

The Church Hurt Me

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The plot has unfolded! The church of over 700 million worldwide believers has ganged up and conspired to single you out and mess up your life. So, you are justified to say, "The church hurt me" to maintain your grudge and throw darts.

Is this a reality? Yes, you were really hurt! But no, blaming the whole Church is a twisted delusion and bondage. It is a misplaced accusation.

We hear this all the time with disenfranchised Christians who have had disappointments or real life-changing clashes. Yes, the hurts can be very deep. But the reactions and conclusions are neither correct nor healthy. The whole church did not hurt you. There are a lot of life-giving, wonderful people and leaders in the body of Christ who do not deserve that stigma from you. An individual or group of people may have hurt you, but not the whole church. From that belief, there comes a more tragic problem.

Do you realize that when you slander the church, you are denigrating the beloved bride of Christ, "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15b)? You are aligning yourself with Satan, the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10b, NKJV) and bashing the people Jesus died for and redeemed by His blood. It is Satan's purpose to condemn, fault-find and accuse people all the time to keep them divided, confused and paralyzed. Do you really want to have his words in your mouth? Beloved, please be careful.

The backlash will be on you. When you resist the Spirit of God and His mercy on the church (and all people), you may find yourself with tragic family and marital problems, coldness or dullness in your faith, chasing "another gospel" or addiction to clinical counseling and mood drugs. Over time, Christ lifts his grace off your life and you quench the Spirit of God, leaving you in a carnal realm of false peace. It says, "I am right; and they are all wrong and bad" (see Prov. 14:14).

It's better to release real forgiveness from the heart and to change your words and actions. Stay connected to the body of Christ in a humble way. Don't stir up strife— seek peace.

In these days there are certain buzzwords the so-called victims use, such as:

"I was abused."

"It was manipulation."

"No one honored my gifting."

"Don't I have a right to be happy?"

"The institutional or organized church is messed up."

There may be partial truth to some of this, but your bitter root defiles you and others (see Heb. 12:14-15). True healing and overcoming love still come from God. Don't settle for soulless commiserators, who are secondary-offense carriers of your hurts. You may need some special Christian counselors with clinical experience, but you mostly need the Father's love ministered by the Comforter. He can restore (rapha in the Hebrew) you and bring hope.

To be transparent, I have "been there and done that"—the right way and the wrong way. There is a kingdom-based, right way of doing life's ups and downs that is best and keeps you from aligning with the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10b, NKJV). Instead of my story, let's look at the apostle Paul as he gives us a magnificent example in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. "Are they servants of Christ? ... I am more: labors ... stripes ... prisons ... beaten ... stoned ... shipwrecked ... in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brothers; in weariness and painfulness [burnout], in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, and in cold and nakedness. ... the care of all the churches." "Who is led into sin, and I am not distressed?" (2 Cor. 11:29b). In other words, Paul refused to complain, but kept on loving God and His church!

Don't change your God or your theology. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the robbers were destructive (representing the world or devil). The Jewish priest and leader were heartlessly neglectful of the wounded man. (Right faith, but wrong ways.) The Samaritan was compassionate and generous. (Wrong faith, but right ways.) Who do you think the restored man will connect with when he recovers? I suggest the Samaritan. (Even though the Samaritan had a skewed form of Hebrew religion.)

In the same way, many turn towards worldly practice, false prophets or false Christs when hurt by individuals in the church. Some even get into the occult or cult-like small groups (elitists). Beloved, base your faith on who Jesus is and your relationship with Him. Keep the Bible central in your understanding of God and man.

So what can you do when you are hurt?

1. Try to be reconciled. Go to the offenders. Don't shift blame to the whole church.
2. Get prayer and counsel (body ministry) from qualified people (you may have to go out of your relationship box).
3. Read Scripture to see how God worked with others.
4. Bring your hurt, heart, disappointments and needs to the Lord.
5. Speak a blessing and let God deal with offenders. Let go.

Dear brother or sister, Jesus and his church are for you and not against you. We are on the same team. You may have had leadership problems, church style issues or hurtful commissions or omissions. If you are a wounded minister or missionary, don't waste time finger-pointing. Maybe it is complicated and partially your fault. You can learn to trust again, but you have to do your part and take steps toward being knit into the body. Be reconciled to God and your neighbor.

Don't take revenge and hurt the church; pray for it. That is the heart of the Bible.