

3 Healthy Ways to Respond When You Feel Like a Misfit

Years ago, John and I found ourselves trying out churches after a leadership change at a small country church we'd been attending for years. With a preschooler, a toddler and a baby on the way, I often spent more time out of service than in it. One church we were visiting was large, and they had a crying room to take my toddler. I was a young mom and very insecure in my role, and even now my stomach tenses up as I remember walking into that cry room and having all the other moms turn my direction, studying my 18-month-old and me as we entered.

Looking back now, I'm sure they were just curious about us. But I wanted to turn and leave immediately. As I settled onto a sofa and found some toys for my daughter to play with, the women continued with the conversation they'd been having before I entered. I don't remember being acknowledged or talked to for the rest of the time. One might have told me goodbye as the service ended. I honestly don't remember, but I do remember the feeling of "I don't belong." Whew, I'm so glad I outgrew that feeling ... *not!* Even though that toddler is now 25 years old, I still get that feeling at times. In fact, I had it just last week.

I'd taken my kids to a Vacation Bible School at a local church (not the one we attend), and I felt like an impostor walking the halls. Everyone was nice enough, but I felt alone as small groups of families clustered together to talk.

As if I wasn't already feeling awkward enough just being the new person, my own negative thoughts add fuel to the fire. One little spark of unworthiness flames up and grows. I'm thankful, that as the years have passed, these awkward times have become few and far between. Yet they still point to worries in my heart ... and truths I need to remember.

Truth #1. There will always be times I'm an outsider, yet I can choose to connect. I can start a conversation or even offer a smile. I'm sure there are times my own feelings of awkwardness show on my face, and I don't even appear approachable.

Truth #2. Everyone feels like an outsider at times, and if I see someone who feels that way I need to step up. Sometimes I feel awkward about approaching people I don't know, but I've made some amazing friendships as I've been warm and welcoming. And to be honest, when I dare to step out of my comfort zone I've had few people shun my efforts. Most people are thankful that someone is reaching out.

Truth #3. As much as I feel like an outsider, there are those who are truly left out. Moms with children with special needs sometimes aren't able to attend a church or Vacation Bible School. It's an isolating experience. There are also immigrants or minorities who stand out. As awkward as I feel in new situations, I can't imagine how hard it is for those who struggle with the language, don't understand customs, or dress differently.

Instead of being so concerned about how I look to others, I need to make a greater effort to reach out to those who feel like outsiders.

Truth #4. Everything changes when we turn our awkward feelings and worries into prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT) says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

No matter where we go. No matter our age. (I'm 45 years old now!) No matter the situation. There will be times when we feel like an outsider.

Yet if ...

... we pray instead of worry, we can see hope in the situation.

... we tell God what we need, we're inviting Him to have say.

... we thank Him for what He's already done, we're reminded that God can show up.

... we let Jesus take over our worries then there's space for Him to fill with His peace.

I know there will be times in the future when I feel like an awkward outsider, but I now have a game plan. I also know a few people who most likely feel like an outsider, and even now I'm making a plan to reach out to them.

Are you thinking of someone, too? Won't you reach out?

Tricia Goyer is a busy mom of ten, grandmother of two and wife to John. Somewhere around the hustle and bustle of family life, she manages to find the time to write fictional tales delighting and entertaining readers and non-fiction titles offering encouragement and hope. A bestselling author, Tricia has published 50 books to date and has written more than 500 articles. She is a two-time Carol Award winner, as well as a Christy and ECPA Award Nominee. To connect with Tricia go to [or](#)