

When Church Is Boring

What do you do when you find that church is boring? It's time for a change! Now the question is, change what? Many folks think the answer is to change the church. I just read an article about a new church created for men only, men who find church boring. Discarding more traditional environments, they meet in a gymnasium one Saturday evening a month. A rock band provides entertainment. The preacher speaks in front of the scoreboard, with the clock running. He guarantees to have them out in one hour! This sort of innovation is not unusual. Many religious leaders hail it as a positive development, a way to reach out to those who otherwise would have no interest in church. Some might not go that far, yet they still insist on change. Contemporary music, drama, and short sermons that are little more than pep talks are the order of the day. Clapping and cheering have replaced old fashioned amens. Celebration and praise are the buzzwords, with the world's calendar dictating the subject celebrated.

Malachi lived at a time when people found "church" boring. Speaking of Israel's worship, God said through the prophet, "You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it" (Malachi 1:13). God proposed two changes to these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home. "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you" (v. 10). The better solution, the change He preferred, was to repent. "'If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,' says the Lord of hosts, 'then I will send the curse upon you'" (2:2). Notice what God did not approve: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

The preacher can work to make his sermons more interesting, the song leader can try to select more meaningful hymns, and the one who leads in prayer can give more thought to what he says. However, when worship as God directed is boring, the main change that is needed is in the heart of the worshiper.

Frank Himmel