

Are You Accidentally Condemning People for Not Coming to Church?

"You missed it," Gina said to Millie on the phone. "Why weren't you at church?"

Millie sighed and said, "I had such an exhausting day that I was too tired to go."

Gina replied, "You're slacking off Millie! You should have been there. God moved powerfully and you totally missed it."

Millie's stomach was in knots. She had put in a 14-hour day at work and could barely stay awake for the phone call. When Gina ended the call, Millie felt condemned. She felt like a loser.

I've heard of people who have cried when they are told over and over again that, "You missed it."

I have never read one scripture where Jesus or any of the disciples told one of their followers that "they missed it" because they didn't make it to a synagogue meeting. There are plenty of scriptures about missing the kingdom of God but not one where Jesus tells his followers, "You missed it."

I understand the benefits of church attendance and being faithful. But I have never understood the tactic of making someone else feel like they are less of a Christian because they didn't make it to church. Instead of asking Millie why she didn't make it to church, why didn't her church friend ask her how she was doing? Where was the love and the care in that conversation? Why not offer prayer for Millie to be strengthened?

I know I use to push regular church attendance until God convicted me that I was not the Holy Spirit. Why someone

misses church isn't any of my business. I know I'm my "brothers-keeper" but if I don't show any love for this person, than I'm like a loud sounding noisy brass cymbal. I'm not bringing life but death.

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

The next time you notice that someone isn't at church, here's how you can reach out to them with love:

- Call and ask them how they are doing.
- Offer to pray for them.
- Offer to take them out to lunch or dinner.
- Offer to take care of their kids if they are a single mom or a mom with toddlers
- When you finish talking to them, pray for them.

Don't treat someone like they have a legal, contractual obligation to attend church. Treat them like a person that you love and care for. When people are told over and over again that "they missed it," they might believe you and quit attending church. Don't be the reason someone quits coming to church. You be the reason someone stays in the race.

*Adapted from **Leilani Haywood's** blog, Keeping It Real. Leilani is the editor of SpiritLed Woman. She is a Kansas City, award-winning writer and columnist. Her work has been published in the Kansas City Star, Metro Voice, Focus on the Family and other publications. Follow SpiritLed Woman on Twitter @spiritledmag or on Facebook.*