

The Crisis Before the Revival: How Ready is the Church?

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If you look carefully at Scripture, you'll notice something striking, spiritual revival almost never happens during times of peace and prosperity. Instead, God tends to move powerfully when people are backed into a corner - when they're facing disaster, judgment, oppression, or the consequences of their own sin. Crisis doesn't just accompany revival; it actually prepares the ground for it.

Think about it. The Israelites didn't cry out to God while they were comfortable in Egypt - they cried out after 400 years of brutal slavery had become unbearable. Nineveh didn't repent during their years of wickedness and prosperity - they repented when Jonah walked through their streets announcing their city would be destroyed in forty days. The massive revival at Pentecost didn't happen during Jesus' popular ministry - it exploded after the trauma of His crucifixion, when the disciples were hiding behind locked doors in fear.

Or consider John the Baptist's ministry. People didn't flood into the wilderness to hear a wild prophet calling them to repentance for no reason. They came because they were desperate. Four hundred years of prophetic silence. Grinding oppression under Roman occupation. Religious leaders who offered empty rituals but no real hope. The weight of foreign rule and spiritual deadness created a hunger for God that made multitudes willing to walk miles into the desert, confess their sins publicly, and be baptized in the Jordan River. The crisis of occupation and spiritual bankruptcy prepared hearts to receive John's message.

The same pattern appears with Elijah on Mount Carmel. Three years of devastating drought - so severe that even King Ahab was personally searching for grass to keep his horses alive - preceded that dramatic moment when fire fell from heaven and the people cried out, "The LORD, He is God!" The crisis of the drought cracked open hearts that had been closed to God for years.

Revival Is Like Fire Catching Dry Wood

Throughout Scripture, spiritual revival appears like fire igniting dry wood. Communities become combustible, and the Holy Spirit is the spark that sets hearts ablaze. Examining biblical examples reveals a consistent pattern: revival emerges when the right conditions align.

1. Spiritual Hunger and Brokenness: The Dry Wood

Revival never occurs in hearts that are satisfied or indifferent. Like dry wood ready to burn, people must recognize their spiritual need.

Nineveh was morally corrupt yet receptive when confronted with God's warning. Israel in Egypt groaned under the weight of slavery and cried out to God. The Samaritans, spiritually confused and marginalized, were open to Jesus' teaching when He sat by the well and spoke truth into their lives.

A community must feel spiritual thirst or dissatisfaction for the fire of revival to ignite. Comfortable people don't seek God desperately. But people who know they're dying of thirst? They'll run to the water.

2. Crisis or Suffering: Splitting the Wood

This is where crisis does its crucial work. Crisis fractures pride, exposes spiritual emptiness, and creates receptivity to God's intervention.

Elijah's drought in Israel created a hunger for God's power after years of Baal worship. Pentecost followed the trauma of Christ's crucifixion- the disciples had watched their hopes die on a cross. John the Baptist's ministry came after four centuries of prophetic silence and under the weight of Roman occupation, when God's people were desperate for a word from heaven.

Just as fire spreads more easily through cracked wood, revival spreads most effectively in communities experiencing trials or conviction. Suffering breaks open the hard shell of self-sufficiency that keeps us from God.

3. Prophetic Word or Revelation: Kindling the Spark

The spark that ignites revival is often the prophetic word or divine revelation. Someone must speak God's truth into the crisis.

Jonah warned Nineveh of impending destruction – a five-word phrase, delivered in Hebrew: which translates to "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Jesus revealed truth to the woman at the well, exposing her deepest needs and offering living water. John the Baptist called people to repentance, preparing hearts for the Messiah with a message so powerful that it drew crowds from Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region around the Jordan.

God's message illuminates spiritual need and plants the seed for transformation. Without the Word, crisis remains just suffering. But when God's Word enters the picture, crisis becomes an opportunity for revival.

4. Repentance and Openness: Wood Ready to Ignite

For revival to occur, communities must respond with humility and a willingness to change. The same crisis that breaks one person can harden another. The difference is the response.

Nineveh fasted and wore sackcloth - from the king on his throne down to the animals in the fields. Jerusalem under Nehemiah renewed the covenant and confessed sins publicly. The Samaritans believed in Jesus after hearing His words and brought their whole town to meet Him.

Hearts that are opened and responsive become ready to catch the flame of the Spirit. The crisis creates the opportunity; repentance opens the door.

5. The Holy Spirit: The Fire Itself

The ultimate ignition of revival is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. You can have all the right conditions - brokenness, crisis, the Word proclaimed, repentant hearts—but without the Spirit's power, there's no true revival.

Pentecost saw 3,000 conversions in one day when the Spirit fell. Samaria under Philip received the Spirit confirming the word of God, and there was great joy in that city. At Ephesus, the Spirit moved so powerfully that people brought their occult books and burned them publicly - a massive bonfire of magic scrolls worth millions.

Like oxygen to fire, the Spirit empowers, strengthens, and spreads revival through willing hearts. He's the difference between human effort and divine movement.

6. Community Unity: Wood Together Spreads Fire

Revival spreads rapidly when believers and churches are united. A single burning coal cools quickly by itself, but coals together create intense heat.

The whole of Nineveh – man and beast – united in fasting for revival to break out. The disciples' unity at Pentecost - gathered together in one place, in one accord—allowed thousands to be touched in a single day. The early church's practice of meeting daily in homes and the temple courts created the perfect conditions for revival to spread like wildfire.

Isolated hearts may burn, but revival spreads explosively in communities bonded by relationships and shared experience. This is why persecution that scattered the Jerusalem church in Acts 8 actually accelerated the spread of revival - believers took the fire with them wherever they went, and the unity of their witness multiplied the impact.

7. Momentum and Persistence: Sustaining the Flame

Revival is not instantaneous; it requires cultivation. The initial spark is dramatic, but keeping the fire burning takes ongoing devotion.

Nehemiah and Ezra nurtured covenant renewal over months of teaching and obedience. They didn't just have one emotional moment—they read the Torah day after day, explained it, applied it, and called the people to concrete changes in how they lived.

Ephesus saw sustained repentance and transformation. The revival there wasn't just a single meeting - it was two years of Paul teaching daily in the hall of Tyrannus, with the result that "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord."

Like a fire that must be stoked, revival requires ongoing prayer, obedience, and worship to continue burning. The initial crisis may crack hearts open, but sustained spiritual disciplines keep them tender before God.

The Pattern Is Clear

Biblical revival is never random. It emerges when communities are spiritually hungry, fractured by crisis, exposed to God's word, receptive to change, and empowered by the Spirit. Spiritual renewal spreads best in united communities and endures when maintained by ongoing devotion.

Like dry wood catching fire, revival ignites where God finds prepared hearts - ready to be consumed by His Spirit, lighting the way for entire communities to turn to Him. And almost without exception, it's crisis that dries out that wood, making it ready to burn.

The good news? God doesn't waste our troubles. He uses them to prepare us for something greater - for hearts aflame with His presence, for communities transformed by His power, for revival that changes everything.

How the Church Should Prepare for Coming Revival

If crisis precedes revival, and if we recognize the signs of crisis building in our culture - economic instability, moral confusion, political division, spiritual emptiness - then the wise

church doesn't just wait passively. We prepare. We get ready for the harvest that crisis will produce.

Get Your House in Order

The early church didn't wait until Pentecost to deal with their divisions and sins. They spent those ten days in the upper room in prayer, unified, waiting on God. Before revival comes, churches need to address the issues that would hinder the Spirit's work - unresolved conflicts, doctrinal disputes that divide over non-essentials, leadership problems, financial mismanagement, and moral compromises.

When people broken by crisis come seeking God, they need to find a church that reflects His holiness and love, not our dysfunction. We can't effectively minister healing to a hurting world if we're wounded and divided ourselves.

Pursue Unity Across Denominational Lines

The time for petty sectarianism is over. When Jesus prayed in John 17 that His followers would be one "so that the world may believe," He wasn't making a casual suggestion. He was revealing a strategic principle: unity among believers authenticates the gospel to watching unbelievers.

Churches and ministries need to begin building bridges now - not compromising on essential truth but recognizing that we're on the same team. When revival comes, it will overwhelm any single congregation or denomination. We'll need each other. The body of Christ functions best when all its parts are working together, and crisis-driven revival will require every gift, every resource, every willing hand.

Practical unity means pastors meeting for prayer across denominational lines, churches coordinating outreach efforts rather than competing, and believers demonstrating that our love for Christ is greater than our theological distinctives.

Seek God Intensely Now

Don't wait for crisis to drive you to your knees. The disciples were already in prayer when the Spirit fell at Pentecost. Nehemiah was fasting and praying before he ever went to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Throughout Scripture, the people God used in revival were already seeking His face before He moved.

This means cultivating both personal and corporate prayer lives now. It means fasting, not as a religious ritual but as a genuine expression of hunger for God. It means worship that goes beyond Sunday morning performance to become a lifestyle of yielding to His presence. When the crisis comes and broken people flood through church doors, we need to be people who already know how to hear God's voice, who already walk in His power, who already have oil in our lamps.

Prepare for Practical Needs

Here's something crucial that many churches miss: when people turn to God in crisis, they often have desperate material needs alongside their spiritual hunger. The early church in Acts didn't just preach - they shared everything they had. They sold property to care for one another. They made sure no one among them was in need.

If economic crisis, natural disasters, or social upheaval drive people to seek God, they'll likely also need food, shelter, financial help, job connections, practical skills training, childcare, or medical assistance. The church that's prepared to meet both spiritual and physical needs will be the church that sees lasting transformation.

This means churches should be building:

- Food pantries and emergency funds now, before the need becomes overwhelming
- Networks of skilled believers who can offer practical help—plumbers, electricians, counsellors, doctors, teachers.
- Systems for coordinating assistance so resources go where they're most needed.
- Relationships with local businesses and community organizations that can help meet needs at scale.
- Plans for how to house, feed, and care for people if crisis creates sudden homelessness or displacement.

When Jesus fed the 5,000 before teaching them, He modelled something essential: meeting practical needs opens hearts to spiritual truth. A hungry person struggling to survive is unlikely to fully receive the gospel until their immediate crisis is addressed with practical love.

Train and Equip Now

Revival produces new believers by the thousands. Someone needs to disciple them. The church should be training teachers, small group leaders, counsellors, welcome teams and mentors right now. When the harvest comes, we can't scramble to figure out how to handle it.

Think about it: at Pentecost, 3,000 were added in one day. The infrastructure was already in place - the disciples had been trained, the community was organized, the patterns of meeting together were established. When revival hits your community, will you have enough mature believers ready to disciple the new converts? Will you have systems in place to integrate them into the body?

Position Yourself as a Refuge

In times of crisis, people look for stability, truth, and hope. The church needs to be known in the community as a place of refuge - both physically and spiritually. This means:

- Being visible and engaged in your community now, so people know where to find you when trouble comes.
- Building a reputation for genuine love, not judgment or hypocrisy.
- Creating environments where broken people feel safe to be honest about their struggles.
- Speaking truth clearly but with grace and compassion.
- Demonstrating by your life and ministry that following Jesus is the answer to the deepest human needs.

The church that's prepared won't be caught off guard when crisis strikes and people start seeking God. Instead, we'll be ready- spiritually strong, practically equipped, unified in purpose, and positioned to serve as channels of God's love and power to a desperate world.

The Time to Prepare Is Now

We don't know exactly when the next great wave of revival will come, but we can see the storm clouds gathering. Rather than fearing the crisis ahead, the church should be preparing with anticipation. God is about to do something powerful, and He's looking for willing vessels - churches and believers who are ready to be part of His work.

The dry wood is being prepared. The question is: will we be ready when the fire falls?