

REVIVAL REFLECTIONS

Prayer Advance: History and Mission

I was asked by a friend to write an article about the Prayer Advances. It all started back in the late 1980's when an evangelist friend and I decided we needed to start the New Year off on our knees in a season of prayer. As we thought about this, it dawned on us that there might be some pastors who would like to join us. We put the word out and were surprised when about 30 pastors invested three days dedicated to preaching and praying. Those early years were seasons of brokenness and refreshing. We did not announce any special speakers and the only attraction was God Himself!

After a few years the thought came that some of the pastors might want to bring some of their key men to join them. About 150 men registered for the first year as we transitioned from the Pastor's Prayer Advance to the Men's Prayer Advance. Attendance virtually doubled in each of the two years following. We maxed out that facility with about 500 men. The atmosphere was electrified with intensity. The congregational singing was so powerful that men would burst out in tears when they entered the auditorium. I remember over fifty men lined up to use the pay phone so they could call home and clear their consciences with their wives. In those days we went after sin with a vengeance. Bunyan said, "When preaching the gospel, shoot to kill!" We preached *for* revival, not *about* revival. The "no holds" barred approach to dealing with sin made the Advance unique.

The Advances begin on Thursday afternoon with two preaching sessions. After dinner we train the group leaders on How to Have a REAL REVIVAL Prayer Meeting or what we later came to label Spiritual C.P.R (Confession, Praise, and Requests). The leaders were instructed to lead their groups in three rounds of prayer. Round one was Confession of Sin only. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18). There is no need to pray if God is not listening, so the first thing to do is get the ear of God by agreeing with God about our sins. The second round of prayer is Praise. God loves to be appreciated and praised. After owning up to personal failures by name, people are prone to get excited and lavish exuberant praise on the Lord Jesus for the cleansing power of His Blood! Confession gets the ear of God. Praise blesses the heart of God. Now we are ready to move into the third round of prayer which is Requests or intercession. We found that Openness leads to Brokenness which leads to Oneness. When God is at work and manifesting His powerful presence, no price is too great to pay. *God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble.*

I recall one Thursday night, I decided to walk down the hallway of the Cedar Crest motel (a lodge at the Conference Center) after the preaching service. As I walked through the corridor of that 40 room building, I would pause in front of each door. That night I stood and listened through the closed doors as men were crying out to God from the bottom of their hearts. These men were not *saying their prayers*, they were *praying their prayers*! Door after door I heard men taking the witness stand against their own hearts while sobbing in the Presence of God. I was so moved I could hardly contain myself. This was *breaking up of the fallow ground* like I had seldom seen.

Friday mornings we have another preaching session followed by the Sweet Hour of Prayer. During the Sweet Hour of Prayer men are instructed not to speak to anyone but God for the whole hour. They are sent off alone with a brochure, Bible, and open heart to find a place where they can pray out loud. Some men, and even pastors, commented that this was the first time they had ever spent an hour with God in prayer. Some skipped lunch because they found God's presence sweeter than food. Their hunger for God exceeded their physical appetite. These men came back with radiant faces and cleansed hearts. Year after year men would comment that the Sweet Hour of Prayer was the best part of the Prayer Advance. Testimonies of men getting right, getting saved and getting revived thrilled our hearts!

Friday afternoon is scheduled with two more preaching sessions. We bring men in from foreign countries and the States who have a special touch of God upon their lives. I cannot begin to explain the congregational singing, especially on Friday nights! Revived people sing from the bottom of their hearts. What will heaven be like when multiplied millions of redeemed sinners are singing to the Lamb in the midst of the throne!!!! In revival eternity is brought to bear upon time, and being right with God is ALL THAT MATTERS. People who are forgiven much love much, and you can sense the indescribable joy of cleansed souls singing to the Lord with unbridled praise.

After the Friday evening service we have another Half Night of Prayer. Church groups huddle and pray together. What a freedom it is to be in a place of honest transparency. Some groups have prayed through the night until five o'clock in the morning.

Then on Saturday morning we have two more messages, sing the Doxology, and send the men home on a mission. Armed with tracts, a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, and a determination to obey God, the men head for home. I cannot begin to tell you of the impact these men had on their homes, churches, and workplaces. Wives began to call in and say, "What did you do to my husband?" Of course we knew that God had done something for these men and no human could account for the impact. Consciences would be cleared. Obedience's were acted upon. Relationships were restored. The women began calling and asking that we would have a Ladies' Prayer Advance. They wanted the same things their husbands were getting. They would plead, "Please don't change a thing." They did not want "Susie Homemaker" sessions – they wanted industrial strength revival truth. Parents are always encouraged to bring their children, and many did and still do. A few years later we held the first Student Prayer Advance.

I recall one Advance when the Spirit of God fell on the congregation after the message. Instantly men fell on their knees without any human prompting. At least 90% of these men were weeping aloud. There was no piano playing and no Altar Call. No one was in any shape to speak. For the next hour men remained on their knees as God turned the hearts of the fathers to their children. God high-jacked the schedule and we prayed through the next session. By the way, you know revival has come when the clock is crucified! Time does not exist in revival. We did not sleep much, but no one cared.

In the early years we had a man come and give the report on The Canadian Revival. At the end of the service one evening, he set a chair in the middle of the stage. He then

informed us that if any man had a need and wanted to be prayed for he could come and kneel in front of that chair. The man would state his need or confess his sin. Men would come and kneel by him as he broke his heart talking to God about his need. Then the men kneeling with him would cry out to God for his deliverance. Would you believe that men were running to get on what was later dubbed the “Hot Seat?!” That year a lawyer, an engineer, a doctor, and two salesmen were among those who were so affected that they changed their careers and surrendered to vocational ministry! Looking back, my heart is filled with amazement and gratitude for God’s mercy.

Our last Men’s Prayer Advance in January 2008 was the largest ever. Men gathered from across America and the United Kingdom to seek God’s face. While many of the previous Advances were characterized with unspeakably deep conviction of sin, this Advance was supercharged with faith, hope, and encouragement. One pastor, who attended for the first time with ten men, called and gave me the details of what happened in his church. One of his Sunday School teachers was so overcome on Sunday following the Advance that he could not teach. Some in the choir were so overwhelmed that the choir could not rehearse, much less sing in the morning service. The pastor was moved to the point he could not preach. People began to testify and respond. The same thing happened that night. After the Advance a policeman asked his captain if he could pray before they went out on patrol. When his superior granted permission, this policeman fell on his knees and began to cry out to God. He thought his fellow policemen would throw things at him or mock him. To his surprise they were moved to a point of stunned silence. This policeman called his pastor and said he wanted to pray with him Monday night. The pastor said yes. Then he said he wanted to pray with him at his home. That night over a dozen people showed up to pray!

I don’t believe in Prayer Retreats. We have retreated too long. It’s time to stop backing up and start going forward! Many have attended an Advance and gone home and started their own Prayer Advances. Praise the Lord for anointed men of vision who have the burden to move our generation toward God for personal and corporate revival.

A. J. Gordon said, “To arouse one man or woman to the tremendous power of prayer for others, is worth more than the combined activity of a score of average Christians.” Amen, Brother Gordon! *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts.*

More information, Advance Afterglow Testimonies, Advance audio sermons, and a special 8 minute video from the 2008 Men’s Advance can be found at www.christlifemin.org.

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