

INTRODUCTION

THE OPERATIVE WORD IS *HOPE*

Few in our generation have yet experienced one of God's greatest gifts to his church—*revival*. Nevertheless, we know with certainty what one major characteristic of a coming spiritual awakening will be. Past Spirit-shaped revivals have manifested themselves in many unique ways across centuries, cultures, and traditions. Yet one common theme has marked them all: They are periods of immense hope.

The cause for that hope is undisputed. Times of revival are hope-filled because they are spiritual awakenings to Christ. Discussion of spiritual subjects or an increase in faith-related activities is all well and good. But an interest or appreciation for the spiritual alone has no power to change. Only Christ himself can truly transform individual lives, churches, cities, and nations. At the very core of hope is the anticipation of a brighter future. Only Christ has the power to bring genuine, lasting transformation to his people and the world. That is why any true spiritual revival—one that is hope-filled—must be an awakening to Jesus Christ. It is time to experience that kind of hope again. Worldwide, Christian leaders believe we are entering a day of such revival. I concur. Revival is at hand.¹ This book is dedicated to helping you play a key role in ushering in what will be the most exciting days you will ever know.

Historically, a critical catalyst in all awakenings has been Christians acting as “agents of revival.” The centuries brim with millions of them. Their primary role has usually been twofold: (1) to be messengers of the hope of revival, and (2) to be mobilizers of concerted prayer for revival. I have already written extensively on the topic of united prayer for revival.² I now turn enthusiastically to the exploration of why and how we must become Messengers of Hope. Please join me!

Do Not Be Afraid

In his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II summarizes his relentless confidence in what God is doing in our generation. This hope for the future is based in part on firsthand observations he has made since 1978 on sixty-two missionary trips around the globe.³ His thesis is simple: If we understand biblical Christianity correctly, it can only lead us into greater hope.

Just a few miles from my home, the pope repeated to an audience of one hundred thousand in Giants Stadium a phrase that dominates his book: “Do not be afraid!” A few hours later, appearing before the United Nations General Assembly, he challenged world leaders to conquer their fears and to rediscover in God a spirit of immense hope to carry us into the twenty-first century.

His message recalls for me the opening words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Creation and Fall*: “The Church of Christ bears witness to the end of all things. It lives from the end, it thinks from the end, it acts from the end, it proclaims its message from the end. . . . Christ is the new, Christ is the end of the old. . . . Therefore, the Scriptures need to be read and proclaimed wholly from the viewpoint of the end.”⁴

Both of these men are convinced that because of Christ, Christians have a liberating message of hope for our generation, one of global and eternal magnitude. If any segment of the church, however, has a greater right and responsibility to declare to the world, “Do not be afraid,” surely it is the evangelical movement. “The most dynamic energized sector of religion has been the evangelical one,

and its eschatological vision is central.”⁵ In other words, committed Christians always thrive under the compulsion of the consummation. It is not an issue of being “otherworldly” but rather “future-worldly.”⁶ God has told us how the future will conclude. That knowledge cannot help but impact the way we choose to move along the path to that future.

Despite the fact that many today are caught up with “apocalyptic fever,” anticipating our entrance into the third millennium, we must never disparage the legitimate revolutionary impact a message of hope can have on any of us. In fact, we might argue that a vision for the future (eschatology) “is the most pastoral of all theological perspectives, showing how the ending impinges on the present,”⁷ helping us boldly seize the present, flush with the dawning of God’s new day—the consummation—just ahead of us. The sunrise of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the certain knowledge of Christ’s return and rule intersect our every move. Our calling in Christ and the importance of our message to the world make every risk and sacrifice as God’s messengers worthwhile.

Each fulfillment of God’s promises to the church and among the nations incites us to even greater hope for the future. The Christian life rises from faith to faith, from promise to promise, from glory to glory—from hope to hope (Rom. 4:13–25).

Hope Is a Virtue

Noted intellectual Richard John Neuhaus has said, “The times may be bad, but they are the only times we are given. Remember, hope is still a Christian virtue, and despair is a mortal sin.”⁸ The power of this hope has been demonstrated dramatically by Spirit-led Christians throughout the ages.

In the fourteenth century, Dr. John Wycliffe, a brilliant Oxford scholar, burned with a passion to spread the hope of Christ throughout England by translating the Scriptures into the common vernacular. At the center of controversy throughout much of his life and condemned by the church as a heretic, Wycliffe refused to heed his

enemies' sanctions on his preaching. From his deathbed in exile, he commissioned scores of itinerant priests to proclaim Christ throughout Europe. Historians call him the "morning star" of one of history's greatest revivals, the Reformation. A near-contemporary chronicler of Wycliffe's life observed:

They burned his bones to ashes and cast them into the Swift, a neighboring brook running hard by. Thus, this brook hath conveyed his ashes to Avon, Avon into Seven, Seven into the Nallow Seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is disbursed the world over.⁹

In our own generation, Pastor Christian Fuhrer is another who stands as a shining example of what hope-filled determination in God's supreme authority can do. Fuhrer lived in the former East Germany under an oppressive and godless regime. All around him he saw signs of hopelessness and despair. Daily provisions could only be obtained by standing in long lines. The rate of alcoholism among adults was dangerously high. His profession placed him under scrutiny by a cold and iron-fisted government. Yet he was hopeful! Certainly, this hope was not based on circumstances. Nor could it have come from his own personal, spiritual resources. Fuhrer's confidence in the future came from God himself. And not only did he have hope, he became a messenger of hope.

Throughout the 1980s, each evening at 5:00 P.M., Pastor Fuhrer led East German believers in prayers for peace. In defiance of all human reason, believers in East Berlin became so infected with hope they literally filled the streets with hymns and prayers. Ultimately, without a revolution, without a shot being fired, the fall of the Berlin Wall became a physical representation of the dismantling of the communist government.

What a modern-day messenger of hope! Fuhrer reminds us, "As Christians we are called always to hope. We should expect the unexpected and not let despair get the best of us."¹⁰

What insights do these men and other messengers of hope through the ages have to share with us today? They understand our relationship to Christ is not only a positional one, it is also a *directional* one. As Christians we don't stand frozen in place, communi-



cating with God at a standstill. We *follow* Christ. And where is he going? Into the future. Our circumstances and surroundings simply cannot shape our expectations for tomorrow. Where God is involved, we must recognize and communicate hope for tomorrow.

British pastor Martyn Lloyd-Jones concurred. As he wrote in his book on revival, “The great and constant danger is that we should be content with something which is altogether less than that intended for us.”¹¹ Throughout his ministry in the mid 1900s, he consistently wrote and preached a central truth: “When we are dealing with God, we must always be prepared for the unexpected.”¹² Another messenger of hope.

In the summer of 1996, such a spirit of expectation vividly unfolded before my eyes in the city of Seoul, Korea. I was speaking at the Global Conference on World Evangelization (GCOWE), an event that summoned nearly four thousand leaders of world missions from over two hundred nations. Two meetings during that conference stand out in my mind. First, nearly seventy thousand university students converged in Olympic Stadium to spend six hours (in a driving rainstorm!) looking at the challenge of world evangelization, embracing the hope that it could be done, and committing themselves to believe that God would do it through people like them. At the conclusion, after a forty-five-minute concert of prayer, over sixty thousand offered themselves *in writing* to go anywhere God would send them to complete the task. That is how filled with confidence they were about God’s future for the nations!

Amazingly, an even more dramatic moment occurred the following evening. All four thousand GCOWE delegates reconvened to spend an evening in worship and prayer. What took place may be unique in the history of the church. Mission strategists, representing most nations and most major denominations, lifted up their voices as one to cry out to God for a worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring forth a revival for the twenty-first century. We prayed these prayers in the hope and realization that only such an awakening would secure the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Why did we pray like that? Because after days of cooperative planning, we were filled with assurance that Christ would be victorious in his mission, and that we were to be a part of that victory with him—right now!

It is manifestations of hope such as these that have caused many to conclude that evangelicalism is really the future of Protestantism in the world. The reason is simple: “Head and heart are being brought together in a movement that is looking forward to the future with a sense of expectancy and anticipation.”¹³ As evangelical Christians, *hope* is our operative word.

In 1995, when Christian statesman Leighton Ford was asked to give a charge to a new generation of leaders for the next century, he wrote that his prayer was for them to become “hoppers.” He said, “God is always ahead of us and moving us on. And so as you minister in a world often steeped in confusion and despair, I hope you will breathe expectancy. God always has another move!”¹⁴

To breathe the air of expectancy and to communicate God’s Word and his works with a holy anticipation of so much more—that is what it means to be a Messenger of Hope.

Biblical Hope Is an Abounding Hope

The one overarching demand the gospel makes of *all* of us is this: Put your hope in God. “In this simple act of hope his grace is glorified, and sinners are saved. This is the command of the gospel that keeps God at the center—the center of his affections and ours.”¹⁵ He is not only the God who is and was, but also the God “who is to come” (Rev. 1:8). Over seventy-five hundred promises crisscross the Bible. And all of them say “Yes!” to those of us in Christ—guaranteed (2 Cor. 1:20).

My own years of study convince me that Scripture’s promises can be summarized into *six* dynamic dimensions of the work of Christ: who he is to us, for us, over us, within us, through us, and most relevant to this book, who he is out ahead of us. Out ahead of us? Yes. True, some promises have already been fulfilled. Most, however, have not yet been realized—not fully, because they await the consummation. But in a preliminary sense, all of God’s promises can be proclaimed to be “at hand,” bearing down on top of us, ready to break through in marvelous approximations of how they will ultimately be fulfilled in the consummation. Fresh installments of the new creation await all of our churches and missions. Today, Christ goes

before us to take us there. As I said before, we *follow* him. That's why *hope* is the operative word.

Ephesians 1:18 and 4:4 assure us that all Christians are defined by the same hope. We've been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3). Fixing our hope on the promise of even more grace coming at us (1 Peter 1:13), we are ready to answer any who ask us where our life of confident expectation comes from (1 Peter 3:15–16). Anticipating greater manifestations of God's glory, we constantly rejoice (Rom. 5:3). Our hearts are so possessed with God's love for us that we renounce fears that he will somehow fail to fulfill all that he has promised (Rom. 5:5). Our God longs to do exceedingly above and beyond what we could ask or think (Eph. 3:20–21), and to surprise us with awesome deeds of righteousness. How can we not pronounce him to be the hope for all the ends of the earth (Ps. 65:5)?

Repeatedly, God reassures us of his plans for us—plans to prosper us and to give us a hope and a future (Jer. 29:10–11). This is the motivation for seeking him with all our hearts (Jer. 29:13).

Take a look at the Sermon on the Mount. As with many commands of Scripture, it is infused with promised rewards. The Beatitudes, for example, make little sense apart from the hope of God's sovereign, gracious intervention for those who seek him (described in the second half of each Beatitude). Once that hope is present, saints are eager to take whatever steps are needed to fulfill God's plan. As Henri Nouwen puts it, "Hope prevents us from clinging to what we have and frees us to move away from the safe place and enter unknown and fearful territory."¹⁶

When a whole congregation of people for whom all this is true come together, the hallmark of a truly Spirit-filled church is demonstrated—an *abounding* hope, produced by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13). Prepare for it!

What Hope Is Not

Now, let's be clear on three points. First, biblical hope does not walk with *presumption*. An excess of confidence in one's self and



what one can accomplish eventually leads to downfall and disaster. Nor should we presume that all our own dreams or ambitions—even for Christ—are necessarily given or guaranteed by God. We should also realize we cannot assume that the fulfillment of God’s promises is inevitable in the face of persistent sin or unbelief. If we grieve the Holy Spirit, we have no right to expect to abound in his power.

Second, biblical hope is the opposite of *resignation*. It is more like a rebellion against the status quo—a summons into a Christ-centered revolution. To hope in God is not to escape from reality; rather it is to have the courage to look reality straight in the eye. The moment we hold is not final in Christ. God has much more for us; we won’t settle for less.

This is a major message of the apocalyptic parts of the Bible, including Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation. Filled with radical (though sometimes enigmatic) visions of the future, these passages dramatize a hope taught in much of Scripture: No matter how dark the circumstances may seem, righteousness triumphs. The kingdom comes at God’s decree, not man’s. Even at our darkest moments, God’s redemptive judgments are accelerating toward the fulfillment of all his promises. In turn, God’s people are to prepare for this coming hope, to live lives consistent with it right now, to be marked by a spirit of watchfulness and waiting, coupled with urgency, to be a people of hope until God intervenes to do for them what they are not able to do for themselves.

Finally, *optimism* is not a synonym for biblical hope. (Someone defined an optimist as a Yugo owner with a car alarm!) In his commentary on Revelation, Eugene Peterson observes that “human optimism comes in two forms: moral and technological. The moral optimist thinks that generous applications of well-intentioned goodwill to the slag heaps of injustice, wickedness, and the world’s corruption will put the world gradually, but surely, in the right.” I wonder how many Christians also engage life with this well-intentioned goodwill that falls so far short of the Spirit-induced hope that can ultimately set things right? Peterson goes on: “The technological optimist thinks that by vigorously applying scientific intelligence to the problems of poverty, pollution, and neurosis, the world will gradually, but surely, be put right.” Any technological optimists serving on your local church’s leadership council? Peterson concludes: “Neither form of optimism worships God. . . . Opti-

mists see that there are a few things left to do to get the world in good shape and think they are just the ones to do it.”¹⁷

Why is it so essential to avoid presumption, resignation, and optimism? Why strive to lay hold of the dynamic dimensions of biblical hope? Well, remember the people around Jesus who ultimately crucified him; they were people of distorted vision. The results were not pretty. The Pharisees anchored their future to the success of their own “lay renewal movement,” pushing the nation back to full commitment to Moses and the law. The Sadducees took their name from the high priestly family of Zadok, Ezekiel’s envisioned leadership for the promised new temple. Unfortunately, the Sadducees tied their self-assumed destiny to an uneasy compromise with the secular powers of Rome. Judas probably betrayed Jesus out of his own impatience with how ineffectively Jesus seemed to be fulfilling the hope he proclaimed. Desperate for more immediate results, Judas offered Jesus to the Sanhedrin in the hopes of forcing Jesus’ hand. Preserving his prospects in the face of the inflamed masses was Pilate’s goal. How? Eliminate all competition to his future ambitions. And the crowd? They cheered Jesus in his triumphal entry, raising the great prayer for revival, “Hosanna!” which means literally, “Lord, save us now!” But how quickly they retrograded into the security of tradition and ancient rituals, too preoccupied to sustain their involvement through the end of the week. Clearly, Neuhaus is right: Lack of hope, true biblical hope, can be a mortal sin.

Jesus, however, broke through all these deceptions and lies, the greatest of all being idolatrous pride. Taking the mortal sin of misplaced hopes into his own body on the cross, he rose again to subsume in himself every promise God had ever offered to those who hope in him. He is the consummation itself, our blessed hope (Titus 2:13) and our glory: “the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). He is also our message of hope, the focus of the coming revival.

Signs of Hope in Hong Kong

Beautiful Hong Kong Stadium looks out over a world-class city. In 1995, I watched ten thousand Hong Kong believers gather there

for a three-hour concert of prayer to intercede for their homeland, which was about to revert to the control of mainland Chinese communists. That afternoon I preached on the hope-filled promise of Jeremiah 33:3: “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” I told them that God is always ready to unleash a fresh work in our lives (or in our city), one that goes way beyond what we have seen him do before. In fact, Jeremiah 33 was spoken to a helpless prophet sitting in prison inside a city under siege, yet, amazingly, the whole chapter is about the hope of revival! God showed Jeremiah a transformed community, awash with spiritual awakening, experiencing grace upon grace.

That afternoon, huddled under umbrellas in a Pacific rainstorm, Hong Kong believers cried out to God with renewed assurance that he would give them in principle a Jeremiah 33–style revival in the coming years. Their praying crackled with anticipation of God’s renewal for Hong Kong. They saw a church galvanized to be a base of operations for Christ’s kingdom throughout the Chinese world. They chose to pray (and obey) with a hope requiring them “to believe in advance what will only make sense in reverse.”¹⁸

Such is the heartbeat of this book. But the signs are also close to home.

An African-American Legacy

I’ve been at work many years proclaiming the hope of revival. Eager Christians along the way have deepened and sharpened that message within me. A multitude of heralds, including a host of prayer mobilizers all throughout the body of Christ, have nourished within me unshakable expectations toward God.

But the segment of the church that has had the most profound impact on my vision has been the African-American church. Theirs is a body supremely marked by hope. As African-American scholar Stephen Carter writes, “Black Americans are the most religious, the most devout people in the world.”¹⁹ This devotion overflows in abounding hope. It is the kind of hope discovered by Jonathan Kozol in the South Bronx, where hope-filled churches are the survivors,

evidencing an “amazing grace” that sustains people in the face of overwhelming poverty.²⁰

It’s the kind of hope expressed by Bishop George McKinney, leader of a major inner-city church in San Diego, who reflects: “With God bringing all peoples to our city, this could be the Black Church’s finest hour to catch the vision to reach across racial and ethnic lines. The Black Church is best equipped with how to deal with the urban crisis, because we have been in the crucible of pain.”²¹ Speaking out of his own context, Tony Evans captures Black hope quite simply: “The church must penetrate the culture with the message, ‘You’re going down, but look up. In your distress cry to the Lord. Seek him, and he will let you find him.’”²² In his effort to groom God-centered leaders in the Black community, theologian Samuel D. Proctor writes in his book *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* that the African-American experience has created a faith that “puts steel in our spines to endure physical bondage, and zeal in our souls to prevail against evil; it illuminates our minds to hold on to a vision of a better day and inspires our hearts to learn.”²³

My indebtedness to these brothers and sisters in Christ was inescapable to me as we concluded a recent Messenger of Hope Conference held in a Black inner-city church in Seattle. For two days, spiritual leaders from throughout the Pacific Northwest met together. The two hundred participants, many of them pastors, represented a healthy mixture of Black and White Christians. We set aside the final session for dedicating ourselves to be messengers of hope. But God indicated he wanted us to alter the approach. All the White pastors came forward to kneel at the front of the sanctuary. All the Black pastors were invited to stand before them, to lay on hands, and to pray prayers of recommission. Why? Because our two days of discussions had convinced us that the message of revival we needed to proclaim into all our churches was already alive and pulsing in many of the African-American churches represented among us. Our prayer was that the Spirit of abounding hope (Rom. 15:13), already resting vitally on Black congregations and leaders, might come upon all of us (as Moses and his elders experienced in Num. 11:25), so each one could return to his or her own people to be an effective agent of revival. It was a profound moment for me.



As you'll see, I've begun a number of chapters with prayers drawn from the book *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African-Americans*.²⁴ This is so you, too, might catch something of the message of hope that has so powerfully dominated the Black Christian experience for generations. What a legacy they give to the coming revival!

Here's Where We're Headed

Messengers of Hope begins where I left off in *The Hope at Hand*. In that companion volume, I discussed reasons why we can pray and prepare with absolute confidence that a God-given revival of national and global proportions is coming to the church for the twenty-first century. Since publishing it, the signs of revival have increased markedly.

This can be seen in the movement of prayer for revival throughout the body of Christ. As I've often said, there are many feeder streams of prayer into the riverbed of coming revival. The full river of revival may not be here yet, but the feeder streams (local, national, and international prayer initiatives) are very active. Thus, it is only right to conclude—since we serve a prayer-initiating, prayer-answering God—that the *river* of revival cannot be far behind! Which alerts us to the critical need of the hour. God's praying people (and there are millions of them) must be kept as clear as possible on the hope we are praying toward.

That need shapes the central thesis for this book. Now that the prayer movement is up and rolling, we must flood our nation (beginning with the body of Christ) with messengers of hope. These are the agents who will keep the true hope of revival—awakening to Jesus Christ—clear and central for the prayer movement until our prayers are fully answered. These are the ones who will help us better prepare to run with the answers to our prayers as they come. In fact, these messengers themselves are a major answer to all our prayers.

In Psalm 68:11, we read: "The Lord announced the word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it." Have you heard Handel's *Messiah* recently? Do you remember the chorus based on this

verse? Handel captures musically the drama of what is pictured in Psalm 68. First, he has all the men sing quite forcefully in unison: “The Lord gave the word.” Then, the entire choir takes up the second half of the verse, “and great was the company of the preachers.” Each section of the choir sings this same refrain in different directions, giving us the feel of a multitude of messengers scattering across the landscape, carrying everywhere the hope first announced by God.

And what is that word? It is nothing less than the promise of revival. Seen in the context of Psalm 68, which begins in verse 1 with the phrase “May God arise, may his enemies be scattered,” the word is that enemy kings and armies have fled in haste; that God’s triumphal procession is moving through the enemy camp, taking booty and captives; that the triumphant parade is ascending Zion’s hill into the temple—all so that God may manifest his glorious presence before his people as they celebrate the victory with him. It’s all about revival, biblical revival, pure and simple. As verse 11 tells us, when the Lord gives the word that a revival is at hand, messengers of hope carry the good news throughout the church. Actually, they aren’t able to stop themselves!

Today, once again, God is raising up an army of heralds. In part, this book is a result of my meetings with thousands of them while teaching on this subject. I have encountered present and potential messengers of hope in scores of pastors’ seminars and regional conferences, as well as in training times with young people and lay leaders throughout the churches.

True, many with whom I have met are clergy. But agents of revival can also be found among the laity of thousands of local congregations. Preeminent are the praying people, those who have sought the Lord for years for the river that’s coming. But many others are joining now in the proclamation of hope even as you read these pages. It is these messengers of hope who will significantly determine how God’s people prepare for and enter into a God-given revival for the twenty-first century.

Revival is our message of hope. Even more accurately, our message is Christ, who is at the center of revival. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). Jesus guarantees the “much more” God wants

to do in us, through us, and out ahead of us. As discussed in depth in *The Hope at Hand*, Christ-centered revival is the foremost manifestation of the hope God offers to any generation of his people. It's the greatest blessing we can anticipate apart from and until the second coming.

Throughout this book we will see why so many are convinced that God is not only willing and able, but ready *right now* to bring spiritual awakening to believers throughout the church. Actually, the initial purpose of this book is to make you a "prisoner" of such hope (see chapter 3), and to help you get free of what I call "boxes of pea-sized Christianity" (see my book *Stand in the Gap*).²⁵ I want you to live a confident discipleship that is hope-filled from beginning to end.

Most of all, I'm writing to equip you to be a messenger of this hope to others. Part of that equipping involves finding new confidence to proclaim such a message (see chapter 4). But part of it (the focus of the second half of this book) also requires practical skills that will help you effectively deliver this message to your family, your small group Bible study, your Sunday school class, or your congregation on a Sunday morning. We'll explore four critical ingredients that need to be a part of every message of hope (chapters 7 through 10), and will also talk about how Christ is the center of our message of hope, uncovering guidelines to help you keep him there (chapter 6).

The Blade of the Sickle

In 1986, while serving as minister-at-large for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, I helped guide a celebration at Mount Hermon, Massachusetts, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of a student Bible conference led by Dwight L. Moody. That gathering in August of 1886 precipitated the unprecedented Student Volunteer Movement. Out of extended study on God's magnificent promises and seasons of prayer, one hundred students propelled a missionary recruitment effort that lasted for over thirty years and sent out some twenty thousand new missionaries overseas. It was also a catalyst for the Laymen's Missionary Movement, which by the early 1900s supplied funding for enlarging the North American missionary thrust. A century later, in

1986, 250 of us gathered to revisit this gracious movement and to honor the agents of revival it produced for a whole generation.

The day after our conference, after everyone had gone home, I wandered down the hillside from the conference grounds. Strolling along the Connecticut River, I pondered what God had done in 1886, and whether he was willing to do it again. Following the old path, I came upon a cornfield, full and ripe for the late August harvest. From where I stood, it seemed to stretch to the horizon. As I gazed, however, the stalks of corn with leaves raised up toward the sun suggested to me a great army of Christians, row upon row, offering praises to God. Then, in my mind's eye, all the stalks were suddenly cut off at the ground, falling forward as it were, in worshipful surrender to the Lord. In prayer, I asked God how this could happen. What was the sickle applied to reap this harvest of freshly dedicated Christians? The answer came immediately: the movement of prayer for revival, already rapidly unfolding across the nation. I responded with another question: If the sickle itself was the prayer movement, what was the sharpened blade of the sickle? Again, an answer came: The blade itself was a message of hope—the hope of revival. Finally, I wondered: Who will swing the sickle? But I had no need to ask. I knew the answer. The same as it had been one hundred years ago. Messengers of Hope!

In the years since that experience, by firsthand observation across the globe, I see that this is precisely what God is up to. He is reaping a whole new army of decisively devoted believers, moving out for the global cause of Christ. To accomplish this harvest, the revival movement requires the sickle of the prayer movement and the blade of the message of hope. As God's people pray, hearing that message and seeking God for mighty things that they have not yet seen, full spiritual awakening will come upon us. At the forefront of the awakened hosts will be the harvesters—the agents of revival, the messengers of hope.

This book is about the blade of the sickle. It's about those who swing the sickle. It's about how they do it. And in it all the operative word is *hope*.