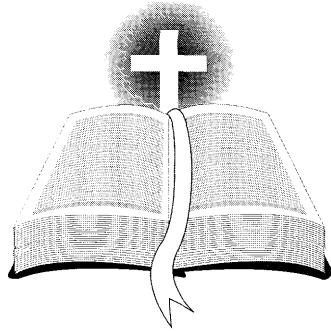


CHAPTER SEVEN



H STANDS FOR “HOP ON!”

Hop On!
Open Up!
Pray Back!
Enter In!

I live in metro New York, home of a most famous (or infamous!) subway system. Laid out on many levels and moving in many different directions, it can overwhelm the uninitiated visitor. But get a subway map and suddenly you find courage to finally hop on a train and go somewhere. In the same way, God’s people need a map of revival so that they can have the courage to pray and prepare for what is coming.

The first ingredient of every message of hope is “Hop on!” This phrase reminds us that agents of revival help God’s people get up to speed with how God has worked in past awakenings, as well as how he is bringing forth renewal and revival today—in churches, communities, throughout our nation, and worldwide.

News Makes News

From previous revivals, we know that verbal communication is possibly the most important single *human* factor in the spread of spiritual breakthroughs. “News of awakening tends to stimulate

awakening.”¹ The more people hear of what God has done in the past or is doing in other places, the bolder they become in faith that God could do the same where they live. As we discovered in chapter 3, this is a wonderful first step toward becoming a prisoner of hope.

Of course, we need to help people develop “interpretative skills” so they quickly grasp what God is really doing. Recently, for example, missionary scholar Robertson McQuilkin, looking across the global landscape, interpreted for others what he saw this way:

We are winning! Two centuries ago there was one Christian to every 49 unsaved persons in the world. Today there is one Bible-believing Christian to every nine in the world. . . . *We are losing!* There are more lost persons now living than the total of all who have lived and died throughout all recorded human history. . . . *Both truths are needed:* the task remaining is vastly greater than it ever was before. But the resources and momentum to do it are greater, too.²

Notice the balance, the fresh perspective. McQuilkin presents reasonable arguments for seeking revival. His statistics also help us clarify and receive a realistic picture of what God is actually doing. He helps us “hop on.”

Using a Catherine Marshall image, it’s like flying south in an airplane while the sun is setting. Those sitting to the east see only a darkened sky. Those sitting by the windows looking west see “a sunset suffusing the entire sky with glorious color.” In a sense, everyone on the plane is headed for the same destination; which window we look out will not change that destination. But how much more wonderful it is to help people on the left-hand side of the plane to view the sunset on the right!³ That is the first job of the messenger of hope. “Hop on!” we say. “Lift your eyes to see what God is doing all around the world; then you will say ‘Truly, the Lord’s great power goes far beyond our borders!’” (Mal. 1:5 TLB). Hear the stories. See the glories. Be filled with great expectations.

“You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth” (Ps. 65:5). And so he does! But how many of our people can recount those awesome deeds? How many of them have good reason to believe Christ alone is truly the hope for all nations? They’re waiting to be brought up to



speed. Begin feeding them with hope-filled accounts of personal and corporate transformations, recorded in the great revivals of the church. Tell them, as well, what God is doing today in China, Finland, South Africa, or Brazil.

Every promise fulfilled and every report of fulfillment confirm that similar demonstrations of God's faithfulness await all of us, where we live. God is no respecter of persons. What he has done for others—and what he is doing this hour in his church and among the nations—he is willing to do for all. It may not look identical to his works elsewhere, but *in principle* every promise of God actively bears down on each of our families and churches. Notice how Jesus, proclaiming the hope of God's kingdom, declared it "at hand," impending, sweeping over them. New triumphs of grace, he claimed, were poised to break forth. Believing this truth and sharing it with confidence compels our hearers to want to jump on board.

Fostering a Spirit of Suspense

Twenty years ago, in audience after audience, I watched God move as we used a newly released twenty-minute videotape. Really, it was nothing more than a "talking head" featuring the late Dr. J. Edwin Orr (the foremost historian at the time on spiritual awakenings). As he recounted the impact of the first three Great Awakenings in our nation, viewers encountered stories and dramas they had never heard before. I saw their faith and hope in God freshly ignited. They went home to tell others the happy stories.

Missiologist Ralph Winter recommends that all Christians should have two books beside their bed: One nightstand should cradle a Bible, to be consulted with prayer every morning. The other should hold a good church history book (he recommends Kenneth Scott Latourette's *History of Christianity*) to be consulted with prayer before retiring. His reason? The explosive combination of hope-filled kingdom advances recounted in both Bible history and church history will spoil us for anything less than powerful movements of Christ in our own times. I've found he's absolutely right.

To all this, we must also add stories of God's wonders in our generation. For example, what if you told your hearers (your family, small group, or Sunday morning congregation) how the Hindu kingdom of Nepal has been so saturated with the gospel that in the past thirty years the church has grown from twenty-five known believers to over four hundred thousand in two thousand different churches? What if you quoted the recent words of a church leader there who said, "We have experienced a supernatural visitation. There is just no other explanation." And this despite years of great persecution and suffering!

What if you announced that a West Coast city has experienced an amazing evangelistic surge, streaming from the faith and prayers of fifty or so pastors who spent four days in fasting and prayer for revival. What if you told how the city has been turned upside-down, how the churches have exploded numerically and spiritually, how there's been reconciliation among believers across the body of Christ? What if you quoted one of the pastors who interpreted this outpouring, saying: "This has given *all* of us hope to believe once more that God is able."

What if you reported how one of the world's major cults has recently embraced biblical Christianity—turning from their false doctrines, giving up reputation, funding, and lands, in order to follow Jesus Christ in full allegiance to him as their only Lord and Savior? What if you shared how the president of this former cult gives the Holy Spirit credit for a genuine spiritual awakening among hundreds of thousands of members, leading them to make Christ, and Christ alone, their message?

These are true stories—just a sample of what God is doing all around the world today! And how much people need to hear these accounts. Sitting in their "waterless pits" of discouragement and exhaustion, they need to be rehydrated by the living water of all God is able and willing to do! Introduce them to great revivals of the past—like those under Patrick of Ireland, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, John Wycliffe of England, Sojourner Truth of America, Pandita Ramabai of India, and Festo Kivengere of East Africa. We want to leave people with a spirit of suspense, wondering, "Is another global great awakening just around the corner?"



Story Sources

Where do you find this kind of information? Where do these stories come from? In addition to *The Hope at Hand*, consider the following sources.

Books

More books on the topic of revival appear practically every month. Here are just a few recent titles:

Robert Bakke, *The Concert of Prayer: Back to the Future?* (Evangelical Free Church Press).

Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Fresh Encounters: Experiencing God in Spiritual Awakening and Revival* (Broadman & Holman).

Bill Bright, *The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray, and Seek the Face of God* (New Life Press).

Robert Coleman, *The Coming World Revival* (Crossway).

Wesley Duewel, *Revival Fire* (Zondervan).

Keith Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing: Evangelism and Revivals in America* (Baker).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (Crossway).

Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (InterVarsity Press).

David McKenna, *The Coming Great Awakening* (Crossway).

J. Edwin Orr, *The Flaming Tongue, The Eager Feet, The Fervent Prayer, and Campus Aflame* (Moody).

Tom Phillips, *Revival Signs: Join the New Spiritual Awakening* (Vision House).

Periodicals

Key periodicals in your mailbox can provide you with fresh stories in every issue. A representative selection may include publications such as:



Charisma

Christianity Today

Concerts of Prayer International newsletter (Chicago and New York)

Global Harvest newsletter (related to A.D. 2000 movement)

Intercessors for America newsletter (Washington, D.C.)

International Renewal Ministries newsletter (Pastors' Prayer Summit, Portland, Oregon)

Mission Frontiers (U.S. Center for World Missions)

National Network of Youth Ministries newsletter (San Diego)

New Man (Promise Keepers)

Pray! (NavPress/National Prayer Committee)

Prism (Evangelicals for Social Action)

The Reconciler (John Perkins Foundation)

Spirit of Revival (Life Action Ministries)

World

World Pulse (Evangelical Missions Information Service)

World Wide Web

Don't stop there, however! Increasingly, updated revival information is available on the World Wide Web. Check a search engine for current URLs for:

Campus Crusade for Christ
Christianity Today
Concerts of Prayer International
Mission America
Promise Keepers
Religion News Today
U.S. Center for World Mission
The U.S. Prayer Track
Youth with a Mission

Mission America, for example, has established an Internet Web site to assist in this communication process. The site, located at



<http://www.missionamerica.org>, is designed to give browsers more information about how God is at work in America and how they can pray for these exciting undertakings. The site includes key links to other web sites providing additional information on prayer, evangelism, outreach, partnering, and items of interest to the Christian community. Questions may be directed to the Mission America Webmaster at 105240.1005@Compuserve.com.

Local News

Beyond all this, you must also uncover and report accounts of awakening right where you live. Ask other believers regularly in your community this one tantalizing question: What is one way God has manifested more of the presence and power of Christ in your life or in your church this past year, past month, or past week? You might have a number of "reporters" put their findings on an e-mail that can be sent to anyone interested. In a similar vein, local pastors—especially if they are praying together—might set up e-mail connections so they can immediately share the signs of revival they observe in their own churches, as well as throughout the community. Simply tapping into your e-mail once a week could provide you more illustrations than you can unload in all your times of Bible teaching. What a delight it is to watch people get up to speed with what God is doing right around them.

Or, dig even deeper. When you come together for Bible study, as a family, or on Sunday morning, alert everyone that they will have opportunity to share with each other how they have witnessed God's moving toward revival in the past week in their own lives. Or, they might testify to something they discovered in reading accounts of revival somewhere else.

Three Categories of Stories

Are you ready to prepare to help other Christians "hop on"? If so, let me suggest, whatever you do, that over time you help your hearers to discover exciting answers to three questions.

1. What Is Revival and Why Is It Important?

Remind people that revival is a divine pattern to be found throughout Scriptures and throughout the history of the church. Give examples.

Tell stories that define clearly and biblically what revival is. Tell them in as uncomplicated a way as possible.

Be creative in how you tell the stories. Make them enticing so that Christians will long for such works of God in their own lives.

Share selections from key books on revival, reading aloud what others say on the topic.

2. Why Is Revival Needed Today?

Illustrate how hopeless our national and world situations are if the church is not revived.

Illustrate how paralyzed and helpless the church is to fulfill the work God has given us to do; emphasize that our only hope is to be revived again.

Use illustrations that are both local, national, and global in scope. Show similarities to your own context.

3. What Are the “Signs of Revival”?

Tell stories of divine awakenings in other parts of the body of Christ today, so that your hearers might gain hope of what God can do for them.

Give specific emphasis to unique trends in renewal and revival, particularly the movement of prayer (which is always the first phase of any genuine revival).

Tell about exciting advances in local and world evangelization that have come out of preliminary experiences of revival.

Create a sense of expectation in your audience that God is no respecter of persons—that what he is doing with others, he is willing, in principle, to do with you, as well, and even more!



One more effort remains for you, one that is absolutely crucial to get people up to speed and help them “hop on” to what God is up to. You must also testify to your own sense of confidence, showing enthusiasm and conviction as you share these stories of hope.

A. W. Tozer said, “God dwells in a state of perpetual enthusiasm. . . . he pursues his labors always in a fullness of holy zeal. . . . Those first disciples burned with a steady inward fire. They were enthusiastic to the point of complete abandonment.”⁴ Somehow, in a way that fits your personality, you need to infect people with enthusiasm that will set them on fire. Do you have stories to tell? Are they exciting to you? Then let those you teach feel your zeal.

In the end, all the efforts I’ve outlined should get *immediate* results. Why? Because God cannot lead you on the basis of facts you do not have. Every time you share these stories, you are placing in the hands of the Holy Spirit more facts with which he can lead your hearers into greater hope and passion for revival—more information than he has ever had to work with before. He will not remain indifferent to these increased opportunities! He will use your stories—and your passion—to incite his people to grab hold, to become prisoners of hope.

With your hearers standing on tiptoe, you now have them ready to dig into the Scriptures.

Scriptures are signs of the only Christ, the glory of God. From the Scriptures Jesus spoke to the minds of the people, and they looked at Him and marveled. Jesus showing forth the wisdom of God. Jesus the sign spoken against. Jesus, a sign overturning the evil time; gathers the nation with His understanding and binds His children together as one. Jesus, the wonder among nations, having done the work He came to do. Earth owned Him. When His soul was offered, His glory was upon Him. He was a Prince and a Son to rule. . . . The mystery of God's greatness. Saints of God on earth. God's signs and wonders, witnesses of His glory and return.

Charles Harrison Mason,
"An Exhortative Invocation" (1919),
taken from *Conversations with God:
Two Centuries of Prayers by African-Americans*