

Oh thou God of all nations upon the earth! we thank thee, that thou art *no respecter of persons*, and that thou *hast made of one blood all nations of men*. . . . We thank thee, that the sun of righteousness has at last shed morning beams upon them. *Rend thy heavens*, O Lord, and *come down* upon the earth; and grant that *the mountains*, which now obstruct the perfect day of thy goodness and mercy towards them, may *flow down at thy presence*. Send thy gospel, we beseech thee, among them. May the nations, which now *sit in darkness*, behold and rejoice in its *light*. May *Ethiopia soon stretch out her hands unto thee*, and lay hold of the gracious promise of thy everlasting covenant. . . . O, hasten that glorious time, when the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall cover the *earth, as the waters cover the sea*.

Absalom Jones,
“A Thanksgiving Prayer for the Abolition
of the African Slave Trade” (1808),
taken from *Conversations with God:
Two Centuries of Prayers by African-Americans*

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN MESSAGE OF HOPE

Note: Useful in preparing family devotions, small group Bible studies, or a Sunday morning sermon, this thirty-minute approach represents only one way to deliver the message of hope. No one message, however, can incorporate all of these suggestions.

1. If you were to give your Bible study, family devotions, or Sunday morning message a title, what would it be? What is the theme for this session? What facet of the vision for revival do you want to explore?

What principle(s) of God's work in personal or corporate revival do you want to illustrate in this session? How might you do that?

2. What text have you selected? (Everything should be built around the Scriptures somehow. In a sense, the entire thirty minutes should reinforce the Word of God.)
3. Do you want to begin with an opening statement? Observation? Story? If so, what should it be?
4. *Hop on!* (four to five minutes)

Do you have a story that will alert your listeners to God's ways in revivals in the past? What story could you share from church history?

Do you have a story that will alert listeners to what God is doing in revival today? Locally? Nationally? Or somewhere else in the world?

Is there a story that will help your people sense the hope they can have personally for a greater work of God in their own lives?

Do you want to share an illustration from your own life or from the life of someone else in the congregation that will enlarge understanding of what God can/will do in true revival?

Above all: What are some exciting ways to strengthen your listeners' confidence in God—that he is the God of all hope, that he is at work to advance the kingdom of his dear Son, and that he will not fail to pour out increased blessings upon them, individually and corporately? How can you open your message by calling them again to a renewed hope in God for their own lives, as well as for our generation?

5. *Open up!* (twelve minutes)

Read the text (two minutes)

Share (or preach) from the text. (See questions in chapter 8.)

How will you show your listeners from the text that God is the God of “so much more,” the God of hope?

How will you relate this text to the overall themes of revival and spiritual awakening?

How will you make Christ the central issue throughout your study of the text? (See questions in chapter 6.)

6. *Pray back!* (ten minutes)

Will you pray verse by verse? Through the message outline? By some other approach?

What creative format could you use? Pairs? Triplets? Small groups? Responsive prayers? Sentence prayers? Unison prayers? Prayers by leaders from the front? Times of silence? Be open, creative, and biblical.

7. *Enter in!* (three minutes)

Conclude by recommending one specific step listeners could take next to help them “act as if” God will answer their prayers. First, how could this message help them pray differently during the week? Also what should they do, based on the text and the message, to get ready—or to be better prepared—for renewal and revival as God gives it?

Do you want to end with a closing statement? Appeal? Brief anecdote? Brief prayer?