

Are Modern Worship Services Letting the Holy Ghost Move?

One London church leader is trying to persuade fellow clergy that today's worship services are excessively long.

How long would you estimate your attention span to be? Ten minutes? A half hour? Ninety minutes? It is safe to say that the length of one's attention span would ultimately depend on the topic or issue at hand. What if the topic was your Creator—the Lover of your soul?

The Bishop of Lichfield, Rev. Jonathan Gledhill submitted in his London diocese recently that “clergy should aim to keep the time of worship to no more than 50 minutes.” He believes worship has become too complicated, leading to confused and excluded churchgoers.

Many seem to blame the confusion on the preoccupation in societal norms today. Sundays are now filled with events and activities beyond church services, like sporting events. Lives are set and lived according to time schedules—some, down to the minute. As much as we would like to be in control, what authority do we have, if any, to put a time limit on God?

Spending over an hour in church seems alien to some and even taboo to others. But to many of *Charisma's* Facebook fans, limitless services are the most fulfilling. Over two dozen Facebook comments acknowledged the Holy Spirit as an immovable variable in the product of worship time.

Colleen Cobb Audette of Micco, Fla., says: “The service should be led by the Holy Spirit. These ‘timed’ services are nothing but ‘religion.’ Too many times we get caught up in having an agenda. We pray, ‘Holy Spirit have your way, but make it quick because we have a lot to do this morning.’”

She finds rushing the movement of the Holy Spirit to be frustrating. "I have felt the Holy Spirit start to move upon the church and then we are asked to be seated so we can go on with the service."

Several individuals went on to point out differences between American society and others. It was noted that some Mexican Sunday schools lasted seven hours. Other countries engage in eight to 10 hours of teaching and at that point have only sprinkled their dry souls.

Sharon Stadtherr, a church dropout, feels some churches try too hard to "be all and do all on Sunday mornings." She continues: "One doesn't truly experience discipleship and intimate fellowship in a church 'service' no matter how long it lasts.

"I think the 'church made in America' focuses too much on making that one day a week a great experience for people and not enough on what goes on during the other six days of the week. This is where the rubber meets the road."

Despite different reasoning, *Charisma* Facebook fans submit that limited time with God does not quench the thirst.

Last year the Vatican told Catholic clergy to limit their messages to eight minutes in length.

One Facebook fan turned the tables asking, "How much time does God give us?"

Christopher Ales of Daphne, Ala., prefers the clocks to be removed from the sanctuary. He feels pastors are more worried about pleasing the congregation instead of pleasing God. "[L]eave quietly if you want to leave," says Ales, "but don't infringe on the Holy Spirit when He is moving. I am left to wonder how many healings are missed, how many leave the same way they came in, bound when deliverance was in our midst."