

This Group of Christians Is Unwittingly Destroying the Church

Legalism and religion are the enemies of the church that God has set in motion. All around in the church world I see so many people up in arms over someone with a sordid past coming into the kingdom, or someone doing something they don't believe is "godly."

Legalism and religion keep people on a short leash. It isn't about a relationship with this spirit or the people being controlled by it. To these people, faith is about walking on a tight rope. Manipulation and control are their weapons.

I have written before about how often Christians can so easily turn "cannibalistic" to each other. Instead of welcoming in the backslider, many are too busy trying to remind the fallen how they don't add up to the Bible.

I believe that God wants us to live in a place of balance between legalism and a "sloppy grace" message. One needs to live a life of holiness—even Jesus often told people to go and "sin no more." However, Jesus also preached his love for His bride, even when she was less than perfect.

Grace is undeserved. But like a parent, God sees us in our own messes and doesn't see the dirt. He wipes the tears.

Recently, the Holy Spirit drew my attention the scene in the Bible where the woman is wiping the feet of Jesus with her own hair. I think this passage is a great one to find balance in this conversation.

This passage is in Luke 7:36-50. To begin with, Jesus was invited by one of the Pharisees to have dinner with them. Then

a woman who knew He was going to be there slipped in and began weeping. I am sure there was some repentance in there.

It is well accepted that this woman was probably a prostitute. She did not get money by ethical ways. So one of the Pharisees gets mad. He says, "If this Man were a prophet, He would have known who and what kind of woman she is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner" (v. 39).

This comment says to me that this Pharisee definitely did not believe in Jesus. They brought Jesus there to pick Him apart and prove He wasn't the Son of God. Their motives were off. They were trying to ensnare Jesus.

What happens next made me literally laugh out loud. Jesus turns to Simon and asks Simon, through a word picture, if you are forgiven little do you love little and if you're forgiven much do you love much? Jesus doesn't even acknowledge the Pharisees' baiting at first. Of course, this upset the Pharisees.

Jesus is sitting at their table drawing to attention their lack of a genuine, godly heart. Jesus looks at the woman and tells her she is forgiven. Her repentance is obvious. There is no need for her to bring a litany of her sins. He saw all that and loved her.

When people come into the kingdom, it's our job as the church to provide unconditional love. That doesn't mean we condone their sin. There are times you need to tell people "This is what the Bible says about your situation." However, it's not up to us to beat people over the head. We should be excited when the prodigals come home.

There are Pharisees in the modern church. Those people may be masquerading as godly leaders. However, when situations arise and their true colors are exposed one can always tell who they are by those who genuinely have Jesus' heart for people, versus those who are only wanting to expose their past. They

merely want to say all the reasons why some individual is disqualified from sharing their faith. The difference between the woman who came to wash Jesus' feet and the Pharisees was a motive of the heart.

Jesus wants our heart. Actions are only surface-level. We need to do what He is telling us, but Jesus is after our heart.

May the church as a whole seek God to see His people the way He sees them. Then perhaps all these divisions being caused by fault-seeking Pharisees can be put aside and we can start operating in unity as God created us to. {eoa}

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