

Grace Notes

Hating Church

1.26.10



***“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’
Revelation 21:9***

I heard someone this past week taking shots at their former church due to past issues that arose between them and that church. Author, Chris Jackson, wrote, *“When wounded Christians get together it seems they inevitably turn to criticizing the church that hurt them.”* That’s dangerous ground. The criticizing doesn’t help the healing. Instead, it turns the wounded into, as one author described, *“discriminating consumers,”* where church is concerned. Sadly, sometimes churches can be critical, even abusive, places. But that’s nothing new. (Think: Pharisees a.k.a the church leaders of Jesus’ time.)

Eugene Peterson describes the church as *“equal parts mystery and mess.”* I’ve witnessed up close the messy side of church. Books in my library bear the titles, *“Church: Why Bother?”*, and *“Loving God When You Don’t Love the Church.”* Twice, I have been ready to give up on the modern-day, institutional church altogether.

But I didn’t. Here’s why.

The first time, a dear friend told me in no uncertain terms, *“Nick, (regardless of what’s been done to you by church people) say nothing to continue to rend the Body of Christ.”* So, even when vicious lies were being spread about me, I remained silent, prayed a lot, and left the situation in God’s hands. And you know what? He had no problem cleaning things up. Jesus’ desire is that His Body reflect Him. And when it doesn’t, He doesn’t need our help fixing it.

The second time, I sat with a friend in a coffee shop battered, bruised and tired - ready to give up once more on church. I was deeply hurt, and deeply angry. My friend looked at me and said something I’ll never forget: *“Nick, you can’t tell Jesus ‘I love You but I hate Your bride.’”* I thought to myself, *“Ouch.”*

Following his own negative experience with church, author, Philip Yancey, wrote, *“Now, when I attend church, I look inward and ask God to purge me from the poisons of criticism and to fill me with grace.....For all its shortcomings, [the local church] is the body of Christ—God’s chosen agent for bestowing grace on a grace-starved world.”*

Pray for the Body of Christ—His Bride. And if you’ve been hurt somewhere along the way by a church, let Jesus take care of it—and you.



Soli Deo Gloria, Nick