

Discouraged, Disappointed, Disenchanted, Disconnected, Disillusioned, Disheartened, Disengaged

When one's expectations for local churches full of imperfect people drive their faith, they often end up facing one if not all of these "D's." I talk to so many who have walked away because they are hurt by the church. Yet their greater challenge is that they place too much emphasis on and have unrealistic expectations for a local church. Their faith is largely rooted in the local church and not in the Lord. So, when the local church fails, as it will, their faith falters.

Local churches will struggle, face challenges, and fall short (read Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 for a synopsis of failings of local first century churches). In a perfect world, local churches would never disappoint. But we live in a sinful world, and churches at their best are made up of struggling sinners who are forgiven. Still, Satan tempts and Christians succumb. Church members thus don't always say the right things or act the right ways. Therefore it is critical to ensure our faith is always rooted in He who will never fail us and He who will never disappoint us.

For those out there struggling to rekindle their faith and recover from their hurt, I point you to Jesus. Remember why you love and follow Him. Then you will have a basis upon which to love and labor with His imperfect, struggling people - the church. It also serves well to recall that the church we will gather with in heaven will not be made up of struggling imperfect souls, but those who were victorious. There will be no sin there. So, with that as our hope, let us rekindle our love for the Lord and His people, putting our trust primarily in Him as we strive to encourage one another to reach home.

- by **Jonathan Perz**

Consider this...

"Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease" (Proverbs 22:10).

Would your home, the place where you work, or the church where you are a member be more peaceful and harmonious if you were "cast out?" If you are a scoffing, murmuring, complaining scorner, they would be. Is it not a sad thought to think that life might be better for others if you were not present?

- **selected**

What Makes The Difference?

- If a man has money and is not willing to have it examined, people think it is counterfeit.
- If a man is afraid to take a lie detector test, people think he is guilty of crime.
- If a man conducts a business and is unwilling to let anyone investigate it, folks think he is running a crooked business.

BUT, many preachers teach doctrines that under no circumstances will they test or allow to be tested by the Bible. Yet millions of people will accept them as upright, honest teachers of the truth, and will risk their salvation upon them.

What makes the difference? The Bible instructs us to try the teachers (1 John 4:1). The truth never fears investigation!

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Forgiveness (1st in a series)

Jesus was clear that forgiving others is absolutely critical to our own salvation: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15) It is, therefore, essential that we properly understand this important subject.

First, when a problem arises, we must determine if the issue involves sin or not. If there is no sin, then we can and should forgive unilaterally. For example, if someone simply 'hurt my

feelings' or I felt slighted in some way, there is no sin in that. Perhaps it was an oversight, or maybe a case of bad judgment, but there was no sin. In such cases I don't even need to address the other person. I can just let that pass. Certainly, I ought not let this linger or cause hard feelings. I can simply 'let it go'.

Jesus described this type of unilateral forgiveness in Luke 7:41,42: *"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"* The Lord's point is clear – those who are forgiven the most are, or at least should be, the most grateful. But notice the scenario He described. Two men incurred debt. There's no inherent sin in that. The creditor just waived the debt on his own, and without conditions. We can do the same, and we ought to do so. Often Christians are much too sensitive, even petty, about the issues that they allow to become major problems. When no sin is involved we need to forgive unconditionally.

However, things change when sin is involved. More on that next week . . .

- by Greg Gwin