



# "EQUIPPING BELIEVERS TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD"

## Overcoming Church Hurt



**"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."  
(Matthew 11:28-30 NIV)**

We expect to be mistreated in the world, but we're often blindsided—and get our feelings hurt—when brothers and sisters in Christ don't invite us to the party, talk behind our backs, or aren't there for us in a time of need.

Although some would argue that we need to die to self, overcoming hurt feelings—dealing with offense—remains a relevant topic in the church today.

Have you been hurt in church? What are you supposed to do? How do you handle it? Leave the church? Confront the issue? Bury it? Lash out at the person who hurt you? When people are hurt by a church or church member, how can this conflict be resolved? What does this Bible say about this and how do you practically walk that out?

Please allow me to share with you what I've learned from my past experience and how we got through the "church hurt". I pray that it helps you as well:

### TAKE IT TO GOD

When a pastor or a parishioner hurts you, the very first action to take is prayer. The hurt you feel is real and pretending like you aren't hurt isn't going to bring healing. Sometimes when we get hurt in church folks like to tell us that we have no reason to feel bad and we just need to get over it. Half of that statement is true. We do need to get over it, but it's not always true that we have no reason to feel bad. If someone is spewing malicious gossip behind your back and you find out about it, it stings.

No matter what kind of hurt you're dealing with, don't rush into a confrontation with the offender. **TAKE IT TO GOD IN PRAYER.** Psalm 50:15 says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." That works for a troubled soul just as well as it does any other trouble. Tell Him how you feel and ask Him to heal your wounds. It may be that the Lord is going to deal with the offender directly and anything you say would just make matters worse.

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Or, it could be that the Lord will give you a graceful way to explain why you feel hurt. If you take it to God, He can give you the very words to say to your offender (Luke 12:12). And He can bring conviction to that person's heart when you approach them with a spirit of humility (John 16:8).

## **DON'T RETALIATE**

Whatever you do, don't retaliate. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:38) and to love our enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (Matt. 5:44).

With that in mind, don't go around telling everybody what someone did to hurt your feelings. And don't make accusations against those who hurt you if you decide to confront the matter. Instead of saying, "You hurt my feelings!" say, "When you did that I felt hurt" or "When you talk to me like that I feel upset." Own your feelings because they are your feelings. It's very possible that your offender has no idea that what they said or did hurt you—and never meant to hurt you. If you approach them in humility seeking reconciliation, your offender may be quick to apologize.

## **LET THE LORD WORK**

Peter exhorts us to "above all things, have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). Again, be led by the Holy Spirit. It's not always necessary to go to someone who hurt you every time they do something you don't like.

It could be that the Lord is working something out in you. Maybe you're too sensitive. We always need to check our hearts. Is the person really being hurtful or are we looking at it through filters of past hurts or rejection or anger that cloud the truth? Ask the Lord. Or it could be that the Holy Spirit will bring conviction—maybe even heap coals of fire on their head—as you bless them outwardly with a heart of love.

## **YOU CAN'T HEAL UNTIL YOU FORGIVE**

The bottom line is this: It doesn't matter how wrong your offender is, you have to forgive. Forgiveness is not for the other person—it's for you. Forgiveness doesn't justify what someone did that was wrong, nor does it necessarily mean that the relationship goes right back to where it was.

If you don't forgive, you end up bitter and resentful and before too long you'll end up hurting other people. The healing process can't really begin until you spit out the bait of offense. I'll leave you with this prophetic insight the Holy Spirit gave me when my wife and I were extremely hurt in church:

"When the feeling of hurt arises, the spirit of offense comes on the scene to fortify the pain, tempting you to hold on to the grudge in your heart. Therefore, the proper response to emotional pain of the soul is always an immediate confession of forgiveness from the heart. The alternative to forgiveness from the heart is the ongoing torment of the soul. So if you want to be free from your hurts and wounds, take thoughts of forgiveness, meditate on them and confess them rather than taking thoughts of the hurt, meditating on them and confessing them. This is God's way—and it's the only way that brings true healing. And, while you are at it, pray for those who have hurt you. This process will cleanse your heart and renew your mind. And you will walk free from the pain of your past." Amen.

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