



When you feel even more Alone

(The church fails you or falls short of meeting your Spiritual needs)

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It is one thing to be alone in the world, to not know Jesus nor to be part of a fellowship of believers; however, it can feel even lonelier to have found Jesus but the fellowship of believers fall short of your needs or they have put themselves above Jesus and are going against His Word and Teachings, yet they make you feel as if you are wrong and the outsider.

I have preached many sermons on the Christian name badge and that fact that probably only about 20 percent of the people who put it on are truly Christians. Some of this stems from the shortfalls of the church to preach God's word and follow the teachings of Jesus. Some rest on the individual lack of the desire to follow Jesus and to total commit themselves to Him. For to be a Christian means that you not only believe in Jesus but that you follow Him and His teachings.

When I was in my early 20's I attended a local church some friends had told me about. They ranted and raved on how friendly the church was and how the members were always there for each other, so I decided to attend worship one Sunday. After the worship service I thought that this church seemed pleasant enough so I inquired on the membership process. For the next six Sunday evenings I attended the new member's class designed to show me all about the church and how great they were, along with all of the other eyewash they had to share. At the end of the class, pictures were taken and then hung on a bulleting board in the narthex, titled "New Members". For the next few months I attended worship faithfully; however I failed to see this very illusive friendship and fellowship that were bragged about so much. When I would walk out of worship, I would see two circles of people, or clicks, so tightly formed that I could not penetrate the circle to even say hello. I even attended a summer family picnic where I was asked who I was and could I possibly be there with a church member. The shock of realization came when almost one year later; someone was looking at the new member's board and asked where all of these people were and why he had not seen them. I approached the gentleman and said that one of the pictures was mine and I had been there almost every Sunday but had not been able to find anyone to converse with, and as for the others in the pictures, they just had less patients than I.

This happens all too often and in many different forms. I have attended churches where the pastor would out right lie to the congregation to obtain their desires, and when a few would bring this up, the others would dismiss it and say that he must have had a good reason. In one church the pastor was not only lying and deceiving the congregation but the secretary who was made youth director was stealing money from the youth. When these things were revealed to the council, excuses were made and things were ignored. Well a few years later the church was almost destroyed and put into a financial ruin, yet their eyes were still closed to the truth.

So in these examples would you, stay with the church and say everything was alright, would you try and change the focus of the leaders to that of the truth or what Jesus would desire, or look for a church more centered on Christ? Well in all these cases less than five left, and in the case where

the pastor had lied and youth director had stolen funds, when the church was on the verge of destruction, they left and followed the pastor to yet another church.

With these things going on around us each day, it sometimes becomes hard to maintain a stable faith. We may feel that since so many think it is alright that we are the outcast, those who are in the wrong. Well I say, for lack of a better word, garbage. Jesus showed us that most of the religious leaders of that day were corrupt or had their own agenda. He also told us to following Him no matter what the world or anyone else thought, and to be faithful to Him. We all have learn of the fate that was met by the flesh of Christ, but fail to understand that most all of the disciples were faced with similar destinies. To be a true Christian and Love and Follow Christ with your whole heart can often mean being on the outside, faced with ridicule, and often much more. We, just as followers of Jesus when He was man, are faced with the same situation Jesus often discussed, and we must learn to recognize them and have some idea of how we are to respond. First let's look at some of the common problems in the churches today.



Some Churches break God's and man's Laws

The pastor of a certain denominational church presides over the wedding of his son and his son's new bride. In less than a year, the father (pastor) is having an affair with his son's wife. It was not long before the pastor encouraged her to leave his son and marry him. About half of the congregation was outraged at this sexually immoral act and called for the pastor's resignation and removal from the church, which by the way is directly in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. The other half though what he did was not that bad and should be overlooked (The pastor never once admitted that what he had done was wrong nor ask forgiveness of his son or the congregation). Well, the council decided to overlook what had happened and only a few who initially stood up for what was right left the church.

Just because we belong to a church family does not put any of us above God's word or the responsibility to do what He would have us do. We have seen endless examples of standing up to those who sin (Jesus tells us **"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.** Matt 18:15-17) and how we are to handle the situation along with many examples of sinful actions which result in us not fellowshiping with the offenders, but we still fail to stand up for what is right. Paul addressed this in a letter to the Corinthians in which he said **"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of**

the Lord.” (1 Cor 5:1-5). We also hear **“Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning”**. (1 Tim 5:20)

We have also seen that for many years, sexual immoral acts against children have been covered up by the churches, which have resulted in great despair for those who have been the victims to these illegal and immoral acts. For those long and agonizing years, those affected were pushed off to the side and cover-ups were established. Is this in any way, shape or form of Jesus and His teachings? Yet those involved still remain as man's foundation for those churches involved and the blind still follow. Many have also turned from those churches and from Jesus Himself, because of these acts. So what does Jesus have to say? **"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck"**. (Mark 9:42-43)



Some Church Leaders have their own agenda

I was an assistant minister at a local church and one of my functions was to carry out the prayer request of the congregation during worship. One Sunday, before the service, the head pastor ask that I pray that the council would give in and vote for one of the agenda items that he had been trying to get past (which was to create a youth pastor position for the secretary to be promoted into, even though there were not many youth). When the intercessory prayers started I prayed that the council would look to what Jesus desires for the church and to base their decisions not on what they or the head pastor wishes, but on what Jesus would have them do. Needless to say it did not go over very well with either of them. God has designated Jesus as the head of the church, not the pastor or the council, and in some cases the family who tithes the most. **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.** (Eph 5:22-24) Also in Col 1:18-20 we are reminded **“And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”**

A few years back, God had put on my heart to spend time in the care centers, and once there my heart nearly broke. Some had little and most had no spiritual care. After sending questionnaires to most of the 1500 plus care centers in our state I saw there was an incredible need and decided to let the churches know. As I was preparing letters to the 4000 Christian churches in the area, I thought I would stop by some of the larger churches and talk with the pastors and hopefully get some seeds planted as to this huge need. As I started out to a dozen of the larger churches in the area, I became too aware of how things have changed. Out of the 12 churches, of the first 10 I was not able to see a pastor at all, they were too busy or did not talk with visitors even if they were pastors, one as I walked into the office that looked like a drive through bank teller, bullet proof glass, small little pass through windows, cipher locks on the doors, I was required to fill out paperwork to talk with anyone. Then they sent an assistant to talk with me who said he could not talk about the subject of spiritual need outside the church. When I came to the 12th I thought this

cannot be as bad, but as I entered the office, I had to explain to the receptionist for 10 minutes why I wanted to see the pastor, who then sent me to the pastor's secretary who again required the full 10 minute explanation, who believe it our not sent me to the assistant pastor who wanted a full explanation. By the time I finally made it to the pastor I just looked at him and said it was a good thing I was not a lost soul looking for help and that he had placed such walls around himself that I could not even talk with him. I pointed out that I can call upon my Lord and Savior any moment of the day, but one of His servants has been placed in such a high position it is almost impossible to reach him. Jesus warns against actions like this, **“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi'”.** (Matt 23:2-7)



Some Churches have become greedy

A pastor of a church in Phoenix was recently arrested for charging for prayers. He would tell people he would pray for them and would convince them that the more money they donated prior to the prayer, the better chance they had of Jesus answering it. He received as much as \$25,000 for one prayer. When the police went to his multi million dollar home they found a few Mercedes, Cadillac's, and many more very expensive automobiles.

Churches have also become so focused on tithing that, if you do not give enough, you do not receive certain services such as pastor visits if you are home ill or even it you are rushed to the hospital. I have a friend who served as a missionary for most of his 50 plus years of service to Jesus. During this time Jesus even used him to establish a seminary in one remote country where he used the training from his doctoral degree and his time in the mission field to train others. When he finally came back to the U.S. to retire he found that because he had not been the pastor of a church which provided funds to the synod, his retirement pay was far less than other church pastors. As he and his wife where both sick, he would call on local churches that where of the same denomination and was to be told if they wanted to receive pastoral support, they had to become members and support the church financially.

I was serving as a chaplain in a care center when I came upon a stone wall. I had someone who was so mad at God that she would no let me enter to talk with her. After over a month, she finally let me in and she shared why she was so angry. She replied that she has been in this facility for over a year and her pastor, nor anyone from her church, had visited. Thinking that the church may have been in another city I asked where her church was; she pointed out the window to the church across the street and said that if you were not active tithing, you got nothing. My heart broke.

If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may

offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.
(1 Cor 9:17-19)



Some Churches ignore the Bible and the teachings of Jesus

When you look at the different denominations or organizational splits in the Christian Church, it is hard to imagine that it is divided into 39,500 plus groups. With only 1.2 billion Christians, this weakens the church of believers in Jesus, because each church is so caught up in their own agenda, it gives satan more opportunities to be destructive. These divisions come about because of man's desire to change the Word of God or their inability to agree on it. There are churches that believe there is no Holy Trinity, those whose profess if you are not baptized you will go to hell, those who worship idols and so on. In many there are examples where the church violates God's Word and the teachings of Jesus, yet the congregation dismisses what is going on and continue to be a part of it. Some even discourage the reading of the Bible, sharing only what parts they want the people to know, because if they read the entire Bible, they would see how wrong their church is.

I had someone who had joined a church without learning the beliefs of the church, and after they had become a member they found out that one of the main beliefs of this church was that if you are not baptized, you go directly to hell. Nowhere in God's word is this stated, yet they have based their entire belief structure on this statement that has no biblical foundation. This person did not know what to do so I just asked them, "do you what to stand along side the members of this church while they tell a grieving mother that since here son was not baptized he is going to hell?"

I had mentioned above that the strength of the church has been weakened and this has opened more doors for evil to cause havoc. We can see this in some of the events over the past few years, one man working, and close to successfully, having the word God removed from the pledge of allegiance, a movement in the supreme court to overturn the law prohibiting cross burning, the images of the ten commandments forced to be removed from the court buildings, and the latest one which forbids the phrase Merry Christmas to be used in the public schools because this country now acknowledges all religions and desires to be politically correct; and this phrase implies that the season is about Jesus. This nation was founded on the belief in God the Father and the Word of the Holy Bible, which you are required to place your hand upon in court, yet symbols of what the Bible stand for a forbidden to be on government property. In fact when I worked for the government the law required that if I put up, in my office, any Christian symbol, for example a nativity set at Christmas, I would have to allow people to place every other type of religious symbol next to mine including witch craft and satanic symbols, because each are recognized religions in this country.



Some Churches have lost sight of who is in charge

Recently a large denominational church group promoted an active homosexual pastor to Bishop. The church feels since the world accepts these sexually immoral sins, they will accept it;

regardless of what God tells us. So they have taken this man, who Jesus tells us that we are not to fellowship with, and they made him a higher leader in the church. **He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean."** (Mark 7:20-23)

A friend of mine has desired to become a pastor in a denominational church for many years. They have gone through seminary and received their master's degree. Then they began to go through all of the hoops for this particular church which would require at least two to three years of additional studies. Just before they were finished and the goal of becoming an ordained pastor in this church was in their reach, they were informed of an additional requirement, they needed to go to a six week course that was in another state. As this in itself does not seem like an issue, the dilemma for this person is that when the church had bought the school building it was previously an all boy school. To save money the church did not want to have to perform any renovations to include changes to the living area or dorm. The issue is that there was one large common bathroom area and the men and women where to share, at the same time. This is neither something that Jesus would promote nor should the church; however, it still remains a requirement for ordination.

I have a friend who was a pastor for many years in a particularly large denominational church. One day I asked what his thoughts were about Mark 7:21, to which he informed me that his church had voted that scripture out of the bible. **"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."** (Rev 22:18-19)



So what are we to do? First and foremost do not lose your Faith in Jesus, not all churches are this way. If your church is not of Jesus or they are doing things contrary to His teachings, either be an active part of initiating change or leave. If the churches beliefs are not in harmony to God's Word and Jesus' Teachings, find one that is. We should never sit back and be silent nor accept from any leader or teacher anything which is false or not of Jesus. We need to be willing to stand up for what is right and force change or leave. To continue to be part of a group that is doing wrong is as bad as doing it yourself. Jesus realized what the disciples and we may be up against when we try to spread His word and share with them what is right. He tells us **"If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."** (Matt 10:14-16)

I have been approach by a few people that feel that something must be wrong with them. They see these things going on so they leave the church, just to go to another and find these same or other negative things are an active part of the next church. This brings on feelings of guilt and they

become confused and feel that there must be something wrong with them. I personally applaud these people and reassure them that what they are doing is correct. There are many churches out there that do their very best to follow God's Word and allow Jesus to be the head of their church; however there are equally those who do not. We saw this back in the days of Paul who send letter upon letter to churches letting them know that what they are doing and have established is wrong, and if we think the churches of today are any different, we are simply fooling ourselves and falling into the hands of the evil one.

To get back to the answer of what we should do, look for a church home that is of Jesus, it could be a large church or even one of the very popular home churches which are growing at a rapid rate, primarily because of some of the reasons discussed here. Or you may want to even skip the "church" type atmosphere and just go out and server in the name of Jesus. Finds people or groups of people that rarely, if ever, have the Love of Jesus brought to them in the form of a Christian Love; for example nursing homes, homeless shelters, or children's homes. Or possible God will place on your heart the desire to start a church with Jesus as the head. The world would be a much better place if all of the churches could just go back to the realization that Jesus is the head of every church and they should not be run according to man's desire but that of Jesus.

To those who feel alone because they have walked away from their church that is failing to be a foundation of Christ, I say thank you Jesus for giving them the strength to do what is of You. I pray that you will allow Jesus to guide you to that place where He needs you or knows that you can server Him best, and where you can be at peace with the knowledge of knowing you have made an active decision to be of Jesus and not of the World. **"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.** (John 15:18-20)

Jesus also reminds us **"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.** (John 17:13-23)

All the Praise and Glory to the Father and the Son

Pastor Scott Jones