

Put Some Purpose Behind It

By: Matthew Allen

Our spring gospel meeting begins next Sunday. I know you are looking forward to the great opportunities to encourage your brothers and sisters, and strengthen your faith. Throughout the last decade, calls have come from some to do away with gospel meetings. Their ineffectiveness and dwindling attendance are often cited as reasons for discontinuing this part of church work. Some of the factors for the downward trend of gospel meetings are out of our control. Society has changed. Religion is not as important in today's culture as it was in decades past. In our day, people have become more skeptical of religion. Add to this, the many things competing for our time.

But, the decline of gospel meetings has also been due to things within our control. In many congregations, the gospel meeting has become "traditional." Some churches have gospel meetings because they have always had them. No thought, preparation, planning, or prayer go on beforehand. In many places, meetings are no longer designed with a purpose of reaching the lost who have specific religious and moral questions needing answers. Many meetings have become "inward focused" and amount to little more than "brotherhood gossip sessions" devoted to brotherhood issues. How many precious opportunities to reach the lost have been wasted with meetings that have no vision or purpose? I would like to go on record saying that gospel meetings are a good thing and can be a great tool congregations use in areas of edification and evangelism. How?

We have a great opportunity for revival! Let's not be afraid to use the term "revival" for fear that we will sound denominational. This line of thinking limits us. If a thing is biblical, good, and wholesome, use it! Take advantage of it. Surely we all see the need for an occasional revival in our spiritual lives. Most of us live on spiritual plateaus – moving up a notch or two – then leveling off. A great gospel meeting can be just the thing to inspire us to greater service. It has been said, *if God wants sleepers aroused; sluggards energized; the discouraged encouraged; and the battle weary heartened, we must do it!* This can be a great time to renew our first love. In Revelation 2:4-5, we find the Ephesian church faithful in doctrine, but lacking in zeal. By renewing their first love, they would become more zealous in their work. Remember, we have *been purified* as God's possession and are to be *zealous for good deeds* (Titus 2:14). We need more zeal, excitement, and happiness about our status in Christ. Next week will serve as a great opportunity to revive your spiritual life!

We have a great opportunity to revive our persistence. In Galatians 6:9, Paul wrote: *Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.* When we became a Christian, we went on record stating our commitment to Jesus Christ. We must remain true to that vow – no matter what. Sometimes we are tempted to "quit in midstream." We must develop a desire to see things through to the end. How many of us need to "wake up?" Next week can be a time for us to do just that. How serious have we been in living up to our spiritual commitments? There are several of Bro. Dawson's lessons that should go far in reminding us of the need for persistence in Christian living.

Finally, we have a great opportunity to reach the lost. There is power in sound gospel preaching! Paul wrote, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek,* Romans 1:16. There are people who are looking for Bible-centered preaching. Preaching without conviction turns many people off. Let us never be ashamed of our conservative handling of the Scriptures! There is nothing attractive about spineless and spiritless preaching. We must not be fearful to preach the whole counsel of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-6, Paul speaks of an important principle: we plant, God gives the growth! We have a great opportunity next week to get the message out!

Yes...a meeting can be a revival! If it is time for a revival in your life – use next week's meeting as an opportunity to jumpstart your spiritual life! I know you are making every effort in praying for the meeting and making plans to be here each evening. Put some purpose behind it!