listened eagerly to Peter as he preached to them. Then they cried out, "*What should we do?*" That day a man who only a few weeks before had shown fear to a servant girl, preached with such authority and power that 3000 were converted to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same God who visited His people at Pentecost in Jerusalem wants to visit His church in America today. In my opinion, the revival coming to America in the year 2001 will eclipse every other revival that the world has ever known. So press in. Follow the steps to revival set forth in this booklet, then prayerfully wait for God to do the part that He has promised.

"Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what was promised." (Hebrews 10:35-36)

Appendix:

(Actual stories of revivals and miraculous answers to prayer taken from *The 700 Club* television program.)

~ EPILOGUE ~

After reading *Steps To Revival*, one of my associates asked this question... “America has suffered a vicious terrorist attack. Something worse may be coming. If God sends revival, does that mean He will protect America and ensure the future of this country?”

This is a good question to which I cannot give a firm biblical answer. It is clear from scripture that if God intends judgment upon a nation, and if that nation repents and does what is right before God, God will relent of the judgment He has intended. In ancient Judah, despite the sin of the country during the reign of evil King Manasseh, the revival brought about by the young, righteous King Josiah served to stay God’s planned judgment so long as Josiah lived.

The best biblical example of national repentance is described in the Book of Jonah. The prophet Jonah traversed the entire city of Nineveh with a message that in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed. At that message, the heart of the King of Nineveh was touched. He ordered national prayer, fasting, and repentance. Even the animals were required to wear sackcloth as a sign of national repentance. At that cry of the whole population for mercy, God relented, lifted His hand of destruction, and Nineveh was spared.

But remember what happened in Nineveh was national, total repentance. If there is a revival in America’s churches and the power of God comes among us, no one yet knows how pervasive its effects will be on society. Will the Supreme Court reverse decisions that have insulted God? Will conviction of sin close down the blatant sex trade? Will society honor marriage vows and protect unborn babies? Will we, as a nation, truly honor God with our lives and our actions? Will we once again be the planting of righteousness our forefathers intended? No one but the Lord can truly answer these questions, but we can hope that the answer to each one will be yes.

We do know that God answers the prayers of His people. If there is a mighty outpouring of prayer, faith, and righteousness, God will answer the fervent petitions of His people to spare their land.

Our hedge of protection has been broken down, but an army of godly intercessors can stand in the gap for the nation.

The promise of II Chronicles 7:14 is that if we do the things God requires, God has obligated Himself to hear our prayer and heal our land.

We have this confidence that with God’s power made manifest in a mighty spiritual revival, we can have the faith to seek God for good times and abiding grace to overcome bad times. We can do all things through Christ that strengthens us.