



God's Not Through With Us Yet

Steve Brown

Have you ever been hurt by church members who didn't seem to care that you were going through a difficult time?

Have you been ignored by the "friendliest church in town"?

When it was dark for you, have church members used clichés at best or just pretended that you weren't there at worst?

If you are there or have been there, I'm here to help. I have spent a lot of time with Christ-followers and we're sometimes not as bad as you think...well bad, but probably not evil.

Sometimes we don't know what to say, so we don't say anything or we say the wrong thing.

Then there are some of us for whom people in pain have become an anomaly. Isn't God supposed to bless you when you're faithful and nice?

When it is quite apparent that you're still trucking and at this time not being "blessed," it messes with our heads.

It's the same thing one sometimes sees in "name it, frame it, claim it" fellowships when someone dies of cancer or

some other disease. If the disease is admitted then their whole theological super-structure comes crashing down. They don't know what to say.

Then there are those of us struggling with our own stuff yet deny it.

You are too close to our reality and we simply don't want to go there. So, we don't. It's the same reason some people don't go to funerals. We are more scared than bad.

I'm sure you've heard the old story about the mother who woke up her son and told him that it was time to go to church.

He said, "I'm not going and I'll tell you why. They don't like me and I don't like them."

"You will go," his mother answered, "and I'll tell you why... you're their pastor."

The Only Thing That Helps

I've been on the receiving end of rejection and judgment, and a lack of compassion. Do you know the only thing that helps? It's the recognition that I've been on the other end more times than I can count, too.

When Jesus said in Matthew 7 that we shouldn't judge the "speck" in someone else's eye until we take the "log" out of our own eye and could see properly enough to judge, I always thought that he was telling me (someone who is ordained) to work at getting better and better in every way every day so I could preach convicting sermons—and exercise proper pastoral oversight and godly discipline to those who were not "walking the talk."

I was young then. I'm a lot older now and a bit wiser. I've been trying to remove the log from my eye for a long time and, frankly, haven't been very successful at it.

And that, of course, is the point Jesus made.

He said that I can't fix others until I can fix myself.

Since fixing me is a lot harder than I ever thought it was, my whole attitude is different. I can't even fix myself, so how can I fix other people?

Not too long ago I shocked some people at a church where I was preaching. "If you're visiting here," I said, "or if you're not yet

a believer, we're so glad you're here. But take some advice from the old guy. Leave before you get hurt. We're not nice people. Sometimes we hang out in cliques and it's hard to break into those. Sometimes we're so selfish that we don't even notice. Sometimes we offend others. So just leave before you get hurt."

A friend of mine told me about a motorist who drove by a Texas ranch and hit and killed a calf crossing the road.

The motorist went to the calf's owner, explained what happened, and asked how much the calf cost.

"Well, the calf is only worth \$200 right now," the rancher said, "but if you hadn't killed the calf, in a few years it would've been worth around \$900. So, I'm out \$900."

The driver got out his checkbook and wrote the rancher a check.

He handed it to the rancher with, "Here's a check for \$900. I've postdated it six years from now."

God's not through with us yet. Sometimes change takes time. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5 that eventually we'll get it together. So, you have to give the Holy Spirit some time to work.

Meanwhile, what do you do when you get hurt by some very self-centered people?

You remember the times God loved you even when you were self-centered.

How do you overlook the rejection and pain inflicted by your Christian family?

You remember how often God has overlooked yours.

How do you cut slack for those who have hurt you?

You remember how often God cut you some slack. It really works! ☐

Steve Brown is a preacher, professor and the president of Key Life Network.

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