



Network for Revival Prepare Issue 48 - February 2024

Is my church biblical?

One of the great motives for praying for Revival is, of course, the unhelpful state of the church today. We need good, biblical churches to pray and prepare for Revival.

We tend to focus on the faults of churches which deny basic biblical doctrines such as the Virgin Birth or Bodily Resurrection, or who promote unbiblical opinions on moral issues such as sexuality and gender issues. But we need to remember that when we point a finger (of criticism), there are three fingers pointing back at us. We need to examine ourselves to see if our churches are biblical. I have written a number of articles in previous editions of *Prepare!* on how churches need to be “radically biblical in the power of the Spirit” and, to put it bluntly, many evangelical or conservative churches are not. I hope you’ve read my articles on the subject but I felt it would be helpful to summarise the main points made in a checklist. It could help us remember and focus upon any weaknesses in our own churches. *(If you’re not in church leadership, these questions will help you to pray for your church and possibly make recommendations to your leadership).*

1. Does my church run on regular corporate prayer (not just prayer in services), the kind of prayer in which we seek God’s will and hear his response or does it run on committees?
2. Does my church regularly experience uplifting worship where we are “lost in wonder, love and praise”? Or, as Paul puts it, do we “sing and make music from [our hearts] to the Lord”? (Eph 5:19). *(The Holy Spirit can set us free from being bound by our traditional worship, whilst still using the inspiring aspects of it).*
3. Does my church encourage members to “be filled with the Spirit,” literally “go on being filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18) so that it functions on a clearly supernatural level?
4. Does my church challenge and encourage members to manifest the fruit of the Spirit “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23)?
5. Does my church encourage members to be committed to each other in unity and love: loyal to each other including the leaders; encouraging each other to live according to biblical principles?
6. Does my church lovingly correct any member who persists in unbiblical behaviour (the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit) as Jesus teaches in Matt 18:15-17?
7. Does my church encourage and assist members to seek and manifest the gifts of the Spirit, practising “every member ministry” (1 Cor 12)?
8. Does my church seek to have a leadership team which manifests complementary leadership gifts of the Spirit, e.g. apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher (Eph 4:11)?
9. Does my church get involved in evangelism and social concern, by love, word and power, in the light of the return of Christ?
10. Does my church seriously practise resisting the devil in his attacks (James 4:7)?

TEACHING RESOURCES

I hope you will ask each of those questions and think how ready your church is to pray and prepare for Revival. If you want further help to correct any weaknesses you will find extensive practical advice on **my Christian Teaching website** ([Christian Teaching Resources](#)), on its [Church Development](#) page, namely:

- A short history of how we worked out the above principles in our Essex parish church.
- My more detailed book on that subject.
- Our written 20-session “Called to Serve” discipleship course, teaching the above principles to churchmembers.
- Audio recording of my teaching the “Called to Serve” course: 20 sessions at approx 30 minutes each.

- **Leaders notes for those teaching “Called to Serve”.**
- **Audio recording of teaching by my wife Patricia (a theologically trained lay minister) and myself on the Church Development Strategy** (*Setting goals; achieving biblical unity; Delegating through ministry groups; Releasing the Gifts of the Spirit; Motivating the church in corporate prayer and in evangelism*).
- **The Minister’s Guide to Church Development Ministry.**
- **Other relevant written articles and audio talks.**

The Kilsyth Revival (1839)

William Chalmers Burns was born at Duns, Scotland in 1815. He was the son of a Presbyterian minister but showed little interest in Christianity until he was 17 when he read a book entitled “Early Piety,” given him by his father years earlier. It had a profound effect on him. He wrote “While gazing on a solemn passage in it, my inmost soul was pierced as with a dart. God had apprehended me. I felt the conviction of my lost estate rushing through me with resistless power; I left the room, and retired to a bedroom, there to pour out my heart for the first time with many tears in a genuine heart-rending cry for mercy.” He went to college to study Divinity and was a brilliant student.

Early in his Christian life he wrote in his diary: “O Lord! Teach me to grow daily and hourly in the apprehension of thy unspeakable and sovereign love to me, a miserable sinner, that I may be constrained out of the abundance of an overflowing heart, continually to commend thee to others who need that love as much as I, and deserve it just as little!”

In July 1839 he preached at his father’s church in Kilsyth, and reminded the congregation of some of the great revivals and awakenings that formed part of the heritage of Scottish evangelicals. The congregation was deeply moved and afterwards he described what happened. “During the whole of the time that I was speaking, the people listened with the most riveted and solemn attention, and with many silent tears and inward groanings of the spirit: but, at last, their feelings became too strong for all ordinary restraints, and broke forth simultaneously in weeping and wailing, tears and groans intermingled with shouts of joy and praise from some of the people of God.” He goes on to say that some were calling out in agony and “strong men fell to the ground as if they were dead.”

His brother Islay Burns described what happened: ‘I can think of no better description than the account of the day of Pentecost ... of which both in its immediate features and in its after results ... it seems to me to have been an exact counterpart.’ William had to leave a few days later but the Revival deepened and spread.

William was greatly used everywhere he went as an instrument of revival. There were huge crowds, long meetings, deep conviction of sin, people sensing that they were face to face with eternal realities, many enquirers and a large number of genuine conversions. God used him to bring thousands to repentance and faith in Christ, or to a renewed devotion to the Lord.

Islay wrote “His whole life was literally a life of prayer, and his whole ministry a series of battles fought at the mercy seat.” He would often spend nights in prayer, agonising for the people attending his meetings.

Later in life, William became a missionary in China and had close contact with Hudson Taylor, who wrote about him: “He is one of those holy men one seldom meets with, who do possess a single eye to God’s glory... The secret is easily learned and told – he is a man of prayer – added to which he possesses an iron frame, and a strong will, which would not be easily moved from its purpose... His love for the Word was delightful, and his holy, reverential life and constant communings with God made fellowship with him satisfying to the deep cravings of my heart”

William died of fever in China in 1868. His last words were “Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.”

God bless you,

Tony

In Network for Revival God has called us to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” This includes:

- Encouraging people to seek holiness and true biblical discipleship.
- Encouraging people to major on prayer for Revival.
- Encouraging churches to be radically biblical in the power of the Spirit (see [Church Development](#) for information and resources).
- Encouraging people to “Watch!” for the return of Jesus (Mk 13:32-37 – see [Eschatology](#)).