



DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR

21 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR REVIVAL



WEEK THREE:

PREPARING FOR REVIVAL



DAY FIFTEEN:

DESPERATE FOR GOD

INTRODUCTION

We have asked God for personal revival and greater intimacy. We have looked at what community revival will entail. What else can we do as we wait for God's revival? G. Campbell Morgan was a well-known British Bible teacher and evangelist who lived at the beginning of the last century. Here is what he said about revival. "Revival cannot be organised, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from heaven when God chooses to blow upon His people once again." I like that. We cannot make revival happen, but we can "set the sails." We can prepare the way. We can get ready. This week we will consider how to prepare for revival. Probably the most frequently quoted verse on getting ready for revival is 2 Chronicles 7:14. Let's start there.

SCRIPTURE: 2 CHRONICLES 7:11-16

When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, the Lord appeared to him at night and said:

"I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

"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 I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

DEVOTION

The challenges and promises of 2 Chron. 7:14 are addressed to a specific context. We just need to check that out to make sure that this verse is still relevant for us today. Solomon had completed his first major building projects, especially the construction of a magnificent temple for Yahweh (God). Solomon and Israel were doing well spiritually at this stage, but God knew that this would not always be the case. In the future, they would abandon him and suffer the consequences. But God promised Solomon that there would always be a way back to blessing for Israel if they humbly gathered in the temple, abandoned their sin and sought God desperately.

This pathway to God's blessing remains true today. We do not need to gather in a temple to pray and the blessing of God comes more in spiritual prosperity than physical and economic prosperity. But as God's people



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humble themselves, pray like crazy, desperately seek God, and desert their disobedience, God promises to see and hear and forgive and pour out his blessing. So that is the way we prepare for revival. That is the way we “set the sails.” We will be exploring this biblical pathway to revival further in the next few days.

Why didn't Israel use this pathway to God's blessing more frequently? Why did they suffer so much? Because they were not desperate enough. They thought they had other options. They believed that somehow they could solve their own problems. It is desperation that drives us to God.

I suffer with renal colic (kidney stones). I have had numerous episodes of excruciating pain as tiny stones descend my ureter. I am told that the pain is worse than the pain of childbirth and I believe it! The advantage of renal colic (if there is one) is that, unlike other health problems, it is impossible to sweep under the carpet and pretend that things are okay. A little twinge and I am straight to the doctor for painkillers. I know what is coming. I can focus on nothing else. I am desperate. It is when we experience this kind of desperation spiritually that we humble ourselves and pray and seek God and turn from sin. Then revival is imminent.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Lord we are not okay. Our sin is not alright. The brokenness of our society is not acceptable or solvable. Our lukewarmness is not tolerable. God we need you. There is no other answer. If you don't do something soon, we are destined to spiritual oblivion. Please forgive us and heal us.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Thank you Lord for the good people who are trying to solve our problems. Many are giving so much and it does make a difference. But Lord our nation is not going to be saved by capable leaders or smart scientists or generous donors. We need you. You are truth. You are hope. You are life. We need you to work in power.



DAY SIXTEEN:

HUMBLE OURSELVES

INTRODUCTION

I have preached through the book of James quite a few times in the last 40 years and today's reading is my least favourite passage in the whole book. James tackles challenging issues right through his letter, but in this passage he really lets fly. "You are proud. You are committing adultery. You are an enemy of God." Try preaching that to a busy and committed congregation. It is not what they expect or want to hear. They are thinking, "Are we really that bad?" Well as we saw yesterday, the first step in 2 Chron. 7:14 to prepare for revival is to desperately humble ourselves. That is what this Scripture is about. James tells us why we need to humble ourselves and how to do it. See if you agree with his observations and challenges. Does the shoe fit?

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:4-10

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble."

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

DEVOTION

An adulterer is someone who commits themselves totally to their partner through their wedding vows and then chooses to have sex with someone else. Adultery is so painful and damaging that Jesus even suggests that it is grounds for the dissolution of a marriage (Matt. 19:9). God sees our friendship with the world as committing adultery. It is being unfaithful to our Saviour. It is abandoning our promises. It is breaking God's heart. The more we move away from dependence on and trust in Jesus and the deeper we entrench our relationship with the world, the stronger the adulterous affair becomes.

In life, adultery frequently leads to divorce, but not always. Sometimes the adulterer recognises their dreadful betrayal and humbly seeks forgiveness. Sometimes the victim of the infidelity can accept the offered confession and begin to rebuild relationship and trust. Occasionally the marriage even ends up stronger. But this does not happen without humility and repentance on the part of the adulterer.



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When we read a challenge like this, we can justify and protect ourselves. We can conclude that we are better than these people James is calling out. And maybe we are. Maybe we are not as adulterous as them. Maybe our friendship with the world is not as entrenched as theirs. Maybe we are closer to God than they were. We can compare our adultery with their adultery and possibly feel okay.

Or we can humble ourselves. We can admit our friendship with the world. We can confess our adulterous ways. We can repent of our sin. We can cry out for God's mercy. We can grieve over our unfaithfulness. We can be truly sorry for our duplicity. We can humble ourselves and wait for God to lift us up. This is how we prepare for revival.

PRAYER RESPONSE

I am an adulterer Lord and I am truly sorry. I am more entrenched in and reliant on this world than you want. I so easily neglect you, even abandon you when the world offers me its pleasures. I have chased after other partners and broken your heart. I am truly sorry. Please forgive my disloyalty and deceitfulness. I am not a good person. Please wash me clean and restore our precious marriage.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Please forgive the church, your bride, for our adultery. We have loved our comfort and convenience more than we have loved you. We think we are doing okay but we are not living close to your heart. Please may you forgive and heal and restore and revive us.



DAY SEVENTEEN:

PRAY FOR WORKERS

INTRODUCTION

The second response that God calls for in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is to “pray.” There are many different ways of praying for revival as we have been discovering in the last few weeks. We confess and pray for forgiveness. We ask for personal closeness to God. We pray for God to work in power. We cry out for our nation. All these prayers are important. But today I thought that we could focus on a prayer that we may not have prayed so far in these devotions. It is a prayer that Jesus asked his disciples to pray so it must be important.

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 9:35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

DEVOTION

The Greek word translated “compassion” in this Scripture is an intensely emotional word. Jesus was deeply moved as he watched the crowds and the hopelessness of their situation. He could not meet all their needs. These needs included their health problems and their poverty. But what really got to Jesus was the fact that they had no-one to look after them, no-one to lead them, no-one to protect them. They were like sheep who had no shepherd. They were lost and ravaged by wild animals. And this profoundly touched Jesus. He deeply felt the hopelessness of their situation.

So is this true of the people we mix with? On the surface it does not look like it. They seem happy. They seem satisfied. They seem self-sufficient and free of needs. But you just look underneath the surface and you find deep disappointment, debilitating depression, broken relationships, draining hopelessness and sapping confusion. People are not doing well, with divorce and suicide rates being just the tip of the iceberg. But who will care for them? Who will help them? Who will support them? Who will share Jesus with them?

Jesus called on his disciples to pray for God to send out more harvest workers. The opportunities to serve and reap were great, but there were not enough workers to meet the need. This must be our prayer as well. It involves praying for more Christians to share their faith and serve their communities (both here and overseas). It also means praying for God to raise up more leaders who will be good shepherds pastoring and supporting



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their people well. As we prepare for revival and a great harvest, we need to ask God to increase the harvest workers. We just do not have enough to meet the need now.

It is interesting to note that in the flow of Matthew's narrative, immediately after calling for this prayer for harvest workers, Jesus commissioned his twelve disciples to get out into the harvest field themselves (Matthew 10). In a way, the disciples were at least part of the answer to their own prayer. Maybe this will be true for you as well. As you pray for God to raise up godly leaders and effective evangelists and bold witnesses and community workers and caring missionaries, you might well find him calling you to become a harvest worker yourself.

One of the greatest privileges of being a harvest worker is helping people find Jesus. To have a role in someone's journey towards faith in Christ is very exciting and very precious. Revival will require loads of harvest workers who will shepherd the harassed and helpless to Jesus. Maybe you will be one?

PRAYER RESPONSE

Lord please increase my heart for the lost. Help me to see people the way you do – harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Help me to feel your compassion. And please raise up the leaders and witnesses we will need to bring the lost home and to care for them well. And Lord if you want me to be one of those harvest workers, I am available.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Lord we are praying for a great harvest. The kind of harvest that we have never seen before. But you will need to call and equip the workers that we need to bring in this harvest. There are not enough at the moment. Please call and send out lots more workers with your compassion to serve and evangelise and disciple those who have no Shepherd.



DAY EIGHTEEN:

PRAY FOR UNITY

INTRODUCTION

There is one other specific revival prayer I would like to focus on. In John chapters 14 to 16, Jesus is giving his final instructions to his disciples before his crucifixion. He mainly focuses on how the disciples will live by the Spirit once he has gone. After these directions, Jesus prays. He prays for himself first and then he prays for his disciples, particularly for God's protection over them when he has gone. Finally, Jesus prays for all those who will believe in the future. We are included in that prayer. Jesus prayed specifically for us. And the heart of his prayer is instructive. Under the shadow of the cross, Jesus asked for one major thing for his future followers. It strikes me that this must be extremely important.

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 17:20-23

"My prayer is not for them [his disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

DEVOTION

Jesus knew that the impact of his future church would rely on its unity. That makes sense. As fellow members of God's family, Christians have a huge amount in common and will naturally be drawn together. Our unity and love for each other is the major sign that God is at work within us – saving us and transforming us. Jesus prays that as God indwells their lives, future believers will become like he and his Father. Different persons, yet completely one.

In some ways, the unity of the church is totally natural – we are clearly drawn together by the Spirit. But in practice, Jesus knew that real unity in his church would be incredibly difficult. Roman culture was strongly stratified. Everyone had their position and role and this was constantly reinforced. You had to accept it. There was no stepping outside the bounds of your place in society. So when Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and Roman citizens, rich and poor all became Christians and met together in small church groups, unity was a huge struggle. It was vital as Jesus said, but it was a colossal challenge. Almost all the New Testament letters deal with aspects of this call to unity. It was probably the most difficult issue in the early church. No wonder unity was the thing Jesus prayed for at the end. Unity was so important and so challenging.



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It still is. While our culture is more egalitarian, largely due to the influence of Christianity, there is the constant temptation to retreat into tribes. That is, to interact with and support and love and respect the people who are like us and to exclude others. Our tribe is the people who think like us, who see the world the way we do, who have the same values and beliefs, who prize the same priorities. Tribalism is both natural (of course we find it easiest to value the people like us) and incredibly dangerous. It reduces our love for believers who are different from us and destroys the unity of God's church. It seems that the pull of tribalism increases as digital media give us easy access to our tribe and the opportunity to ignore, even reject, others.

So we need to join Jesus in praying for unity. A divided church will never see revival. It cannot be a clear witness to the world. It cannot reflect the love and grace of the gospel. It cannot show the reality and beauty of Jesus. It will be stuck with its judgements and disagreements and arguments and splits. It will be clear evidence to the lost that the church is no different from the world. With Jesus, we need to pray and pray for unity among believers in preparation for revival. "May we be one."

PRAYER RESPONSE

Lord please grow my love for and grace towards other believers, especially those who are different from me. May I see your presence in their lives. Protect me from judging others – that is your job. May I not retreat into tribalism but grow in grace as you fill my life. Help me to link arms with those who I tend to judge.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Division destroys the power and witness of your church Lord. Please break down the tribalism that is invading our churches. Forgive our judgmentalism. Bring conviction. Bind us together in unity in preparation for your revival. May we all be one Lord Jesus. Bring us to real unity.



DAY NINETEEN: SEEK GOD'S FACE

INTRODUCTION

We know that Psalm 24 was written by David (it's in the subheading), but we are told nothing about the context that lay behind the composition of this song. However, if we look within the psalm, there is a call to open the gates (presumably of Jerusalem) so that the King of glory can enter (24:7, 9). This is likely to be a reference to the entry of the Ark of the Covenant (representing God's presence) into Jerusalem. David wrote Psalm 24 for this special occasion. The incidents preceding this event are outlined in 1 Chronicles 13 and 15.

David had captured Jerusalem and established his capital there, but the Ark was still stationed at Abinadab's house. So David summoned Israel to bring the Ark up to Jerusalem so that God's special presence could dwell in the centre of his kingdom. It was a delicate operation because the Ark was holy and had to be treated very carefully. But the day was full of excitement and celebration. This was the culmination of David's reign – God's presence coming into the capital. As the Ark was being transported, the cart lurched and the guy in charge put his hand on the Ark to stop it falling off the cart. God struck him dead on the spot. As you can imagine, this put an end to the festivity. The Bible says that David was both angry with and afraid of God, and he cried, "How can I ever bring the Ark of God to me?" (1 Chron. 13:12). So he left the Ark close by and returned to Jerusalem.

Because of what happened, David was too afraid to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. He did not feel worthy or able to live close to God. God was too frightening, too dangerous, too holy. It was another three months before he was ready to try again. David did a lot of soul searching during this time and realised how he could seek God's face and live close to a holy, all-powerful God. He put his revelation in this song.

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 24:1-10

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.*

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?

*The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.*

They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Saviour.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty - he is the King of glory.



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DEVOTION

As David writes, God is incredible. He created the whole of this world and everything belongs to him. God is powerful. He never loses a battle. Everything is under his control. He is all-powerful. So we have to be careful about seeking his face, of coming close to him, as David found out. You cannot push God around. You cannot toy with him. You cannot treat him lightly. Seeking God's face without due respect is a recipe for disaster.

But we can come near to God. It is possible to get close to him and know his blessing as David discovered. It is possible to "stand in his holy place." You just need "clean hands and a pure heart." Right actions and right motivations. This is possible for us through Jesus. We come humbly through Jesus to stand in God's presence, to seek his face, to savour his love, to hear his commands, to be filled with his power.

And when a generation seeks God in this way (24:6) then the door to revival opens. God's blessing is poured out on his people. David saw this in his generation and so will we.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Lord I honour you. The whole of creation cries out in praise to you and I gladly join them. I recognise my smallness and brokenness and yet through Jesus I come freely into your presence and seek your face, Lord of the universe. I know it will be costly and humbling, but I want to live close to you. To hear your voice and to follow your will and to enjoy your presence. To seek your face. This is my heart's desire.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Please raise up this generation to seek your face with pure hands and clean hearts. Please make it a generation that will be yielded to you. A generation that will be blessed by you. A generation that will see your power.



DAY TWENTY:

TURN FROM OUR WICKED WAYS

INTRODUCTION

When God called his people to “turn from their wicked ways” in preparation for his revival, we would think that they were involved in all sorts of evil practices. Maybe the Israelites were abusing the poor, or worshipping idols, or even sacrificing their children. They must have been into some rotten stuff that clearly needed to be abandoned before God could revive their nation. In comparison, our ways are not too wicked. Some of us may have “big” sins that taint our lives and wreck our relationship with God. But while we are aware of our weaknesses, most of us do not appear all that bad. We do not feel that we have to change our lives all that much. We do not have too many “wicked ways” to abandon. We are mostly behaving okay and we feel that God is fine with us. We are off the hook. The church in Ephesus was just like that.

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 2:1-5

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

DEVOTION

The church in Ephesus sounds pretty decent to me. They had been through some rough times but they had worked hard, stayed true to Jesus, dealt well with sin in their midst, and persevered despite the challenges. What a solid church. Good theology, committed, faithful, robust, stable. Like us, they were difficult to fault in any major way. There were no obvious “wicked ways” from which to turn.

Yet Jesus is so unhappy with this church that he threatens to finish their work completely, to wipe them out. What? Their problem was that they did not love Jesus the way they did at first and it showed in their actions. Perhaps they were going through the motions without any real desire for intimacy with Jesus. Perhaps they had correct theology but it got stuck in their heads and didn't touch their hearts. Perhaps they felt that all their hard work had earned them God's favour and so they lost sight of Jesus. Perhaps they had become hard and



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judgmental towards each other. Whatever the reasons and signs, they just did not love Jesus and each other the way they used to. Jesus could see this.

Losing love can happen in any relationship. For example, without continual effort in a marriage, the love can fade, and the relationship becomes two people living together but sharing very little. Jesus is not happy with such a relationship with us. He loves deeply and is looking for our love in return. The “wicked ways” of the Ephesians were not rebellion or apostasy or immorality, but something equally dangerous and more insidious in Jesus’ eyes - lost love.

This is the biggest challenge in the Western evangelical church. Our theology generally is not bad. We are reasonably committed and hard working. In a broken world, we continue to maintain most of our Christian distinctives. Our worship has plenty of energy. But we just do not love Jesus and each other the way we should, and it shows in our prayer life and in our dependence on Jesus and in our love for his word and in our grace towards each other. As we prepare for revival, God calls us to turn from our wicked ways and return to our first love. And as we do, he will come running to welcome us home with incredible love.

Maybe personally you know that there is a major sin blocking your closeness to God. It is time to repent and turn away from your wicked ways. But maybe your greatest sin is your lost love for Jesus. Much more hidden but just as harmful. It is time to turn back to Jesus.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Lord you love me deeply and I want to return that love. Set my heart on fire for you. Grow my need for you. Reawaken the love I once had. I have drifted a long way from the love I once had. Please forgive and revive me in your grace.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Jesus, open our eyes to your love and heart for your church, your bride. Forgive our waning love and the mess it has brought to our lives and churches. Restore our love Lord and bring revival.



DAY TWENTY-ONE:

BE A WATCHER

INTRODUCTION

This is the last day of our 21 days of prayer for revival. But I hope it is not the last time you pray for revival. We are at the beginning of a new passion and prayer for God's reviving work. God is not finished with us yet. The spiritual wave might appear to have withdrawn, but there is a new wave coming. This last study focuses on those God is asking to watch and pray for a new move of his Spirit that will bring great spiritual blessing and transformation. It is a call to be on the forefront of the preparation for revival – a watcher.

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 62:6-12

I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm:

"Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled; but those who harvest it will eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary."

Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.

The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your Saviour comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'" They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.

DEVOTION

In Isaiah's time, watchmen would be posted on the walls of cities. Their main task was to watch for invaders and to warn the citizens. But sometimes they would be watching for something wonderful like a returning army or an arriving ally. Isaiah figuratively applies this role to those who watch and prepare for the coming Saviour who is going to bless the nation. God has given people this watching role and they need to be continually calling on God. There is to be no rest for the watchers as they prepare for this wonderful event.



DAY TWENTY-ONE:

BE A WATCHER

As we saw in Isaiah 40, this triumphant arrival of a Saviour for God's people refers to their return from exile, and also to the arrival of the Messiah and also to the return of Christ. But it covers other powerful saving works of Jesus as well. As we move towards God's reviving work, God raises up watchers. Their role is to believe in God's future, pray continually for it, get things ready for what God is going to do, and keep reminding everyone that there is a powerful work of God to come.

I do not like surprises. I have told my family that I never want a surprise party. I like to plan for everything. Don't ask me to do something on the spur of the moment. I will not enjoy it. You see a lot of my joy comes from anticipating and planning the future. For example, I love preparing for major holidays. Getting ready and anticipating what is coming is almost as much fun as the holiday itself. In this sense I am a "watcher." I get ready for the excitement ahead. I remind everyone of what is coming. I anticipate the future.

God has called many of us to be watchers for revival. He has posted us on the walls and told us to keep pleading with God until he works in revival power. He has summoned us to prepare the way for his awakening by humbling ourselves, praying, seeking God's face, and turning from our wicked ways. He has encouraged us to dream of what will be and to get others excited about God's future blessing. We are the watchers.

And what is our message? "See, your Saviour comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him." We will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and we will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted" (62:11-12). Come close Lord Jesus in your mighty power. Bless us like never before.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Lord if you are calling me, I will be a watcher. I would love to help prepare for revival. I know that you are gracious and powerful and that you want so much more for your people. Help me to believe and pray incessantly. Open the heavens and pour out your revival blessing on me Lord.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Lord I have read and thought and prayed so much about revival over the past 21 days. I long to be part of it. Please, please may you forgive your half-hearted people, renew our dependence on you, and pour out your power in us and through us so that our community experiences your love and grace and is transformed. Please revive us Lord.

