

“THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH”

This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10)

During one of the cycles of sin in the Old Testament, God judged Judah by sending them into exile in Babylon. After seventy years, God began to bring the people back to Jerusalem. A significant revival took place under the leadership of Ezra the priest/scribe and Nehemiah the governor. This revival began on the day for the Feast of Trumpets—a prescribed time of sacred assembly.

So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law...

Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground (Neh. 8:2-3,5-6).

Can you imagine being part of a crowd that stood for six hours (daybreak to noon) listening attentively to God’s Word being read? Amazing! Another amazing fact from our modern perspective is that all the people assembled, all that could understand. This was not an optional event. The people heard how God had called them out as a nation. They heard about all the miracles and mighty acts God had performed for them. They couldn’t help but worship Him. This revival experience began with a reading of God’s Word and a meaningful time of worship. “The Levites... instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Neh. 8:7–8).

When the people understood the words of the Law, however, they realized how miserably they and their fathers had failed the Lord. They began to weep and mourn. Notice the unusual response of the spiritual leaders:

Nehemiah, the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:9–10).

The leaders did not want to cut short the worship and praise. They knew the people needed to experience the joy of His presence. Genuine worship would strengthen them for the work of repentance to follow. The Israelites experienced great joy. Worship alone, however, could not bring about revival. No amount of prayer, feasting, fasting, or Scripture study could. God required repentance—a turning away from wrong and returning to Him.

On the day following the Feast of Trumpets, multiple leaders gathered together to see how to continue in their return to the Lord. They looked into God's law and saw instructions for celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. So that is what they did. For eight days they celebrated all the mighty deeds of God's provision for the people during their wandering in the wilderness. They remembered how God delivered them through the Red Sea, provided water from a rock and manna and quail to eat, guided them with the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, entered into covenant with them, and a host of other things. "And their joy was very great" (Neh. 8:17). Do you remember what the leaders said earlier about joy? Now the people were strong and ready to deal with their sin through repentance. Two days later, the people assembled for a special time of repentance.

The people fasted, wore sackcloth, confessed and turned from their sins, and worshiped the Lord. Following the time of confession, Nehemiah rehearsed all the mighty acts God had performed for His people; he recounted the spiritual markers for the nation. He detailed God's judgment on the land because of the sins of the nation. He agreed that God was justified in all the ways He had acted in judgment. Then Nehemiah guided the people in reaffirming their covenant relationship with God (See Neh. 9.). Revival began with genuine worship, continued through repentance, and ended with worship.

This revival experience is very instructive for us in seeing how spiritual leaders guided the people to return to the Lord. It follows a similar pattern to Jesus' instructions to the Church in Ephesus. He said, "Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first" (Rev. 2:5). Remembering God's blessings of the past can strengthen us for the repentance required for revival.

SEEKING GOD FOR REVIVAL IN THE LAND



- Take a few minutes to recall the many ways God has blessed your life. Think of the ways He has blessed our nation over the years.
- Pray that God will cause His people to remember the ways He has richly blessed us in Christ so we can see the height from which we've fallen.
- Pray that God will reveal the depth of His love for us so we will be grieved over the ways we have sinned against His love.

“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:13-14)

Turn to the inside back cover and read Phases 1-5. Notice at Phase 5 God’s people can choose to repent or refuse to repent with very different consequences.

When we depart from the Lord, He disciplines us in love. We need to make the connection between our sin and what is happening to us. If we are experiencing God’s discipline, the sooner we respond the better. The longer we delay, the more intense His discipline becomes. God deals with us more and more severely until He finally gets our attention. Then we cry out to Him for help. When we cry out to Him, He calls us to repent and return to Him: “Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty” (Mal. 3:7).

King Solomon was the wisest person to ever live. He understood that God’s people would sin and depart from Him. As he dedicated the temple, Solomon asked God if He would forgive His people when they cried out to Him.

Read Solomon’s prayer in 2 Chronicles 6:14-42 and write notes in the margin listing some of the ways Solomon anticipated God might discipline His people for their sins.

God disciplines His people when they sin against Him. Notice that the sin is against God. Solomon knew that God used disasters to punish and correct His people. God used things such as drought, famine, plague, blight, mildew, insect plagues, military defeat, and captivity to discipline His people. Solomon’s question of God was this: Lord, if You punish Your people because of their sin, and they turn their hearts back to You, will you forgive them?

God answered Solomon’s prayer in 2 Chronicles 7: 12-22. We began today’s devotional with the promise of God to His people. God answered, Yes! If I punish my people and they return to Me, I will forgive them and heal their land. This was God’s promise to Israel. But it describes the way God deals with His people when they sin and when they return to Him. In this passage God identified four requirements for revival: humble yourselves, pray, seek God’s face, and turn from your wicked ways. God wants His people to return to the love relationship with Him. He wants His people to spend time with Him in prayer. He wants them to seek His presence (His face) and communion with Him. He wants them to repent of their wicked ways. Then He will forgive and heal!

When you go to a doctor with an illness, he examines you, looking for

symptoms of the illness. Once he sees what the illness is doing to you, he often knows what the cause is. Then he knows how to treat it. In a similar way, we can observe symptoms of a spiritual illness. We have already identified three symptoms of spiritual sickness or departure from God:

1. God's discipline indicates a sin problem.
2. Turning to or accepting substitutes for God, His presence, His purposes, or His ways indicates a spiritual problem.
3. Lack of obedience or disobedience to the clear will of God in His Word indicates a sin problem.

What was the root problem that leads to these symptoms of our departure from God? (See Deut. 30:17 on p. 22.)

These all indicate that our heart has shifted, that our love relationship with God is not right. Once you see the symptoms in your life, family, church, community, or nation, you need to cry out to God for help. You cannot fix the problem by yourself. The good news is that God has the help you need. In fact, by the time you respond to His call, He already has everything planned and in place for revival. When God took Israel into captivity because of their sin, He sent a message through Jeremiah. God took the initiative to call His people back:

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity (Jer. 29:11-14).

Even when He brought great disaster on His people, God had all the plans in place to bring them back to Himself. He was ready to prosper them and give them hope. God was standing ready for their call to Him in prayer. When they began to seek Him, He would respond to their plea.

SEEKING GOD FOR REVIVAL IN THE LAND



- Humble yourself. Name to the Lord in prayer the symptoms you see in our land that indicate we have departed from God. Describe the symptoms in your church and in your own life as well. Confess your sin to the Lord.
- Pray and seek God's face—His presence and communication with Him. Ask the Lord for guidance and strength to repent and return to Him.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17).

When we talk about repentance, many people think of very negative experiences. But the truth of repentance is described in Jesus’ words above. When we repent (turn around) the full dimensions of God’s presence and power are waiting right there. The cleansing, the power, the joy, the fullness of life that God has to offer are waiting right on the other side of our repentance. That’s a wonderfully positive message.

But the call to repentance is a very serious one. God calls His people to repent or perish. (See Rev. 2:5.) Sin is very serious, and we must treat it as we would a serious wound. In Jeremiah 6, God describes the condition of the nation. The people were very sinful and the leaders treated the sin as if it were not serious at all. “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious” (Jer. 6:14).

God does not let us set the conditions of repentance. Repentance is not being sorry that you got caught. It is not just feeling sorrow for your sin. Repentance is not just taking an action to get away from God’s wrath. The word repent indicates a turning away from our sin and a returning to the love relationship with God with our whole heart. Sorrow is not enough. Reforming our behavior for a while is not enough. Returning to some religious activity is not enough. God wants us to love Him with all our heart. When we return to the love relationship with Him, our lifestyle will reflect the change. According to Scripture, repentance must come before forgiveness.

He [John the Baptist] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.... John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:3,7-8).

The fruit of repentance is a changed lifestyle. Confession of sin is not enough. Confession is merely agreeing with God about our sin. That is a first step, but it is not repentance. Sorrow for sin is not enough, either. “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Cor. 7:10). A broken heart over our sin leads us to repent.

Our heart and lifestyle will change in a way that shows we have repented. Paul explained how new life in Christ reflects repentance: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Once we die to self, Christ takes up residence in our lives! He becomes our life. He lives through us. That is how we show genuine repentance: We let Christ live through us. Repentance for God’s people—individuals

and churches—involves a threefold process of change.

1. *When we repent, our mind changes.* The first change required is a change of mind. We must agree with God about the truth. This is confession. We must agree that what we have done is wrong. If we want to argue with God about whether we have done wrong, we haven't repented yet. If we try to give God excuses to justify ourselves, we haven't repented yet. We must come to the place like David did where he said, "I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Ps. 51:3-4).

2. *When we repent, our heart changes.* We must see how we have broken the heart of our heavenly Father because of our sin. Do you realize that Jesus had to die on the cross in order to forgive your sins? Instead of enjoying our sinful ways, we must come to the place that we grieve over our sin. David said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps. 51:17). We begin our departure from God when we have a shift of our heart—when we leave our first love. Repentance requires that we return to our first love. We must have a change of heart. Once we have returned to loving the Lord, we will be prepared to obey Him as well. But the change of heart will precede lasting obedience.

3. *When we repent, our will and actions change.* Repentance requires a turning away from the sin. It requires a change of lifestyle. Too often we try to walk as close to the world as possible without sinning. We flirt with temptation when we should flee from it. Repentance requires a radical putting away of the sin—radical surgery. You must get rid of any idol of the heart, tear down any stronghold, and remove yourself from tempting situations. That requires a change of your will. If you desire to change your will, God will enable you to do so, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). Once you have allowed God to change your will, you must go on and allow Him to change your actions as well. When you begin to live life as God intends, you have repented.

SEEKING GOD FOR REVIVAL IN THE LAND



- You cannot repent for others but you can repent for yourself, and you can do your part of repenting for the groups to which you belong. Ask the Lord for help to thoroughly change your mind, heart, will and actions to perfectly follow Him.
- Pray that a growing number of people and churches will come to recognize that repentance is the one step required to begin experiencing God's manifest power and presence in our churches and in our world.

GOD REVIVES HIS REPENTANT PEOPLE

“I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezek. 36:25-27).

Turn to the inside back cover and read Phases 1-6. Notice in the diagram that Phase 6 is the place where God restores His people to a right relationship with Him so He can work through them to carry out His mission of world redemption.

God is the One who revives His repentant people. It is an act of the Sovereign God. We cannot cause a revival to take place. We cannot force God to act. We cannot “pray it down.” He brings revival under His conditions and on His timetable. Yet, He wants us revived more than we do. In fact, He is the One who causes us to want to be revived. We come to Him at His invitation. God initiates revival and He brings it to pass when His people have met His conditions.

God said, “Return to me, and I will return to you” (Mal. 3:7). How can you know when revival has come? The way to know if you have returned is to see if God has returned to you. If you are still missing out on His presence and power, you have not yet met God’s requirements. Your return (repentance) is not complete. When you experience God personally or corporately, you will never be the same. If you are still the same, whatever you have done, you have not encountered God. At a time like this, you need to go to God and ask Him what you still need to do in repentance.

He is waiting for you to draw near to Him. Repentance and revival, however, are not just a reform of behavior. Revival has not taken place unless a change of character has occurred, not unless a change of heart has taken place. But God even helps with the change of heart: “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart” (Jer. 24:7).

When your love for the Lord compels you to obey Him and when your heart’s desire is to please Him, revival has occurred. That is the indication that the love relationship has been restored. The joy and pleasure in God’s presence is great. When a church experiences revival the whole atmosphere is different.

That is what most people pray for when they pray for revival. They actually are praying for the fruits of revival. The cleansing process of revival is the hard part to endure. When God comes in revival, He comes as a refiner’s fire.

“Suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap...

“So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty (Mal. 3:1-2,5).

A refiner’s fire burns away all the impurities to leave pure metal. When God comes, He, too, burns away all the impurities and waste. Responding to God’s presence produces holiness in churches and in the lives of believers. Revival is painful in the process—but well worth the end result.

Sins of the Nation in the Church

A church in a southern state entered into a two-week series of revival meetings in the spring of 1994. At the beginning of the services, the members made a list of sins they knew existed in the nation. Their list contained forty-one specific sins. Then they prayed for the nation.

As God began to deal with sin in the church, members began confessing sin and seeking forgiveness and cleansing. Much of the confession began in the prayer room and with counselors. Some was shared with the congregation, when there was a need for corporate confession or when a person could share a testimony of the victory over sin that God had given. The refining work of God began to go deep, and services were continued for five weeks.

At the conclusion of the revival services, the pastor pulled out the list of forty-one sins. He was amazed to realize that every one of the sins listed for the nation had been confessed to by church members. Months later the church began to experience some of the joys and fruits of revival, but the pastor said that those five weeks were some of the most painful experiences of his life and ministry.

When Jesus came preaching repentance, John said He would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (See Luke 3:16-17). People either came to Jesus or fought against Him. God exposes the attitude of the heart when He comes in revival. You cannot be neutral. Once you hear what God wants you to do, you must do it. Individuals and churches cannot continue to do business as usual when God is calling them to revival and to be part of a spiritual awakening in the land.

SEEKING GOD FOR REVIVAL IN THE LAND



- Thank God that He wants you, your church, and our nation to be revived more than we do. Ask Him to increase your passion to see revival in the land.
- Invite God to come as a refiner’s fire in your life. Ask Him to show you everything that needs to be disposed of or removed from your life.
- Agree with Him about the impurities He reveals. Let Him revive you.
- Now pray that He will do the same in your church.

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together” (John 4:34-36).

With little in the way of human planning a nationwide revival broke out in America among God’s people in “union prayer meetings” beginning in 1857. In the awakening that followed nearly 1,000,000 people accepted Christ and became involved in churches in a single year. Someone has estimated that a similar move of God in our day would result in 30 million people turning to Christ. That is the kind of magnitude of change that will be required to see our nation start turning back to the Lord.

The years leading up to 1857 were years of tremendous growth and prosperity for America. Population was booming. People and businesses were becoming wealthy. The “cares of the world” captured the minds and hearts of Americans choking out their interest in God and His kingdom. Churches were declining in numbers, strength, and influence.

The growth of New York City began to force the wealthy residents out of the downtown area. They were replaced by unchurched masses of common laborers. Many churches decided to move to “more fruitful” locations. In a state of decline, the North Dutch Church decided to stay and reach the lost masses around them. They employed a businessman, Jeremiah Lanphier, as a lay missionary. He began to visit homes, distribute Bibles and tracts, and advertise church services. Facing a discouraging response, he found comfort in prayer.

One day he prayed, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” He sensed God’s leadership to begin a weekly prayer service for workers and business people to retire from their work at the noon hour for communion with God. He began on Wednesday, September 23, 1857 with six people attending. The second week 20 attended, and 40 the third. The hunger and thirst after God was evident, and they began daily “union prayer meetings” the fourth week. People of all classes of society and from every denomination attended.

God had a praying people in place when the financial crash of 1857 hit just weeks after the prayer meetings began. “When it [the crash] came, merchants by the thousands all over the country were forced to the wall, banks failed, and railroads went into bankruptcy.” In New York City alone 30,000 lost their jobs. Added to the financial crisis, the nation was gripped by the tensions over slavery. The future of the nation was bleak indeed.

In the midst of disaster and with a great hunger for God, people flooded the prayer meetings by the thousands. The meetings spread all over town and then across the nation. Businesses even closed to allow their employees time for prayer. The newspapers gave front page coverage of “Revival News” and

revival spread like wild fire across the country. Religion became the common topic of conversation. Special newspaper editions were printed to carry the revival news.

When the revival/awakening was at its peak, 50,000 people were converted every week. Within a year nearly one million people were converted. “Bishop McIlvaine, in his annual address before the Diocesan Convention of Ohio, said: . . . ‘I rejoice in the decided conviction that it [the revival/awakening] is “the Lord’s doing;” unaccountable by any natural causes, entirely above and beyond what any human device or power could produce; an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon God’s people, quickening them to greater earnestness in his service; and upon the unconverted, to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus.’”

This prayer revival, like so many other revivals, is an example of God’s pattern for revival and spiritual awakening. God began a work among His people. But as His people got right with God and became faithful in prayer and witness, a harvest began among those who had not yet believed in Christ. The flames of this revival spread all around the globe to other cities and countries.

SEEKING GOD FOR REVIVAL IN THE LAND



- Would you be willing to pray, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and wait on the Lord until He tells you what He wants to do through you for revival in our day? If yes, pray it now.
- Sometimes we need to pray, “Lord, do what ever it takes to turn our nation back to you.” If God’s discipline on our nation (like the financial crash of 1857) would prompt masses to turn to faith in Christ, the end result would be worth the temporary difficulties. If you are willing to do so, pray that prayer.
- Better yet, let’s pray that God will so revive the churches of the land, that they will repent and obey His final command to make disciples of all peoples. Truly the harvest is ripe. Let’s get ourselves right with God so we can be useful instruments of His to bring in a mighty harvest for His glory. Why wait for more severe discipline?
- Pray that God will call laborers into the harvest fields of our cities and nation. Pray that now would be a time of His favor to save.

This account has been adapted from *The History of American Revivals* by Frank Grenville Beardsley, 1912. For further reading see *The Fervent Prayer* by J. Edwin Orr, 1974.

Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

In the 1920s Christian missionaries in North China were grieved over the spiritual condition of the churches. Members showed little or no spiritual sensitivity or concern. The missionaries began to wonder if many people had accepted Christianity mentally but had never been born again.

In 1920 missionaries began to devote one day a month to prayer for revival. In March of 1927 the southern revolutionary army burned Nanking, and all missionaries were ordered to Chefoo for possible evacuation. They began to study the Scriptures and ask the Lord why they had been removed from their work. God began to speak through His Word.

A group of Southern Baptist missionaries asked Marie Monsen, an Evangelical Lutheran from Norway, to join their prayer meetings. God began to use her to challenge missionaries and others to get right with God. The missionaries spent days before the Lord. They confessed every known sin. They sought to be reconciled with one another.

During a special prayer time God worked to heal the eyesight of Ola Culpepper. In the middle of their rejoicing, God convicted the missionaries that they were far more concerned about physical healing than they were about the salvation of the Chinese. They once again began to confess sins to the Lord. God was getting a people right with Himself.

Marie was again used of the Lord as she asked the missionaries and others three penetrating questions:

1. Have you been born of the Spirit?
2. What evidence do you have of the new birth?
3. Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?

The hunger for spiritual vitality caused people to do much soul-searching. Christians and especially the leaders were revived and filled with the Holy Spirit and power. Once Christians were revived, God had clean vessels through which to work. By 1932 revival and spiritual awakening were spreading.

Many came to realize they were only "head" Christians, but they had never placed their trust in Christ. An evangelist for 25 years, Mr. Chow, realized he was trusting in his good works and not Christ for salvation. After he was saved, he refused to be paid for his preaching, because he had preached for 25 years without the presence and power of the Lord. Lucy Wright, a missionary nurse for nine years, realized she had only joined the church. She trust Christ for the

first time. In 1932 masses of people were coming to Christ. In one boarding school all 600 girls and 900 out of 1,000 boys trusted Christ during 10 days of meetings.

Results of the Shantung began to be evident in communities and cities throughout the area.

1. Saved people went everywhere telling everyone what Jesus had done for them. Those who turned to Christ took down their “house gods” and burned them.
2. The hearts of God’s people were full of praise and thanksgiving. Joyful singing filled the services. New songs were written and the Scripture was put to music.
3. All believers had a great hunger for God’s Word. Bible classes met nightly, and the Bible schools and seminaries saw significant increased enrollments as people surrendered to God’s call to become ministers.
4. Spiritually dead churches were revived. Church attendance multiplied, and the members paid close attention to worship, prayer, and discipleship. Prayer meetings lasted two or three hours as people got right with God and prayed for the lost.
5. Broken families and relationships were healed.

SEEKING GOD FOR REVIVAL IN THE LAND



- Pray that God will use the questions of Marie Monsen in new ways today to call people to genuine faith and fullness of God’s Spirit.
- Pray for pastors, evangelists, missionaries, teachers, and other spiritual leaders that they will examine themselves and make sure they are right with the Lord.
- Pray that God will stir up an intensity in the lives of many who will not let go of Him until He pours out a blessing.
- Pray that churches will be revived.
- Pray that Christians will develop a deeper concern and compassion for those who are lost and have yet to believe in Christ than they concern for the physical healing of those who are sick.
- Pray that God will raise up churches that truly are “houses of prayer for the nations.”
- Pray that schools of all sorts will experience His presence and holiness in such a way that larges groups will come to saving faith.

This account has been adapted from *Go Home and Tell* by Bertha Smith, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1965, pp. 12-39, and *The Shantung Revival* by C. L. Culpepper, Atlanta, Home Mission Board, 1982.

**SEEKING GOD
TOGETHER
FOR REVIVAL
IN THE LAND**

SESSION FOUR

Call on a volunteer to open your session with prayer.

Read Ezekiel 36:22-38.

Discuss the things God was prepared to do to revive His people Israel. In what ways do we need to respond to God so He will forgive and cleanse us in our day?

Review what God has been saying to you through His Word and His Spirit.

1. What Scripture, statement, idea, testimony, or illustration that you read this week was most significant or meaningful to you and why?
2. What truth has God revealed this week that seems to have the greatest significance for revival in our nation?

Respond to the Lord in prayer.

Ask the Spirit to guide your prayers according to the will of the Father. Pray conversationally focusing on one subject at a time. Respond to the Lord about the things He has been revealing in your devotions this week.

Talk Together. Discuss some of the following questions or raise questions of your own.

1. What do we need to do individually or as a group in response to what God is saying through His Word, prayer, circumstances, and other believers?
2. What can we learn from the revival under Ezra and Nehemiah that would help us know how to lead God's people back to Him? (pp. 48-49).
3. What are God's requirements for revival of His people and healing of our land?
4. How big an issue is pride in keeping us from turning back to God? What can be done to humble ourselves?
5. How can repentance be a positive experience?
6. Review the story of "Sins of the Nation in the Church" (p. 55). How true do you think that would be for the churches you know? How do conditions like that contribute to the spiritual darkness in our land?

7. What can we learn from the Prayer Revival of 1857-58 and the Shantung Revival that might help us know how to point people back to God.

Testify to what God has done.

If God has done something special in your prayer times this week or in your personal walk with Him, share a brief testimony with a focus on what God has done.

Seek God Together for Revival in the Land

Spend the remainder of your time in prayer for a fresh encounter with God in revival in your lives, churches, communities, and in our land. Pray about one topic at a time. Let the Spirit guide your prayers. You may want to consider some of the following directions for your prayers. Take notes if God reveals things as you pray.

1. Invite God to come as a refiner's fire. Give Him permission to refine you and your church for the sake of revival in the land.
2. Pray that God will increase the numbers of His people and churches in our land who will earnestly seek Him and turn from their sins.
3. Pray that people and churches will hear and respond to God's call to repent for our failure to obey His final command (Great Commission). Pray that the Lord of the harvest will call an army of labourers into the harvest fields of our nation. And pray that God will bring the harvest for the honor of His Son Jesus.
4. Pray that God's people and particularly spiritual leaders will be so right with God that they will be filled with His Spirit. Pray that God's holiness, righteousness, and power will be manifest through His people once again in our land.
5. Pray about what God wants you to do next to pursue revival in the land.

NOTES