

Natalie Runion: Moving Forward When You've Been Hurt by the Church

For many, the church serves as a spiritual home and a place of growth. However, even within the sanctuary of the church, hurt and disappointment can arise, causing pain and confusion. Natalie Runion is a gifted worship leader and author, who is shedding light on the complex issue of church hurt and offers a path toward healing and restoration.

"The Lord has given us the blueprint to how to receive people into the family of God," Runion said. "That is to love God and to love people. And what does love look like? It looks like meeting people where they are when they show up, not trying to adjust behavior before we address belief."

Runion points out that the church has been so focused on living perfect lives that it has been a detriment to many when support is needed or someone does something out of line with the Word of God. Instead of leading people back toward Christ, many feel shamed and left behind.

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"The church is so behavior-focused that if we don't change the way that we do church within our own walls we are going to continue to prove to the world that we are not the safe place that we say that we are," Runion said.

It's important to recognize that in the same way no one can live up to a holy standard on their own, no one wants to be on the receiving side of backlash from the church. How we handle hurt, though, is up to us.

"We don't walk into a church and say, 'Oh, please somebody hurt me;' that hurt happens to us. Abuse happens to us," Runion said. "We don't choose to be hurt, but offense is a choice. We choose to pick up an offense."

Runion believes that offense becomes a deep issue when we allow hurt, frustration and anger to consume us. John Beveré's "The Bait of Satan," for instance, discusses the very real impact that the root problem of unforgiveness can have on our spiritual health. A heart of unforgiveness will bleed over into every other area of life. It scars our hearts and keeps us from the freedom that forgiveness can bring into our lives.

While it is the church's job to be a place of healing and peace, it is still made up of broken people who all have fallen short of the glory of God. It is Christ alone who we must place our faith and trust in.

"I should probably investigate why that happened rather than going to the dark place of 'everybody hates me and everybody's against me,' and that's what's happening when we're picking up offense; the enemy is just using it to create these false scenarios the Bible calls them high things, anything contradictory to the Word of God that we're commanded to pull down as well as to shake off all those things that so easily keep us from running our race," Runion said.

The church is meant to be a refuge for all those weary and heavy laden, but it is only through Christ and Christ alone that we can truly be set free from the grip of offense and bitterness. Without Him, none of us can experience a life of abundance and true forgiveness.

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