



*“I feel like I never do anything right!”*

**Q** I have been attending a Southern Baptist church for my whole life. But for the past couple of years it seems that the members “just can’t do anything right.”

Yesterday in the bulletin a whole page was dedicated to how the members should act before, during and after church.

It stated that before church we should be quiet and not talk to our neighbors but have respect for the Holy Spirit.

During the service and singing there should be no talking, and we should not put our hymnal in the holder or put on our jackets during the last hymn because it’s disrespectful—that we should wait until after the closing prayer.

And after church, we shouldn’t clog the front area by talking and asking “personal” questions. I still don’t understand that statement.

Oh and then finally came the announcement in the bulletin suggesting that we should stop the “chatting.”

Don’t get me wrong, I definitely think we should respect the service and focus on God, but goodness! Are we not supposed to be friendly?

*I feel like I can never do anything right! My heart is torn and I’m so distressed.* I would appreciate your perspective and advice. Thank you so much for all you do!

**A** I am truly sorry to hear about these concerns which seem to be enormously painful for you. First and foremost, a brick-and-mortar church is there to serve the needs of the individual members of the universal church—that is, the body of Christ.

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it for spiritual nourishment.

Jesus, God in the flesh, came to serve us, not the other way around. We do not find Jesus running around enforcing a bunch of rules.

The primary sense we receive from reading the life and teachings of Jesus is that he loves us and invites us into the kingdom of heaven.

The life and teachings of Jesus do not leave us frustrated or depressed, thinking we have never done anything right or that he is upset with us. That feeling comes to us from the kingdom of religion, not the kingdom of heaven. That feeling came (in the time of Jesus) from the Pharisees who

condemned, belittled and scorned Jesus and his disciples as well as Jesus’ mission and his teaching.

I am well aware that lofty expectations and unrelenting condemnation can erode a lifelong relationship and commitment to a particular church, causing great stress and grief.

Whatever you may decide to do about your physical circumstances, please know that Jesus is not being

represented through constant, continuous corrections you are receiving.

As members of the invisible, universal and

eternal body of Christ, we read that we are forgiven, embraced, welcomed and accepted by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If a brick-and-mortar, temporal institution that claims affiliation with the invisible, universal and eternal body of Christ is more about fear than faith, more about control than freedom in Christ and more about legalism than about God’s grace, as God’s children we need not subject ourselves to such an anti-Christ environment.

*No human being can take Jesus away from you!* □