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When Church Is Boring

- by Frank Himmel

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!

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. *Celebration* and *praise* are the buzzwords.

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 in these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home (1:10). The better solution - the change He preferred - was to repent (2:2). Notice what God did not approve of: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

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

The Weaker Vessel

Jim Jonas

To the sheer delight of feminists everywhere, Peter refers to a man's wife as a "weaker vessel" (1 Pet 3:7). The standard feminist take on this is that the Bible is misogynist and denigrates women as brainless slaves, good for nothing but birthing babies and cooking meals. To be self-actualized, women need to break out of this antiquated mold and dominate in boardrooms, state houses and on the battlefield. Only by exercising her sheer strength, intellect, creativity and tenacity in a "man's world" will she reach the zenith of her potential.

Clinton Hamilton comments: "(Weaker vessel) is used here in the comparative degree, weaker, and in this context she is weaker than is her spouse. But weaker ... or more feeble in what sense? Certainly, not in moral and spiritual qualities because the Bible has many examples of women who were models of spiritual comportment ... This leaves the physical sense as to the point of comparison. Because of this ... attribute pagan men often abused their wives as do men in this day ... because they have the strength to do so. But the will of God demands a different kind of behavior of husbands ..." (*Truth Commentary on 1 Peter*, 138).

A wife should be honored and handled as gingerly as fine china. She should be loved as Christ loves His church; and supported, affirmed, defended and made to feel secure and appreciated. If more men would do that, then perhaps fewer women would be on medications and filing for divorce. A wife and mother in her own home should never have to question her husband's devotion, should never have hands laid on her in a hostile manner and should never be the recipient of demeaning words. An honored wife is a woman contented with the exalted role God gave her. *The Centreville Journal*

Growing Pains

Michael Cawthon

My then five-year old daughter had quickly cleaned her plate and was reaching for another biscuit. Someone at the table remarked, "Wow, you must be going through a growth spurt!" Abi Kate quickly put down the biscuit and put her hands at her side. Her grandmother asked her what was wrong. She replied, "I don't want to spurt."

It does sound painful, doesn't it? We expect our children to grow and mature. If they didn't, we would take them to the doctor to find out what was wrong. The same is true for Christians. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). As disciples, we never reach a point where we stop growing. We are always learning, following, studying, and applying God's word to our lives. Just as it is exciting to watch new Christians learn and grow in the knowledge and grace of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18), it is frightening to see someone stop growing. Something is wrong!

It takes time to grow. It takes time to study to show yourself approved (2 Timothy 2:15). It takes time to pray and have a meaningful conversation with God. It takes planning and time to assemble with the saints to worship and encourage one another. It takes time to visit the sick, write a card to someone, and go to a Bible study. It takes time (and patience) to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). If we are not growing as we should, the question may be, "How are we spending our time?"

Purge. We live in a wicked world. Access to impure thoughts and works of the flesh are now just a click away on our computers. What do you do after work or school or on the weekends with your friends? We need to examine our lives and how we employ our time and see if there might be some purging that needs to take place. To purge is "to remove undesirable elements from" (Webster). In other words, we need to take out the trash. We need to routinely purge sin from our lives. David wrote, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (Psalm 51:7-9). Want to have more time for spiritual things? We need to regularly take out the trash that is cluttering our lives. It will stunt our growth.

Prune. Sometimes we can fill our lives with activities that are not bad, but they choke out the time for better things. In Jesus' teaching on the vine and the branches, He says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). Christians should be about producing fruit. Sometimes, superfluous hobbies, meetings, clubs, or events take up valuable space in our lives that could be put to better use. Which activities, if more concentration were given to them, would make a significant difference in the spiritual lives of our families and the church? Perhaps we, like Martha, need to prune some activities and chose the better part (Luke 10:38-42).

Partner. We tend to do better when we have someone else around to encourage us. Accountability is a powerful tool. Partnering with someone who has the same spiritual goals will not only help you do better, but it will provoke the other person to improve as well. "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). We need to find a mentor or companion who will help us along our spiritual walk; someone who will be honest, encouraging and even have the courage to discipline when the need arises.

When we grow, we are capable of doing more. We need to purge, prune, and partner to help produce spiritual growth. Just as our grandparents may comment on how much we have grown from time to time, our Father in heaven is glorified when He sees our progress (John 15:8). Growth spurts can be painful, but we shouldn't be afraid to reach for another biscuit!