

How to Keep from Getting Hurt in a Church

By Dr. Dale A. Robbins

The title of this writing may seem to be rather unusual. After all, we would suppose the church to be a safe place – right? However, unfortunately, the church has sometimes been a place where many have experienced wounds instead of healing.

In fact, statistics show that a great percentage of persons who cease attending church, do so because of some type of offense or injury to their feelings that happened there. Sometimes these occur because of the insensitivity of the church; other times, people are themselves at fault for being too touchy or sensitive to misunderstandings.

In any case, it is sad that such experiences ever occur, because the church is an indispensable part of the believer's life. Not only does it provide a place to worship, serve and learn about God, but it is also a community where believers can practice love toward their brethren as the Bible requires; "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

The following 13 steps can help believers protect themselves from getting hurt in a church:

- (1) **Avoid developing unreasonable expectations of the church** — “My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him” (Psalm 62:5).
- (2) **Don't place an absolute trust in people** — “Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD” (Jer. 17:5).
- (3) **Focus on common ground** — “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).
- (4) **Don't expect any church to be perfect** — “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.” (Rom. 7:18-19)
- (5) **Don't seek to promote yourself or your own agenda** — “Do not lift up your horn on high; Do not speak with a stiff neck. For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another” (Psa. 75:5-7).
- (6) **Avoid blaming the church for personal problems** — “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3).
- (7) **Treat others as you wish to be treated** — “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12).
- (8) **Have a teachable, cooperative attitude** — “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).
- (9) **Don't oppose or hinder the church** — “These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19).



(10) **Be committed to forthrightness and truth** — “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. “But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17).

(11) **Be devoted to love and forgiveness** — “He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him” (1 John 2:10).

(12) **Don't get caught up in the offenses of others** — “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend” (Psa. 15:1-3).

(13) **Don't personalize everything that's preached** — Obviously, every pastor preaches with the hope that everyone will take the message personally and apply it to his or her own life. “If the shoe fits, wear it.” However, there are always a few who think the minister is pointing his sermon specifically at them. This is a common misunderstanding which causes persons to get hurt.

It is my prayer that these principles will help and encourage you in your relationship with the church. If you been injured there or have merely strayed away, I urge you to find God's grace to forgive those who may have hurt you and return to the fellowship of God people. As challenging as it may seem sometimes, the church is Christ's plan for His people, and it is there that He will develop and mature you into a fully equipped disciple of His kingdom.
