

We Need the Freaky Stuff! Just How Spirit-Filled Is Your Church?

This is part one in a two-part series.

My 4-year-old daughter, Eva, just said something as I'm sitting here writing this article at a Starbucks in Branson, Missouri. While scanning through cartoons to watch on Netflix on her tablet, she zeroed in on one.

"I want to watch this one. But I don't. It's freaky and I love freaky stuff. But I also hate freaky stuff."

I just had to laugh. In a way, that might sum up the tension of the Christian heart. Discerning good and evil is important for all of us. I'm proud of Eva at her young age!

Further, from an entirely different angle, it may also be the way many people think about the supernatural. Church experiences widely range from absolutely stoic and dead to bizarre and flamboyant. Freaky.

I think there are many mildly hungry yet cautious Christians out there in the middle who are intrigued by the "freaky stuff" but, then again, are tired of the ridiculous manifestations in many churches that aren't Spirit-driven at all. It's just people acting strange in the name of freedom. Too often, they default to calm and safe instead of wild and risky. Many pastors fall into this category as well.

America needs to take a bold, confident step toward wild and risky. We need the freaky stuff in the church to emerge as it did at Azusa.

William H. Durham recorded his testimony in the sixth issue of *The Apostolic Faith* (February-March, 1907), p. 4, where he

wrote:

On Friday evening, March 1, His mighty power came over me, until I jerked and quaked under it for about three hours. It was strange and wonderful and yet glorious. He worked my whole body, one section at a time, first my arms, then my limbs, then my body, then my head, then my face, then my chin, and finally at 1 a.m. Saturday, Mar. 2, after being under the power for three hours, He finished the work on my vocal organs, and spoke through me in unknown tongues. ()

Another local paper reporter in September 1906 described the happenings at Azusa with the following words:

...disgraceful intermingling of the 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." ()

We Need More Than Explosive Church Services

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26-27).

It's true that I firmly believe we need a massive shift toward "groaning churches" with atmospheres of searing hot intercession that cause the building to shake. I've been in many, but nowhere near enough, such services that have left me in tears, trembling and under the influence of fire, drunk on something out of this world. The supernatural moments, in very legitimate ways, forever marked my life and my relationship with Jesus. When you add authentic experience to life-changing truth, you can't help but be transformed from someone who is simply devoted to Jesus to someone who is raging in love, undone, undignified and suddenly alien. Everything changes through authentic encounter with Jesus. Nobody can remain the same.

Too often, we presume we can achieve such an electric atmosphere in our church services through charisma, exuberance and a decent dose of exciting worship and expressive prayer. This is common in your more "alive" churches. People are just deep and hungry enough to "jump a little higher than before," as the song goes (which, at some point becomes humanly impossible.)

The point I'm making is this: It takes a leadership team and a zealous people who are setting a culture of deep and extreme prayer, sharp spiritual discernment, and who are wildly prophetic to experience breakthrough into the supernatural.

Natural and predictable church services are the result of spiritually lazy and naturally minded people who are not moving into the realm of the invisible.

Freaky Stuff Will Set the Stage

My life in ministry has been shaped by unusual and powerful supernatural conflicts and encounters. I say that not because it's cool, but because I'm really dumbfounded. A simple man praying fervent prayers has somehow triggered invisible entities into manifesting in the natural. As I started

witnessing more and more, I began to understand how absolutely critical it was to live, walk, breathe and legislate in the Spirit—especially for those engaging in a dark world with an apostolic assignment.

Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:10-12).

How many Christians are actually confronting evil forces as a part of their ministry strategy? This takes way, way more than simple prayers. We must go deeper than ever. When we do, the fight is on and it will absolutely manifest in the natural realm. Get ready for some wild church services!