

Disillusioned believers turn to God

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BIG SANDY, Texas—It is sad for me to watch people allow their disillusionment with religious systems to affect their relationship with God.

First let me say that I understand that a relationship with God is personal and private, and it is easy for observers to misread a person's behavior and come to wrong conclusions.

People are far too quick to judge by appearance (John 7:24).

However, when I claim to recognize a person's weakened relationship with God, I am doing so after the person has explained his situation to me.

I am glad when people have asked me for help. It gives me the opportunity to help them refocus on their calling and their commitment.

He understands

It helps disillusioned people begin healing when they realize that Jesus Christ certainly understands valid reasons for their disappointment with religious systems.

In Matthew 21:31 Jesus told chief priests and the elders of the people: "I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Do you remember when He made that statement? He said those words at the conclusion of a parable (Matthew 21:28-31). Let's look at this short parable.

Two sons

A certain man had two sons. The father went to both sons and told them to work in the vineyard.

The first son initially said he would not work in the vineyard but changed his mind and later worked.

The second son said he would go, but he didn't go.

Jesus asked: Which of the two sons did the will of the father?

The chief priests and elders answered: The first.

That's when Jesus made His comment about publicans and harlots going into the Kingdom before them.

Jesus Christ understands how religious systems do not accurately reflect the will of the Father.

Earlier in His life Jesus Christ discussed the traditions of the elders (Mark 7:1-13). He criticized the leaders for laying aside the commandments of God to promote their own traditions (verses 8-9).

As the time for His suffering and death approached, Jesus attacked the leadership practices of the religious system (Matthew 23). Many of those same leaders were instrumental in putting Him to death (Matthew 26:3-4).

Considering Jesus' experience with the religious system of His day, He certainly understands when you have reasons to be disillusioned with a religious system.

Moving forward

One of the basic steps to moving forward is to separate the idiocy of religious systems from the personal commitment to God.

Someone might ask: If I understand the flaws of the religious system of my church group, can I still attend there?

My response: Sure. Lots of people do that.

Someone might ask: If I understand the flaws of the religious system of my church group, am I free to leave?

My response: Yes. Leaving a church group is not the same as leaving God.

Someone might ask: If I change congregations, am I behaving like the second son in the parable? Am I saying yes to God and not going to the vineyard?

My response: You were not baptized into a religious system. You did not pledge allegiance or submission to any religious system. When you said yes to your spiritual Father, you agreed to give your allegiance and submission to Him.

Good news

Believers who become disillusioned with religious systems can continue a strong relationship with God. In fact, you can talk to people who became disillusioned who express that they have a stronger relationship now with God than they ever had.

The experiences that caused disillusionment with systems of men may affect your relationship with people. But those experiences do not need to negatively affect your relationship with God. In fact, you can use the experiences to strengthen your relationship with God.

When people lie to you, the glory of God's truthfulness comes into greater view (Romans 3:4).

When people practice injustice against you, the reality of God's judgment is magnified.

Since you said yes to your spiritual Father, keep your eyes on Him. He wants you in the vineyard.