

When Judgmental Christians Hurt You

You're trying to do good. Or at least you want to. Really, you do.

You believe (at least most of you believes) that doing things God's way is the best way. But every time you try to take a step forward, judgmental Christians seem to cut you down, point out your failings and act as though they're too righteous to associate with you. They hold your sins over your head and try to prevent you from doing what you believe God has asked you to do. It's discouraging. You're tempted to wonder if it's even worth continuing to try.

You've probably heard people say you're supposed to keep your eyes on Jesus and not on people. That's true. But how do you deal with the "friendly fire" from those who claim to be Christians?

In our most recent survey, I heard from several of you who have been wounded in the name of God. A young man wrote, "The deepest hurts in my life are from Christians, and the worst part of it is that they use God to hurt me." A woman who struggles with her church wrote, "The Bible talks about Christians restoring each other if we backslide. Often people are too judgmental to restore anyone." Perhaps you too can identify with the frustration, hurt and even anguish behind these words.

I've been there; I've also been hurt in the name of God. I know that some of those who hurt me did so unintentionally, and some did so out of their own woundedness. Some also did so consciously and directly. And it hurts.

If you've been wounded in the name of God, my heart bleeds for you. And I want to give you some hope. Here's what I pray you

will understand and remember.

The Truth about your Christian-Inflicted Wounds

1. Condemning, accusing, manipulation and control are always from the enemy. Satan, not God, is the “accuser of our brothers” (Rev. 12:10). “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1a). Regardless of the truth of what “they” say or do, or whether or not the barbs are couched in God-talk, these are tactics of the enemy. Yes, they wound us, but it’s not God causing those wounds.

2. Jesus will always accept you if you come to Him. There’s nothing you can do to make Him love you any less or that is so bad that He will not welcome you openly. “All whom the Father gives Me will come to Me, and he who comes to Me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). You can’t surprise or shock Him. As far as He is concerned, there is always the possibility of a fresh start, of restoration. Those who know God best will display this spirit of restoration.

3. Jesus will not leave you the same as He found you. He accepts you as you are, unconditionally. But He will not leave you the way He found you. Our choices have consequences, and He does not always remove us from the pain of those consequences. His grace is strong enough to change you to become like He is: we “are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18). He requires nothing less of us.

4. Christians who inflict wounds are usually not experiencing that transformation themselves. So often those who are judgmental of others are struggling with sin in some other area of their lives. Sometimes their own sin or wounds makes them more aware of yours, and they lash out as a way to divert attention from their own issues. Later, some sin or brokenness often becomes exposed in their own lives.

5. Helping another believer find healing or restoration involves both acceptance and change. Those who spent time with Jesus knew He accepted them, but they also knew anything less than holiness was unacceptable. They had to leave their life of sin if they wanted to remain with Him. Everything about Jesus said, in effect, “You don’t have to live like this!” Jesus made it possible for them to change, and He also required it of them. Those who know God best help other believers through that same process.

Condemnation from the enemy and conviction from the Holy Spirit are very different. Condemnation feels dark and hopeless, and ties you to your past. Conviction feels light and hopeful, and offers you a pathway through repentance and forgiveness to transformation and a new life. If other believers are only condemning you, that’s not of God. If they are calling you to something better, that may be the Holy Spirit’s work.

So what can you do if you’re wounded, and desperately need that healing or restoration?

How to Find Healing

1. Separate God from the toxic God-talk you hear. That may be easier said than done, at least at first. Sometimes that means backing away from believers who only display toxic religion. Spend lots of time listening to God yourself—reading and studying His word, praying, etc.

2. Determine to let God change you. Listen when the Holy Spirit puts His finger on something in your soul and says, “This right here: I want this. Let me take this, and change you.” And then stick around long enough for Him to do so.

3. Stay in God’s presence long enough. God is most concerned with your heart, and you should be, too. Go where His presence is, be that in nature, in worship by yourself, in church. Stay there long enough for Him to minister to you, and He will do

so. Then keep coming back over and over.

I know God weeps when some of His children wound others in His name. He wants to heal you, to change you, to bring you to the **Fully Alive** kind of life He has you for. Don't quit too soon! {eoa}

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