

7 Guaranteed Ways to End Boring, Predictable Church Services

An Azusa Street report:

...disgraceful intermingling of the races ... they cry and make howling noises all day and into the night. They run, jump, shake all over, shout to the top of their voice, spin around in circles, fall out on the sawdust blanketed floor jerking, kicking and rolling all over it. Some of them pass out and do not move for hours as though they were dead. These people appear to be mad, mentally deranged or under a spell. They claim to be filled with the spirit. They have a one eyed, illiterate, Negro as their preacher who stays on his knees much of the time with his head hidden between the wooden milk crates. He doesn't talk very much but at times he can be heard shouting, "Repent," and he's supposed to be running the thing... They repeatedly sing the same song, "The Comforter Has Come."

It's becoming less common for Christians to jump out of bed on Sunday mornings, excited about heading to church. Of course, many do still love their church experience. The worship environment is powerful, the vision is alive, and the part they play causes them to feel the fire of the Holy Spirit coursing through them. However, sadly, if we were honest, we'd have to admit that many church services are much less powerful, less anointed and less impacting than we'd like. In fact, a church that looks anything like what was described in the above Azusa Street report can hardly be found.

There is a way to fix that. The end result is an atmosphere that's placed in the Holy Spirit's control. I'll tell you this: It's impossible to be bored when God moves. Impossible.

It can't happen. It's possible to be provoked, irritated, offended or troubled, but not bored or disconnected. What this means is that, in many churches, God isn't moving in real power. It may be hard to admit that, but we must if we want to prepare for revival and an outpouring that will make us say, "I can never do church the way I used to again."

An Azusa Street report:

"All who are in touch with God realize as soon as they enter the meetings that the Holy Ghost is the leader."

Seven Sure-Fire Strategies to End Boring, Predictable Church Services

1. Lead in lengthy sessions of corporate praying and singing in tongues.

True Christian leaders will confidently, passionately and continually lead people in fervent and supernatural prayer. Lack of a powerful prayer emphasis on Sunday mornings is an indicator of a lack of a powerful prayer discipline throughout the week. When we are burning in intercession throughout the week, there is an explosion that simply must come on Sunday mornings and any other time the saints meet together.

Nurturing an atmosphere where everybody is praying in tongues and singing in the Spirit simply cannot disappoint. How easy would it be, in the midst of worship, to spend 15 or 20 minutes pacing around the room, lying out at the altar or finding a place to pray in tongues with a zealous spirit? I recommend integrating this into every church service, understanding that the wind of the Holy Spirit may blow the program for the rest of the day well of course.

In fact, it would be valuable to bring the worship team down off the platform on occasion during this part of the service so they can be free to let the groans and cries of their heart out. Often, worship team members find a comfort spot behind

their instrument or microphone. You'd be sadly surprised at how many people who have been entrusted to lead us into the holy of holies don't operate from a burning, overwhelming spirit of prayer.

"When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6).

An Azusa Street report:

Singing was sporadic and in a cappella or occasionally there would be singing in tongues. There were periods of extended silence. Attenders were occasionally slain in the Spirit.

2. Embrace a vibrant prophetic culture. Invite people to submit prophetic words during the service.

In order to stay right on track with the order of service and to ensure the focus of the day isn't threatened, definitely do not promote a prophetic culture. Unfortunately, too many pastors have embraced that advice by eliminating or rejecting prophetic ministry on Sundays.

I've always believed one of the best ways to promote an absolutely electric church service is by allowing God to speak. When people are trained in the prophetic and are also given an outlet to reveal what God is desiring to communicate through them, the supernatural energy in the room spikes. I often wonder how many sermons have been delivered and how many church services have been conducted in such a way that God's plan for the day was entirely missed.

As we effectively equip people in prophetic ministry and facilitate an environment that affirms and promotes prophetic expression, God will blow through the saints and the atmosphere will shake under the weight of God's *rhema* word.

We need the groans of God to roar through the saints and to

prophetically shatter the building, just as they did at Azusa. "Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1).

An Azusa Street report:

... devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal. Colored people and a sprinkling of whites compose the congregation, and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve racking [sic] attitude of prayer and supplication.

3. Have open-mic intercession. Invite people to pray 10-15 second prayers, to make decrees and to stir the atmosphere.

Praying in tongues corporately will naturally lead to some incredibly potent revelation stirring within the people. I believe it's extremely valuable to invite people, in that Holy Spirit infused moment, to release that in the form of short prayers and decrees.

Simply open the microphone and watch the line grow as hungry, passionate saints of God prepare to lead the people in intercession, one after the other. Imagine 20 or 30 people or more shocking the atmosphere with Holy Spirit-driven decrees. Not only is it powerful corporately, but it also empowers people individually to take ownership of what God is doing within. As they all respond to the impact of the Holy Spirit, they become stronger and the service will definitely be marked with fire.

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. 34:15).

An Azusa Street report: "There was spontaneous preaching and altar calls for salvation, sanctification and baptism of the

Holy Spirit.”

4. Invite people to make biblical declarations.

At another point during the service, open the microphone again. Invite people to release biblical declarations. The Word of God is alive, and when that sharp sword pierces the atmosphere as people read it and then call everyone to come into agreement with it, it will result in supernatural shockwaves.

“Your statutes are very sure; holiness is becoming to Your house, O Lord, forever” (Ps. 93:5).

An Azusa Street report:

...in most services preaching consisted of Seymour opening a Bible and worshippers coming forward to preach or testify as they were led by the Holy Spirit.

5. Promote prophetic art, flagging, dance and other expressions during the service.

It's disappointing that prophetic expression such as art, dance and flagging are almost extinct in the church today. I suggest we allow the dancers to dance! There's serious prophetic power when anointed people flag, paint, dance and contend in the Spirit.

Put up the easels and allow the artists to draw or paint. Provide whiteboards for people to write down prophetic words anytime during the service. Celebrate the dance and encourage the flaggers. God has given them important gifts, and it's a mistake to shut them out.

I know many pastors would argue that they can be undisciplined. They might steal attention as they exhibit their gifting during the service. My question would be, what have you done to guide and equip them? Have you invested in

them by training in protocols and equipping in prophetic ministry? If not, you can't blame them if they don't know exactly how to respond when their God-given desire to function in ministry is stirring within.

"Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing" (Ex. 15:20).

6. Have prayer for deliverance, healing and freedom.

When's the last time you saw someone vomit at the altar? Yeah, I know, that's a funny question. I personally don't prefer to clean up the mess (I love that some pro-deliverance churches have "bucket brigades"). The point is valid, however. When is the last time deliverance has happened on a Sunday morning?

The weight of God's glory should be so intense that demons easily manifest, and deliverance commences right there at the altar. I've had demons react in some intense ways in services I've been in. It's actually a thrilling adventure, not something to be shut down for the sake of keeping nice, quiet and sanitized order. When we know who we are and the authority we walk in, deliverance is something we should all get excited about.

As we contend for deliverance, healing and freedom on Sunday mornings, the order of service will often have to be violated. I'd personally rather see people free than hear the prepared sermon or get out of the service on time.

"These signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17).

An Azusa Street report:

Among first-hand accounts were reports of the blind having their sight restored, diseases cured instantly.

7. Expect manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and don't shut them down when comfort levels are threatened.

How is it we can worship God, preach about God and gather together because of God but shut God out when he starts to interact in a supernatural way? Manifestations of the Holy Spirit should be expected. If God's not moving, something is wrong.

I remember a meeting many years ago where God was moving in extremely intense power. People were absolutely rocked. God was touching people for at least two hours before the preaching even began. When the preacher was bringing the message, one lady was laughing and crying under the power of the Holy Spirit. Some in attendance kept looking her way as God ministered to her. The preacher became agitated and said something like, "Can you not hear me? Should I have the sound crew turn my mic up? Pay attention. Do you really want me to shut down God's ministry to that lady just because you can't stay focused?"

That was a powerful moment indeed. One I've remembered for over two decades.

"'In the last days it shall be,' says God, 'that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams' (Acts 2:17).

An Azusa Street report:

Soon the crowds became very large and were full of people speaking in tongues, shouting, singing and moaning. Many people would continually shout throughout the meetings. Finally, the front porch collapsed, forcing the group to begin looking for a new meeting place. They shouted three days and three nights. It was Easter season. The people came from everywhere. By the next morning there was no way of getting near the house. As people came in they would fall

under God's power; and the whole city was stirred. They shouted until the foundation of the house gave way, but no one was hurt.

The attendees were often described as "Holy Rollers", "Holy Jumpers", "Tangled Tonguers" and "Holy Ghosters". Reports were published throughout the U.S. and the world of the strange happenings in Los Angeles.

Church Should Never Be Boring

While I'm not at all proposing that church should entertain us, I am saying that it's just not possible to be bored in an environment where the Holy Spirit is moving, touching, engaging, healing, delivering, wrecking and encountering the people.

I'd challenge every pastor to initiate all seven of these strategies. The result will be a church on fire that draws in a hungry, passionate remnant that is ready to release the oracles of shake the nations.

An Azusa Street report:

Christians from many traditions were critical, saying the movement was hyper-emotional, misused Scripture and lost focus on Christ by overemphasizing the Holy Spirit. Within a short time ministers were warning their congregations to stay away from the Azusa Street Mission.

Proud, well-dressed preachers came to "investigate". Soon their high looks were replaced with wonder, then conviction comes, and very often you will find them in a short time wallowing on the dirty floor, asking God to forgive them and make them as little children.