

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Most would agree that America needs revival and that it should start with our churches. Yet many will not admit that they are the ones that need reviving or that they are in as bad of shape as others. Many pastors and churches don't see their own state of complacency, or their satisfaction of just maintaining the aquarium (status quo church). What would real revival look like, do, or change in our churches if we had it?

Have you ever asked yourself or considered that the church you are a member of needs reviving or what I would call revitalization? By revitalization I mean an ongoing attitude of revival in the church that bring about change in the people and ministries of the church for God's glory. If true revival comes then there will be change, because the church was in need of reviving in many areas personally and collectively. You may not have even heard the term of revitalization before used in a church. In the last few years many have been using this term for a church that is in need of help to see their people as well as their ministries to get a new vision for their churches future. Most pastors are familiar with all types of church help and church growth programs, methods and books. We have had these for decades with many new trends and methods of trying to grow and maintain their churches, all without little or no progress in their ministries. If these things are working, then why are so many churches closing and pastors leaving the ministry today?

Sometimes churches and pastors get into habits and traditions in their ministries that they believe are unchangeable or untouchable. In some churches it would cause a (train wreck) to change service times, use a power point, ask how many revivals to have in a year, have some kind of different music (not contemporary or worldly), to rethink the method of ministries or programs (not saying stop them), there are many parked and broken down buses as well as people. There are many good traditions in churches, but don't let traditions and church habits that no longer work be a source of decline and hindrance to the churches ministry. True revival will bring about Godly change that lasts.

To some any change in the church is of the devil, and yet they allow the same or many other changes in their personal and family lives. I'm not saying that all change is good or right, but some could be good and right. If a church is just maintaining or is in decline, you need to make some changes. Many churches and pastors are changing without even knowing that they are, these are those who are changing slowly in a wrong direction. Church decline and apathy in the pastor and people happens over time and in most cases without them even noticing it.

We all agree that revival is needed, but that will bring about a change of heart and attitude in the church that is willing to except the reality of their need for revival. Then there will be a willingness to yield to the Lord and make the appropriate changes that He desires. In the next few weeks we are going to look at Church Revitalization and what it means to the church.

May the Lord bless your church family this week!
Bro. Mickey - SCM

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Consider First the Need for Church Revitalization.

In dealing with churches that need revitalization I've found that they have a wrong view of their present reality. Many pastors, church leaders and members have a distorted belief of where they really are in their service and ministries. One of the hardest things for a pastor and church to do for their churches health is to honestly admit where they are in their present condition in service and ministry. We all have blind areas that we don't see until it's brought to our attention. Many churches will keep going on in their unhealthy church practices, just because they don't see themselves doing anything wrong. They fail or are unwilling to ask themselves what they could be doing better and change the things that are no longer working in their ministries.

If a pastor or church is satisfied with where they are and have no desire to move forward with the ministries of the church, then they need revitalization. Some may think that the size of the church determines the need for revitalization, but size doesn't reveal the need, it's a heart and spiritual matter. Large, medium, small and dead churches can and do have some need of revitalization if they are honest. With ninety five percent of all churches in America in decline maybe one of them is yours.

Your church may need Revitalization if:

- There is a maintenance attitude in the church. There are as many leaving as coming in an overall time period of five years. Many churches think this is normal. Some may not like to keep numbers because it shows reality.
- There is a constant decline in membership. Some will say that it's a sign of the times, yet other churches are growing. Maybe it is a sign of the times, you need church Revitalization.
- There are mostly gray and white headed folks in the services. We need a balance of all age groups in the church, including the younger in addition to the older for a healthy ministry.
- There are banners, posters, overhead projectors, old books and Sunday school materials that haven't been used in the last twenty years. (Or maybe still used?)
- There has been no new vision for the church to reach and disciple others for Jesus Christ for the last ten years. Scores of churches have lost their vision for their ministries many years ago. Vision comes from leadership.
- There is a decrease in everything but your waistline. The church budget, visitors, missions, member attendance, S.S. classes, people's spirit, decisions, baptisms, and the list could go on, they are all down and the church needs revitalization.
- There is still dark paneling and yellow carpet in the church. This is not saying that it's wrong, but it is out of date. And where these are still around there will be the same mindset and attitudes from the past. It takes money to update, but it also takes a willing heart to give and to actually change for the health of the church.

This is not an inclusive list of churches that need revitalization there are many things that could be added. The first and foremost is seeing the need for revitalization.

May the Lord bless you and your church family this week!

Bro. Mickey - SCM

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Consider Second the Leadership of Church Revitalization.

Most pastors would like to consider themselves a good leader in their church because they get to preach and teach each week. There is much more to being a good pastor and leader than just speaking three times a week. Good preaching cannot and should not replace good leadership skills in the church; some just want to preach without the duties of leadership of the ministries within the church.

Many pastors are just confused or unconcerned about what a good leadership requires and how it serves the members of the church. A college degree will not give pastors the practical experience that they need to learn to be a good servant leader in the pastoral ministry. Learning good leadership skills is an ongoing process throughout one's pastoral ministry as he seeks to be the best pastor God has called him to be.

There are many different leadership skills needed in the ministry and not all pastors are called to be a church revitalization pastor. This doesn't mean that every pastor can't benefit from the leadership skills of those who have learned how to lead a turnaround church. Some pastors follow a church revitalization pastor's ministry and receive the benefits from the leadership of his ministry to that church. Please remember that God should be given the glory and praise in any church revitalization, but He uses men to accomplish His work to turn a church around. Therefore it would be wise to learn some leadership qualities of a revitalizing pastor to carry on the work of a church that is reviving and moving forward again. Here are some characteristics of pastoral leadership for church revitalization.

- They have a committed and very close relationship with the LORD.
- They are humble servant leaders that are willing to work with others.
- They have a teachable spirit and willing to admit their need to learn from others.
- They are decision makers and are willing to stand alone if need be.
- They are compassionate and yet firm in the work of reviving the church.
- They are committed to going through the revitalization process counting the cost.
- They are willing to examine themselves and grow in order to help others to grow.
- They don't waste time but use it up and invest it wisely for the ministry.
- They seek the LORD for right timing for the right change concerning ministry.
- They have a passion for seeing the lost get saved, without excuse making.
- They have a vision for the church from God and will not leave until fulfilled.
- They see the need and seek God to revitalize the church members and ministries.
- They are able to seek outside help when need without fear from others.
- They have their priorities in line, God, family, ministry having balance with all.
- They are not failures because they don't quit, asking God to help them learn.

These are but a few of the characteristics of a church revitalization leader, this doesn't mean that those who don't have all of these working are not good pastors. If the pastor is honest he will sense a need to grow in many of these areas. God bless your Sunday!
Bro. Muse - SCM

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Consider Third the Follow-ship of Church Revitalization.

In church revitalization God will need the hearts of both the leadership (pastor / other leaders) and followers (congregation / membership). A humble, Spirit-filled, pastor cannot do the work of revitalization by himself nor can a church do it without their pastor. It will take the cooperation of both them (pastor/church) yielding themselves to God and letting the Holy Spirit move them to submit in humility to seek the Lord to do whatever it takes to change them and turn them around. This may seem like a big job, but we have a great big and awesome God that can break the hearts of stone and make all things new.

In follow-ship it should be obvious that the pastor is following the Lord in humility with a servant's heart for the church. This doesn't mean that he shy's away from taking the leadership role that God has given him for that church and its ministries. Just as a father needs to follow the Lord in order to lead his family, so the pastor needs to follow the Lord in order for the church to follow his lead. There are no perfect leaders or followers in church revitalization, but both have areas that need change and improvement. If one or both can't be humble enough to admit that they need help, then there will be no church revitalization.

Here are a few signs of being a follower for both pastor and church members;

1. Assurance of salvation – don't assume that everyone is saved in the church.
2. Baptism – should be done soon after salvation, use persistence and patience.
3. Church attendance – with a joyful attitude of love for Lord and for others.
4. Witness – when full of the Holy Spirit, then this will be a natural outflow.
5. Giving – not only money (tithes / offerings) but ourselves to the Lord serving others.
6. Submission – to all God given authorities (Lord, home, church, and government).
7. Obedience – a willingness do what one is told with a right attitude.
8. Suffering – doing right even if one has to suffer in obedience to Christ with joy.
9. Faithfulness – just being available when and where one is needed.
10. Useable – knowing ones spiritual gifts and willingly using them for God's glory.

There is so much more to include with these in being a good follower of the Lord in church revitalization. The idea here is, are we following the very basic things in obedience to our Lord and His church? Someone has said, "Great leaders start by being good followers", and that has merit with all of us in the ministry. In certain churches the pastor, individual member, or the whole congregation may have a lack of truly following the Lord and others. May the Lord help us and our churches to learn to be good followers, so that He can teach us to be great leaders. May our Lord bless you and your church family this week!

Bro. Mickey Muse
SCM

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Consider Fourth the Results of Church Revitalization.

Psalm 85:6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

With churches that are just in maintenance mode (same average over the last five years) or in decline because of unhealthy church practices (unwilling to admit their pride) and with those that are dying or already dead the need is great. Churches don't get to these places of apathy, complacency, or denial all at once, it happens over time. Some churches are blinded to the fact of their need for revitalization thinking everything is well. The ministries are going on but there is no passion from the pulpit or the pew in serving the Lord as they once did years ago. There is kind of dread of who will show up and do the work of ministry this week in order to just get by and hope that things don't get worse.

We need revival in America today but with a plan that sees a reviving spirit continue in the church after the meeting is ended. This is what revitalization can do for a church that has had no real change from the pulpit and the pew after having revivals for years. If the current revival meetings are working, then why are we in so great a need with our churches? I still believe that God can and will revive anyone or any church that will honestly humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their sinful practices. There is hope for America, if the people of God will yield themselves unto Him with a willing heart of sincerity, love and passion to glorify Him. Here are a few results of a church that has a true revival and is practicing revitalization.

- There will be a spirit of true humility – from the pastor down to the people.
- They will sense their need for a deeper and consistent prayer life for all.
- There will be a hunger for the Lord to know Him better, seeking Him first.
- There will be a yielding and walking in the Holy Spirit that characterizes love.
- There will be desire to know and obey the word of God more fully.
- There will be a sorrow and repentant heart over sin, personally and collectively.
- There will be an excitement about God working in the church membership.
- There will be a true thankfulness from hearts of gratitude for what God is doing.
- There will be an atmosphere of joyful worship with glad songs of praise.
- There will be an attitude of servant leadership and servant-ship in the Lord.
- They will be seeking and reaching their community in more positive ways.
- They will be taking time to really disciple their new converts and members.
- There will be a united spirit of working together for the honor of Christ.
- The ministries will match their mission field as they seek God's leading.
- The giving, going and serving will be a delight and not a burden in the church.
- Christ will be Lord, souls will be saved, and members will grow and mature.

These are just some things that will happen when a church really has revival and is willing to submit to the Lord and not let it end but grow and move forward. The Lord is more willing to revive us than we are to be revived. Salvation is free, revival is conditional. May we be stirred to be revived today and have a revitalization personally and collectively in our churches. May God bless and have a great week in the Lord.

Mickey Muse - SCM