

In One Accord

Could It Be?

By Jonathan Graf

Any person who truly longs for and prays for revival comes to understand that at its theological core, revival is a sovereign act of God. That said, there are scriptural things we can do and historical patterns we can study that open the door for a fresh move of His Spirit.

Historically we know God often begins such a move among younger generations—young adults, college-aged and even younger. The Welsh revival was birthed through young adults in their 20s. The Haystack Prayer Meeting and missions movement was birthed through college-aged young people.

Sometimes God launched revivals through humble preachers to whom He gave a powerful anointing during a special season: Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, and George Whitefield, for example.

Many revivals also began during economic and social desperation. Probably because people started getting more and more desperate during the painful circumstances chipping away at the comfort of their lives, they started to cry out to God for relief.

One of the revivals with a very curious beginning was the prayer meeting revival that swept across the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Different from other revivals, this one started among businessmen. Due to the pre-Civil War economic woes in the Northern States, New Yorker Jeremiah Lanphier called for a prayer meeting at the Old Dutch Church in lower Manhattan, New York City. In the economic heart of

the city—Wall Street—people gathered to cry out to God for His blessing to fall again.

Six people gathered at the first meeting in 1857. The following week, 20 came to pray, then 40—and within six months 10,000 or more were gathering weekly in New York City. The revival swept across the nation. At its high tide it was reported that 50,000 people a week were coming to faith in Christ across the country. The awful yoke of slavery was broken during the wave of this revival!

A New Excitement

The businessmen's prayer revival seriously intrigues me because I see two major things happening today that are very similar to 1857.

First, our nation is in turmoil, both economically and socially. A sluggish economy has put many out of work. The national debt and government spending are propelling us perilously close to a total economic collapse. While we do not have the issues of slavery and states' rights tearing the nation apart, as America did in the 1850s and 1860s, several social situations currently divide our nation. People with opposing views cannot accept each other anymore or rise above disagreements and work together for the greater good. Our government is rapidly becoming totalitarian, rejecting the beliefs and freedoms established in the early days of our nation. And the moral decline of our nation is both taking us on a course to destruction and shaking believers to the core. The times are very dark!

The other similar element is that people in the business world are again launching a wave of prayer, asking God to pour out His Spirit in revival and spiritual awakening. Started in the hearts of a few businesspeople like Bill Williamson and Os Hillman, a movement called Renewal of America is seeking to

raise up 100 million believers who will pray for the total transformation of America—spiritually, socially, and economically.

They are also challenging businesspeople to use their money to help transform communities through such avenues as feeding the poor and renewing economically troubled neighborhoods.

A few days before this issue was released, I had the privilege of being at a first-of-its-kind gathering between business leaders and prayer leaders. We came together to pray and talk about ways we might raise up 100 million believers to pray effectively for our nation.

Why does this excite me so much? Because I sense the Holy Spirit converging several elements—desperation among believers that will draw them to finally cry out to God, and the financial means to get the word out, to provide encouragement, and to help pray effectively. “But wait,” you say. “I thought revival is a sovereign act of God. Isn’t that an example of people laboring to make something happen?”

I believe God is sovereignly bringing the pieces together. Christians in the business world are leading the charge. This is key. They do not have the “baggage” or limitations in communities that individual ministries, pastors, and churches have. Many pastors and churches are still trying to protect their turf and keep their people “theologically pure.” They often do not encourage gathering with those of other Christian streams. But businesspeople are just happy to find someone in the workplace who is for Christ. Now that has real potential to be a launching pad God can use for revival and awakening!

I encourage you to watch this movement—and join in as you see opportunity.

JONATHAN GRAF is publisher of Prayer Connect.

(C) 2014 Prayer Connect magazine