

5 Ways to Respond When Someone Leaves Your Church

I am going out on a limb and writing about a sensitive topic. I have been on both ends of the spectrum. I have left churches and I have had people I love leave the church we attended. So, what do we do?

Let's start with ***what not to do*** and why.

1. Don't call them and talk about church attendance.
2. Don't tell others you have not seen them and ask others if they have left the church.
3. Don't post on Facebook about "awkward moments" of running into someone you used to go to church with.
4. Don't unfriend them on Facebook or any other way because they left your church.
5. Don't make the whole relationship about church attendance or their intent on coming back.

Why? I have written many blogs on kindness. Read them for more in-depth information. But the bottom line, we are called to love. We were never called to be church-attendance, record keepers or the Holy Spirit that needs to correct, fix or inform.

Who are we to say that if they left our church, they have done anything wrong? Are we the Holy Spirit? Even if they left the church to follow Satan, we are called to love them back to Christ. We are not called to be the reason that they never return.

So then what should our attitude be?

1. Contact them and ask them how they are doing. Why? Because you love them. Never discuss church, attendance or a church service that they missed. That is prideful, arrogant and stinks of self-righteousness. We are not called to bring people to "our" church, we are called to restore people to His church.

2. Pray for them. Maybe they are sick and in a hospital. Maybe they have been called to the mission field. Maybe they are going to school full time? Maybe they lost a loved one and are needing time to adjust. Maybe they have been diagnosed with terminal cancer and need much bed rest.

Maybe they are going through a financial crisis and have to work 3 jobs. Maybe they are investing their time into what they are called to do. Maybe some unkind person broke their heart at church and as much as they want to come back, they don't want to face the self-righteous person again.

3. Repent. I know beyond a shadow of any doubt people leave churches everyday, due to human error. Maybe you personally did nothing wrong, but if you never connected with that person or prayed for them, than maybe you just didn't do enough right.

4. Be who you were meant to be, to avoid the onslaught of people leaving the presence of God. Be loving, honorable in character, humble, compassionate, merciful, full of grace and led by the Holy Spirit. Check your heart daily.

5. Allow people to make up their own minds. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them. Allow others to enjoy other places of worship that fits their calling better. Let go of ideas that you must do, say or control anyone. No! God does not control! He allows us all to choose His path for us. Only He knows what that path is.

I did not become a member of a church until I was in my 30s. In the amount of time that I have been in churches here are

the reasons that I know people have left.

1. They were treated harshly by a church member. Not once, twice or even one person. This is an epidemic problem.
2. They were not given an opportunity to be in the ministry of their desire.
3. They were made to feel like they were inadequate by leadership. Anything from not spiritual, not faithful, not talented or not discerning to being the wrong sex, color or age. This list is too long to recount.

I have witnessed public humiliation from the pulpits, in regards to people leaving churches. This alone is enough to drive people away. Church attendance needs to not be discussed, ever! Let God keep record.

One thing I am confident of, people with great attendance records do more damage to the kingdom of God than any gang member on a street corner. God is only concerned about the attendance record of our hearts. Most of the people in churches around the world do not know Jesus, love Jesus, spend time with Jesus or desire His will for their lives.

No amount of church services can make that happen. Only love can change a heart. Romans 2:4 tells us that the kindness of God leads you to repentance.

Matthew 7:22 says, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonderful works in Your name?' But then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice evil.'"

1 John 4:20 says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar."

Love restores; everything else divides.

*Adapted from **Michelle Mangold's** blog, Give Life.*