



D. A. Carson

## What to Do If Revival Comes

"What to Do If Revival Comes" continues Dr. Carson's reflection on revival begun in the November/December 2002 issue, "Lift Up Your Voice!"

I have no idea whether God in his mercy will revive and restore his church in the Western world anytime soon. But I think I have a pretty good idea of what our priorities should be if genuine revival does come.



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In 1975, my wife and I, seeking a little reprieve from our sight-seeing in southern Wales, stepped into a Calvinist Methodist church that was offering afternoon tea to the passing tourists. We paid for our tea and crumpets, and I took my time looking around the building. Its posters and literature bluntly attested that this congregation had long since sacrificed its heritage in favor of classic liberalism.

At the same time, I could not help noticing that the woman who served us tea seemed to be in her eighties, and I wondered if she had been around during the Welsh Revival of 1904 to 1905. I began cautiously, asking if she had been in this church a long time.

"Oh, yes, all my life," she replied. "I was brought up in this valley."

"You must have seen a lot of changes during that time," I persisted.

"Yes, many changes," she agreed.

"And what is the ministry of this church like now?" I asked, growing bolder.

"Oh," she said, more cautious now, "the young people seem to like it."

I decided this was going nowhere fast, so I asked the question that was in my mind all along. "Tell me," I said, "is it true that in the Welsh Revival so many miners were converted and cleaned up their language that the pit ponies that hauled out the coal could no longer understand them?"

Her face lit up. "You know about the Welsh Revival?" she blurted out, now completely animated. "I was converted in the Revival, just a young girl I was.

And what you say is true: my father was a miner, and he stopped cursing and drinking and was a changed man, and the ponies couldn't understand him!" And away she went, story after story, as I probed with gentle questions, listening to her recall those days when

the heavens were rent and the Lord came down.

After half an hour or so, I asked, "Tell me, please, what do you do now for spiritual nourishment? Who teaches you the Word of God? Where do you find fellowship with converted men and women?"

She smiled and patted my hand. "I listen every week to *Back to the Bible* on the radio, out of Morocco."

It was an inexpressibly glorious half hour, and equally sad. For apart from the fruit of that Revival in the lives of those who were immediately touched by it, almost nothing was preserved. That Revival started so well but soon became more eccentric and forced. Worse, despite small efforts later in Swansea, almost nothing was done to capture or develop theological schools, multiply Bible teaching, or train a new generation of preachers.

My interest in revival has not waned with the passing years. Wider reading, and some humbling personal exposure to what God has done in various corners of the world during the past half century, have conspired to forge an unshakable resolution within me. Should the Lord in his mercy ever pour out large-scale revival on any part of the world where I have influence, I shall devote all my energy to teaching the Word, to training a new generation of godly pastors, to channeling all of this God-given fervor toward doctrinal maturity, multiplication of Christian leaders, evangelistic zeal, maturity in Christ, genuine Christian "fellowship."

And all of this I should have learned already from Acts 2:42; 6:2; 1 Timothy 4:13–16, and 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5.