



Say No To Isolation-frustration

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. —Proverbs 18:1, esv

It's interesting to see how Jesus started His earthly ministry as He walked along the shores at the Sea of Galilee ..fishing.. but not for fish. He really had His Father and people on His mind and that's why He wouldn't live isolated. Sure, He'd get alone to pray, but He also wanted to be out where the hungry people were.

Yup, that was the place where He called everyday fishermen to become His reverent and relevant disciples ..for life. Do you remember when we saw the brothers Simon and Andrew? He told them, ***"Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men"*** (Mk. 1:17). This Friend of sinners saw what they each could become, and how they could be used of God once sin was dealt with. He knew what tremendous joy, peace and fun they could have in serving a gracious God. How encouraging for any of us!

And this same merciful God calls each of us to closely follow Him, and also to fish as we wisely infiltrate society rather isolate away from needy people.

I was once told about a church far away in an old Canadian fishing town. The place where it was located on the jagged edge of the frigid Northern Atlantic Ocean was originally chosen by the leadership due to the fact that this was where countless fishermen congregated, traded goods, talked tools, came ashore to socialize and to visit with their families who lived there.

And the people at the church did enough things right according to the Word of God that God really blessed the work and this congregation situated there, began to shine out brightly, to attract people by love, and to flourish.

But as time passed by and as this congregation grew larger, the congregants found what seemed like a really good deal on some property and then they opted to relocate. They chose to construct a new church sanctuary quite a distance from that town and the Atlantic shore. Key influential figures wanted to get away from the waterfront, congestion, and the smell of fish. Besides, fishermen who love to party and sin aren't always easy to hang with. Sometimes they are obnoxious or smell, along with their jokes and speech. Who wants to put up with that?

Then a very interesting thing started to take place. Before, it had been so exhilarating to visit the services and see people coming to faith in Christ as the Word was ministered, but now since they had moved away from lost people, it seemed like the constituents had lost their joy, the passion, and the red hot zeal for winning sinners. Some even got distracted and backslid spiritually. And why was that ..you might ask? Well they

themselves wanted to learn the answer to this question as well, and they spent quite a bit of time trying to figure all that out. The leadership indeed still wanted the numbers. Some suggested that it was because they were no longer among the common people, and it now was very challenging for these people to find transportation to get to their new meeting location.

I wonder if all of us pray over our decisions first, or make our decisions in the light of Jesus' passionate desire for us to go live and tell it—I mean share the Good News. If we only cloister together in our nice warm buildings away from sinners.. if we only stay to ourselves in a cozy holy huddle of protection and away from the grungy street people, away from the ordinary workers, away from families that don't believe like we do.. how in the world will we ever fulfill Christ's Great Commission or His Great Commandment? We each need to go to where the needy people are. Don't fishermen do that when fishing for fish; don't they even use decent bait and lures that the fish actually like?

Sure there will be needy people too proud and closed-minded to accept what God freely offers. Sure there will be those who scoff, who mock, who joke, who laugh at us and get cruel and in our faces, but we still have a mandate.

There are a lot of relevant Christ-honoring churches filled with grace and truth in our land that do things biblically, glorifying God. And we rejoice with them as they fish for souls! We've also encountered many reverent Christians and evangelistic ministers who are wisely applying the Scriptures to build up God's Kingdom rather than their own. We excitedly celebrate what God is doing through them! We must proactively look for them, test their messages and be fruit inspectors in order to find these balanced places and people of worship.

Today, I know of some older, small churches situated in the middle of huge growing cities that haven't gone so far as to relocate away to the peaceful rural areas where hardly anyone lives, but they still tend to isolate themselves from needy people in other ways. And don't get me wrong, there are indeed healthy small and large churches in cities and out in the country—I have nothing against either.

Some unfortunately elevate secondary doctrines to the level of Essential Christian doctrine and then divide over these teachings, sadly even condemning people to hell for say.. having a different eschatology, or a different pneumatology. Some set what they believe according to what they feel and allegedly “experience” and others according to what they don't feel or lack in the way of experience. We all must set it according to the Bible and then experience what God says we need to experience.

I also know of few insecure pastors in a church who literally grew jealous of a very popular and fruitful elderly couple who was leading their church's marriage ministry (what looked like the only department growing there) and then these pastors threw them out for no good reason. And it wasn't the first time they chose to isolate. Ego with leaders can be so ugly and cruel.

Some leadership teams demand that all attendees and under shepherds adopt the same grey-area-personal-convictions regarding non-sinful hobbies and interests that the senior pastor has chosen for himself, otherwise they will subtly get cold-shouldered right out the door as well. Some pastors who view the church campus as their own, adopt manipulative pressure tactics, even using alleged gifts of the Spirit at times for gain, or

use inordinate disciplinary brow-beating, and sociologically cult-like control to gain more income, or more volunteer service. Yes, they push, push, push.. too much for free labor from overworked individuals "in the Name of Jesus" unfortunately to the hurt of families.. that is until the people flee out the back door for peace and safety. Then those same half blind guides will actually pride themselves in being bold-crowd-thinners who use the uncompromising truth and "anointing" to serve God. It breaks the Lord's heart!

We Christian don't get involved with unbelievers in their plight because we simply don't care. We tend to become selfish with "our free time" and "our stuff." We tend to quickly form snooty clicks that feel like isolating themselves in the name of "going deeper"—refusing to venture out to become acquainted with new people. Some individuals resist getting together with anyone just to guard against embarrassment etc and these people become lonely hermits.

Perhaps you have become lonely and empty. No matter the cause of your loneliness—sin, loss, shame, selfishness, sickness, prison incarceration, depression—God says this is **"not good."** God created each of us to be in close relationship with others—with growing Christians ([Eccl. 4:9-12](#)) and [with Himself](#) through Jesus Christ ([Rev. 21:3](#)). God longs for honesty, yieldedness, and intimacy with you.

Small towns, large cities, and every place where people live in-between.. all need Jesus Christ! Yes, they and those in them need healthy balanced growing churches with evangelistic fervor. Saints need simple Bible teaching that points to the Son, with an emphasis upon practical application. Sinners need to hear Bible preaching from those with conviction practicing it.

"A man who has friends must himself be friendly..." (Prov. 18:24).

"A recluse is self-indulgent, snarling at every sound principle of conduct." (Prov. 18:1, nlt).

Reach out and develop those needed friendships—for your sake and theirs. ~Marvin Williams

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mk. 12:31).

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone...'" (Gen. 2:18).

Look, I don't mean to come off as some hyper-critical know-it-all or some puffed-up fool that's never made a mistake, 'cause I myself have boat-loads to learn in this area. But some pastors have the unspoken mentality, **"Who cares about showing love to the people we have—they're already 'ours. If we just build it big, they will come—new ones will show up."** Wrong!

Some pastors believe that if we can just maintain the physical buildings like an exclusive country club well enough (and it is certainly important to be good stewards of what God loans us..), if I can just use the people to make the sheep-shed nice enough, high-tech enough, man, the sheep will just flock into it and we'll have enough money. Some even put the buildings before the people of God.. "in the name of Jesus" they would think. Some get too busy and mean-spirited, some indifferent (any of us could error if we don't remain dependant upon Christ). They lose the fruit, lose their peace, lose their victory over the flesh. They strive all the harder in the flesh and begin to think the excessive attrition rate is normal for "spiritual leaders."

They might not say it out loud that they're now in it to impress or compete, but.. "Every year let's make it look like at our ministry headquarters, that we've experienced numerical growth (as if that should be the true mark of success..) so that ministry peers and followers will think we are doing things right and then we can retain our position, hide all embarrassment, and maybe gain some momentum."

Bless their little hearts. May God help us all!

The bottom-line is that Jesus never called us to primarily focus on cleaning up the fish bowl to the level of flawless perfection! He called us to follow Him, to worship Him alone, to feed His flock in love, and to wisely fish for unregenerate people compassionately without any pretense or selfishness!

There is a place for speaking helpful truth that is hard to receive. But Jesus was and is inclusive—full of grace and truth ([Jn. 1:14](#) and 17). So why shouldn't His people and his leaders be that way? Jesus is more than wonderful—He's the same yesterday, today and forever! Do we brag on Him the most or have we left our First-love in the dust? Do we have passionate zeal and talk about Him more than we do about everything else or do we brag on our ministry campus, our church growth strategy, our denomination, our great programs, our gifted minister, our rockin' band etc... the most?

Are we too quick to come to conclusions about people? Do we roughly or rudely misjudge or man-handle people to make sure the building stays clean and in order? Do we isolate or infiltrate? Are we more into the physical maintenance and add-ons of the property, than the building up of the individuals who are in the church... or how about those outside of the four walls of the church?

Jesus Christ is far better than tremendous and ministry unto Him will always be our top priority even more than discipleship or witnessing.

He is the...

One Who relieves us of all emotional stress and mental duress.

One Who gives the best advice and manages us in His worldwide Cause.

One Who furnishes lasting relief and eternal support.

One Who acts between parties in conflict to reconcile all their differences.

One Who gives us a burden for lost people—He pleads the cause of the poor, of the orphan, of the weak, of the lonely, of the prisoner and of the widows.

One Who causes supernatural strength and endurance to enter the fainthearted.

One Who can always be relied upon to meet our every need no matter how late it is.

One Who can show churches specifically how to serve and reach their communities.

Christ, our premiere Example in everything never isolated Himself away from Sinners—people like you and me. He loved to interact with ordinary people and he was willing to put at risk His own reputation with the religious bigwigs, to associate with people like me.

*Isolation is a lonely place
Distraught with inner turmoil
Attempting to figure out yourself
Looking for something to be happy about,
Trying to remember what love is.
Isolation can be a trap you set yourself
Then you turn around and blunder into it,
Falling into patterns which are nonproductive.
Call it bad judgment or false steps,
Someone falling through society's cracks.
Isolation can lead one towards depression
Fathoming all of ones insecurities. ~ Gregory Crockatt*

Can you just imagine how so uber-wonderful it could be to have Someone with these loving attributes actually involved in every detail of your life—that's Jesus who is there for you? Sound too good to be true? Well it is true and it will cost you nothing .. but your whole life in surrender. Turn to Him and [trust Him](#) to save you in the fullest sense of the term. He paid for it so you wouldn't have to.

We are to be in the world but not of the world—with worldly sinners some, but not pulled down by them. We aren't better than other people, but better off than those who are lost. Have a prayer request or questions about bad isolation verses good separation unto God? At fish4souls.org click "[Contact](#)" and let us know! Perhaps we can help.

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