

THE POWER PHASE · A CONGREGATIONAL STUDY

Ask Him Again

A six-week study of revival
for churches who want
more than a turnaround

*"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the
LORD of hosts."*

ZECHARIAH 4:6

EMPOWER
Churches

Coaching for Church Revitalization
empowerchurches.com

How to Use This Study

This study is for the whole congregation, not a committee. It works best in a Sunday night, Wednesday night, or small group setting, one session per week for six weeks.

Each session has four parts:

01 Read the Scripture aloud together.

02 Learn from the teaching section and the story of a real revival from history.

03 Talk through the discussion questions honestly. Resist the urge to give the church answer instead of the true answer.

04 Pray using the guided prompt. The praying is not the wrap-up. It is the point.

A word before you begin

Revitalization is not a strategy problem. It is a Spirit problem. Before we plan, we repent. Before we build, we beg God. This study will not hand your church a program. It will walk you through what God's people have always done just before God moved, and it will invite you to do those same things with empty hands and expectant hearts.

You cannot schedule a revival. You can ask for one. This study teaches your church to ask.

01

SESSION ONE

What Revival Is (and Is Not)

Big Idea: Revival is God's people coming alive to God again.

"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"

ZECHARIAH 4:6 • PSALM 85:6

The word revival gets used loosely. Around here it can mean a week of scheduled meetings with a guest preacher and a potluck. Those weeks can be sweet, but that is not what the Bible means, and it is not what this study means.

Revival is a period of unusual blessing when God supernaturally re-enlivens His own people. Notice two things in that sentence. First, revival happens to believers. The lost are converted in great numbers after God's people wake up, not before. Second, God does it. No preacher, program, or plan has ever produced one.

"There is a difference between seeking revival from God and seeking God for revival."

DANIEL HENDERSON

Church historians who have studied awakenings describe the same shape again and again: God's people grow hungry, they pray, they see their sin, they return to the Word, they surrender, and then God pours out His Spirit in a way nobody can take credit for. This study walks through that shape one week at a time.

Two warnings before we start. Revival is not about strange experiences. When God moved in Wales in 1904, leaders kept telling people to seek His face, not His manifestations. Look for Jesus, not for goosebumps. And revival is not church growth. Numbers, activities, and busyness can all rise while hearts stay asleep. We are not asking God for a crowd. We are asking Him for life.

FROM THE HISTORY

In 1727 a small, quarreling community of refugees in Herrnhut, Germany, called the Moravians, was so humbled by God during a communion service that they started a prayer meeting. It continued around the clock for one hundred years and launched the modern missionary movement. It began with people who knew they were the problem.

TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 When you hear the word revival, what comes to mind from your own history with church?
- 2 Psalm 85:6 says "revive us again." What would "coming alive to God again" look like in your own life, honestly?
- 3 Why do you think God revives His people before He awakens the lost around them?

PRAY IT NOW

Pray Psalm 85:6 out loud together, slowly, twice. Then let anyone who is willing finish this sentence in prayer: "Lord, the part of me that has gone to sleep is..."

02

SESSION TWO

Extraordinary Prayer

Big Idea: No revival in history has ever begun without God's people praying together.

"All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer."

ACTS 1:12-14 • ACTS 6:4

Before Pentecost there was a prayer meeting. About a hundred and twenty ordinary believers "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer." Before the church exploded outward, it knelt together. Later, when the church faced its first internal crisis, the apostles refused to be pulled away from "prayer and the ministry of the word." They did not design a program first. They prayed first.

The historian J. Edwin Orr spent his life studying awakenings and concluded that whenever God is ready to do something new with His people, He always sets them to praying. Not one awakening in any country began some other way. The pattern is consistent: the church catches fire in prayer, and the outpouring follows.

"Whenever God is ready to do something new with His people, He always sets them to praying."

J. EDWIN ORR

What makes prayer "extraordinary"? Not volume or eloquence. It is God's people agreeing together, visibly and persistently, that His presence is our greatest need. Ordinary prayer asks God to bless what we are already doing. Extraordinary prayer admits that without Him we have nothing worth blessing.

Here is the hard question for a church in revitalization: is our prayer meeting the engine of this church or a courtesy? Most churches will reorganize before they will intercede, because reorganizing feels productive and praying feels like dependence. That feeling of dependence is not a bug. It is the whole point.

FROM THE HISTORY

In September 1857 a quiet businessman named Jeremiah Lanphier started a weekly noon prayer meeting in New York City. Six people came. Within six months, ten thousand were gathering daily across the city, and the awakening that followed swept an estimated one million people into the churches of America. No famous preacher led it. It was laymen, on their lunch hour, asking.

TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Be honest: what place does united prayer actually hold in our church's weekly life?
- 2 What is the difference between asking God to bless our plans and asking God for Himself?
- 3 What would it cost you personally to be part of extraordinary prayer here?

PRAY IT NOW

Break into groups of three or four. Each group prays one sentence of confession about prayerlessness and one sentence of asking, using Acts 1:14 as the model: agreed, together, devoted.

03

SESSION THREE

Conviction and Confession

Big Idea: Renewal begins when sins are confessed, hearts are broken, and leaders are humbled.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

PSALM 51:10-17 • 1 JOHN 1:8-9

Every revival account, biblical or historical, includes a moment nobody enjoys reading about: God's people seeing their sin clearly. Not the world's sin. Theirs.

David's prayer in Psalm 51 shows what that looks like. No excuses, no comparisons, no "mistakes were made." Just a broken and contrite heart, which David says God will never despise. That word for churches is enormous. God does not despise a congregation that finally tells Him the truth about itself. He draws near to it.

"The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit."

PSALM 51:17

The pattern repeats when God moves in power among His people. The Word shines into the corners of our souls. We stop pretending everything is okay. We confess to God, and where our sin has touched others, we confess to them. And a community that receives confession with love instead of gossip becomes a place where others find the courage to do the same. One writer on spiritual awakening put it this way: confession and surrender are the crucibles of revival. A crucible is where metal gets melted down before it is made useful.

Churches in decline often carry unconfessed history: old conflicts nobody resolved, grudges that outlasted the people who started them, decisions made in fear and baptized as wisdom. That weight does not lift by itself, and no strategy can lift it. It lifts the way it has always lifted, at the bottom of Psalm 51.

FROM THE HISTORY

In the Welsh Revival of 1904, meetings had no order of service and often no preaching at all, just wave after wave of public confession and singing. Within six months roughly one hundred thousand people had come to Christ. Judges in Wales were left with empty dockets, and the pit ponies in the coal mines reportedly had to be retrained because the miners had stopped cursing.

TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Why is confessing sin easier to recommend than to do?
- 2 Is there old, unresolved history in our church that we have learned to live around instead of dealing with?
- 3 What would make this congregation a safe place to be honest?

PRAY IT NOW

Extended silence first, at least three full minutes, letting the Spirit search hearts with Psalm 139:23-24. Then the leader closes with Psalm 51:10-12 prayed over the whole church. Private business between members should be settled privately this week, before Session 4.

04

SESSION FOUR

Return to the Word

Big Idea: Revival happens when the people of God return to the Word of God.

"And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and he read in their hearing all the words of the Book."

2 KINGS 22:8-13; 23:1-3 · NEHEMIAH 8:1-9

Two of the greatest revivals in the Bible began the same way: somebody opened the Book.

In Josiah's day the scroll of the Law had been lost inside the temple itself. Religion continued; the Word was missing. When Hilkiah found it and Shaphan read it to the king, Josiah tore his robes. Then he gathered all the people, read the Word aloud to them, and led the nation in covenant renewal. In Nehemiah's day, Ezra read the Law from daybreak until noon while the people stood, wept, and then worshiped.

Notice the order in both stories. The Word was read, then hearts broke, then life changed. Nobody worked up an emotion and went looking for a verse to match. The Word did the work.

"Revival happens when the people of God return to the Word of God."

ROBBY GALLATY

Church history says the same thing. What heralded the Reformation and the Great Awakening was not a new method but renewed preaching: Scripture opened, explained, and pressed home to the heart. Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield did not invent a technique. They unleashed a Book.

A church cannot be revived past its diet. If we are fed on announcements, opinions, and reheated inspiration, we will stay exactly as alive as those things can make us. But where the Word is opened hungrily, in the pulpit, in classes, in homes, and at kitchen tables, God has something to set on fire.

FROM THE HISTORY

In the 1730s and 40s, the First Great Awakening spread through the American colonies largely on preaching, plain, urgent, biblical preaching, often outdoors to crowds of thousands. Critics complained it was too emotional. Edwards answered that a true work of God is tested not by the size of the feelings but by its fruit: love for Christ, love for Scripture, and holiness of life.

TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 When was the last time Scripture itself, not a sermon about it, stopped you in your tracks?
- 2 What is the actual Word intake of our congregation across a normal week?
- 3 Josiah acted on what he heard the same day. What keeps us from that kind of response?

PRAY IT NOW

Read Nehemiah 8:9-10 aloud. Then pray in pairs: thank God for one specific thing His Word has done in your life, and ask for a fresh hunger for it, personally and as a church.

05

SESSION FIVE

Surrender and Obedience

Big Idea: God does not revive a people who keep the crown but refuse the King.

"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

1 SAMUEL 15:22-23 • ROMANS 12:1

King Saul is the Bible's warning label for religious activity without surrendered obedience. He kept the sacrifices going. He kept the appearance of faithfulness. He simply would not do what God actually said, and he always had a reasonable explanation. Samuel's verdict cuts through every generation since: to obey is better than sacrifice.

A church can be Saul. Services held, offerings received, calendar full, and the whole time quietly refusing the one thing God is actually asking. Revival waits on surrender, and surrender is specific. Not "Lord, we give you everything" in the abstract, but yes to the particular things He has already made clear: the neighbor we have avoided, the ministry we have protected because we like it rather than because it bears fruit, the comfortable pattern we have defended for years.

"To obey is better than sacrifice."

1 SAMUEL 15:22

Writers on revival have observed that awakenings are rare for an uncomfortable reason: God's children often prefer managing their sin to rooting it out, and prefer partial obedience with a religious explanation to full obedience with a cost. Absolute surrender to God's mission, personally and as a congregation, is the soil revival grows in. There is no substitute soil.

The good news hiding in this hard session: surrender is not losing. Romans 12:1 calls it worship. When a church finally stops negotiating with God, it discovers that the God it was negotiating with is good, and that what He does with a surrendered church is better than anything the church was protecting.

FROM THE HISTORY

In 1949, on the Hebrides islands off Scotland, two elderly sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, one of them blind, prayed for months in their cottage, and a handful of church leaders joined them in a barn. Nothing happened until the night a young deacon read Psalm 24, "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? He who has clean hands and a pure heart," and asked whether their own hands were clean. Revival broke out across the islands within days.

TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Where might we, as a church, be offering God sacrifice instead of obedience?
- 2 What has God already made clear to this congregation that we have explained our way around?
- 3 What are you personally still negotiating with God about?

PRAY IT NOW

A prayer of specific surrender. The leader names areas one at a time (our building, our traditions, our schedule, our reputation, our comfort), pausing after each for silent release. Close together with Romans 12:1.

06

SESSION SIX

When God Moves: Keeping the Fruit

Big Idea: Fire spreads and lasts where God's people build hearths for it.

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

ACTS 2:41-47

What happened after Pentecost is almost as instructive as Pentecost itself. Three thousand people were converted in a day, and the church immediately gave them a life to live: the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. The fire fell, and the church built a hearth.

History shows why that matters. George Whitefield and John Wesley were both mightily used in the awakenings of the 1700s. Whitefield was likely the greater preacher, but he admitted late in life that much of his fruit faded because he built no structure to hold it. Wesley organized every convert into a small group for confession, encouragement, and growth, and his fruit multiplied for generations. Same fire. Different hearths.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

ACTS 2:42

This is where the revival study joins the rest of your church's revitalization journey. Some churches hear "process" and worry it means unbelief, as if planning were the opposite of praying. Acts 2 says otherwise. Devotion and order lived together in the first church. The Spirit who sends fire also builds hearths; the same book that gives us Pentecost gives us elders, deacons, and daily distribution lists.

So here is where this study lands. Keep asking. The praying your church has learned these six weeks is not a unit to complete but a life to continue, and the next step in the Power phase is exactly that: a sustained, congregation-wide prayer initiative. And keep building. As God stirs hearts, your church will walk forward together, with help, through purpose and planning. Not because strategy revives churches. It cannot. But because a surrendered, praying, Word-fed church should expect God to move, and a wise one gets the hearth ready.

FROM THE HISTORY

Wesley's "class meetings" were groups of about twelve that met weekly to answer one question honestly: how is it with your soul? Through them, a hundred thousand people came to faith in five years in Britain, and the movement outlived Wesley by centuries. The structure was not the revival. It was the hearth that kept the fire.

TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 Looking back across all six sessions, where have you sensed God stirring you or this church?
- 2 What "hearths" do we have for new life: places where a new believer or a re-awakened member would actually be fed and known?
- 3 What from this study must not end when the study ends?

PRAY IT NOW

Close the study the way the early church began: together, in one accord, asking. Pray specifically for God to revive this congregation, name the next step your church will take, and ask Him for the humility to keep asking after the study is over.

KEEP ASKING

The study ends. The asking does not.

You have spent six weeks looking at what God's people have always done just before God moved: they prayed together, saw their sin, returned to the Word, and surrendered. None of it earns a revival. All of it positions a church to receive one. The work of revitalization is His. Our job is to get out of the way and ask Him for it.

Talk with your pastor and your EMPOWER coach about the next step in the Power phase: a sustained, congregation-wide rhythm of prayer.

"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"

PSALM 85:6