

When God Shows Up For Church

Dave Butts

Christians around the world are praying for revival. What exactly is meant by “revival”? Some think in terms of great meetings or tremendous evangelistic outreach. Others think more in terms of Christians who are encouraged and brought to a new level of commitment in their faith. Certainly Christians should be praying for revival, but what is it we are praying for and about?

Though many have given good definitions of revival, I still like this simple little description: Revival happens when God shows up for church. In a real sense, the Lord is always present when His people gather in His Name. But all too often His presence goes unnoticed. This definition recognizes the fact that when the people of God become aware of the Presence of the Lord, everything changes. Our worship services, our family lives, our evangelistic efforts, and our individual devotional lives will all be different when God shows up for church.

The Bible teaches us the amazing fact that God has come to dwell in us through His Holy Spirit. The Old Testament name given to the Messiah was Emmanuel...God with us. Colossians 1:27 teaches us the mystery of God – *“Christ in [us], the hope of glory.”* Jesus said, *“If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”* (John 14:23). The Lord also made it clear that when two or more are gathered together, He would be there in our midst.

Much as the temple or the tabernacle in the Old Testament was a place where the Presence of God was manifest on earth, so now the gathered Church becomes a place where His Presence is known. Our theology is clear on that fact. Unfortunately, our

experience normally fails to match up to our theology. Most churches meet for worship, teaching and fellowship and leave again without truly being aware of God in their midst.

Praying for revival is praying for open eyes among the people of God. Lord, help us to see Jesus! Open the eyes of our hearts that we might know You and become aware of Your Presence here in our lives.

The experience of Israel under the leadership of Moses is a great teacher for the Church today as we cry out to God for revival. My friend, Terry Teykl, wrote a powerful book entitled *The Presence Based Church*. He writes, "As a result of their unique relationship with God, the Israelites became the original Presence based people. Under the leadership of Moses, and at God's bidding, they made the Presence the axis of their lives.

"The Ark of the Covenant was always located in the tabernacle at the very center of the camp. The 12 tribes were divided into four groups and stationed symmetrically around the Presence: three to the north, three to the south, three to the east, and three to the west. By day they saw the cloud that hung over the tent, and by night they would lie in the entrance to their own tents and watch the fire. As long as the Presence stayed, they stayed. But when the Presence moved, they followed. They were Presence led and Presence drawn" (Pg.89).

In Exodus 33, verses 13-17, there is a fascinating conversation between the Lord and Moses concerning His Presence. "*The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'*" Then Moses said to Him, "*If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that You are pleased with me and with Your people unless You go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?*" The Lord replied, "*I will do the very thing you have*

asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Moses understood how critical it was for Israel to stay with the Presence of God. When the Church today grabs hold of that fact, we will see revival. When the Church, like Moses, commits to going only where the Lord leads, then we will be making progress. It is time for us to cry out for the Lord to make us aware of His Presence.

Teykl offers great insight as to the effects of the manifest Presence of God:

"Where His Presence is being manifested, God's glory is evident. When the Presence fell on the Mercy Seat of the Ark, His glory filled the tabernacle to such an extent that no one could go near. His Presence was noticeable. Think about it. If God were to manifest His Presence in your church, shouldn't it be just as noticeable as it was in the tabernacle? Is not God that same God that descended in the Holy Place and rested among His chosen people in fire and cloud? Is He not the same God who, from the Mercy Seat, displayed His power and authority, guided and governed the Israelites, gave them victory over their enemies, demonstrated His favor and love, established His uniqueness and offered atonement for sin?

"Where God's Presence is being manifested today, the same results are evident. Humility and uncommon zeal characterize people of the Presence because they have seen His power and know of His authority in the earth. Where the Presence is, wisdom and peace prevail through His guidance. Pathways become clear and sound decisions are made. In the Presence, people gain victory over habits or emotions that have held them captive for years. Relationships are healed, lives are transformed, joy is evident and the powers of darkness are forced to retreat. In the Presence, many call on the name of Jesus and are saved in response to the wave of supernatural love and grace that penetrates their spirits" (Pg.201).

Does that sound a bit like revival to you? It does to me. I'm praying for an increased hunger for His Presence in my life, my family, and my church. As God answers that prayer, we will begin to see an increased awareness of the activity of the Lord in the midst of His people. Join me in praying for God to "show up for church."

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