



WHETHER IT'S A 'GOOD' BREAK UP OR A 'BAD' ONE, IT'S NEVER EASY, AND IT'S NEVER FUN, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO "BREAKING UP WITH A CHURCH..."

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

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It's like the thing that no one talks about. The **white elephant** in the middle of the room that no one likes to acknowledge is real; and since no one is talking about it, this phenom is nameless. Just for the sake of this article though, let's call it a "Church Break Up." I'm not talking about a Church 'split,' where a group of people make a mass exodus to some other Church, I'm talking about an individual who leaves a Church and how that can personally feel like a **'break up.'** I can almost guarantee that anyone who has gone through a hard "Church Break Up" knows exactly what I'm talking about. Depending on how deep your relationship was with that Church, how long you had been going there, how involved you were in the Sunday to Sunday workings, and if you had been involved with leadership on some level, whether paid or volunteer position...breaking up is hard to do! Personally, I've been involved in at least 5 Church Break ups in my Christian Life, and believe me, it's **never** been fun!

SIMILARITIES

Let's just look at a few similarities between 'boyfriend/girlfriend break ups' and 'Church break ups.' When you break up with a person, at least for a while after, you are secretly asking

your 'connections' how the person is doing. If it was a bad break up, you're inwardly hoping the other person doesn't succeed in anything they do. (I am very aware of how evil that is..I'm just sayin,' it does happen if we are honest) You are also hoping they feel the pain of you being gone...are they missing you? 'Have they asked about me?' If or when they get another girlfriend/boyfriend, you're quietly hoping they don't even compare to the relationship you had with your former bf or gf. **All these things** can also be applied to Church situations. After you 'leave' a Church, at first you might check their website or talk to your 'connections' who still go to that Church. Trying to get the skinny on 'how is it now that I'm gone,' or 'Do they even know I'm gone?' etc. As I said before, there are a bunch of factors that play into how 'bad' or how 'wounded' a person might be as a result of the "break up."

In my experience it's so strange that you can work with people both on a professional level and on a personal level, and yet at the end of the day, or the end of the 'season,' the time that follows your leaving shows the painful lack of depth you actually had with these particular people. And it's even more frightening when it's a whole congregation of people who no longer communicate with you or seem to care about your life, family or ministry.

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND?

On the other hand, and just to be fair, I'm not so good at making a big effort to keep the

relationship going either. Eventually, because we are not seeing each other on a regular basis, not doing 'ministry' together, or I've moved on to another 'set' of Church folk, we drift apart. Out of sight, out of mind. Those lives I was so concerned with before are now just faint memories, good or bad, of a season of time where they mattered to me and I mattered to them. I'm ashamed of my part of not keeping up with some of the genuine friends I've made over the years in different churches. BUT, life is too short for regrets, so I repent of my 'out of sight, out of mind' sin, and will try very diligently to bring forth fruit in keeping with that repentance. Oh yeah, and one more thing, when it comes to speaking poorly about the place (Church) we've just come from, we should probably take a lesson from Nascar (or the BIBLE), and, at the very least, not say anything bad about any one of our fellow drivers on the track (our fellow Christians on the narrow road,) The 'world' is watching...

IT'S NOT ALWAYS BAD...

Sometimes we find ourselves in a relationship or in a Church where we mutually agree to go our separate ways. There is no animosity to speak of, sometimes it's just God moving us on to something else. Still, it's a **break up, and it's hard to do.** I want to encourage

all of us who are CHRISTIANS to carefully consider our part in this...WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, JESUS IS COMING BACK SOON, we don't have time for games! Stay connected with people as the Lord leads, and don't be lazy. (I'm speaking to myself here:) In this day and age where there are so many 'easy' ways to stay connected, go ahead and send that email or make that phone call. There's really no reason for us to 'divorce' any congregation or church 'family.' In these last days we can't afford to isolate or forget the BIG PICTURE. We're ALL IN THIS TOGETHER regardless of what 'church' (ie group of believers) we currently find ourselves in!

KEEP IN TOUCH!

I SAY,

let's all make a concerted effort to 'really' care; and to 'really' love one another as Jesus told us to. We should not be so quick to forget, or to let go of the "church" relationships GOD has established...remember, the world is watching our 'break ups.' They are looking for hope in love. If they can't see the Love of Christ in Christians (Christ Followers), where **can** they see it?

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)