

Have A Positive Church Experience

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The Garden of Gethsemane was located just outside the walls of Jerusalem. It may have belonged to a friend of Jesus. Around midnight on the Thursday before he was crucified, Jesus took his disciples to Gethsemane to pray. But they fell asleep instead.

Jesus prayed so diligently that his sweat fell like drops of blood. *"Father," he cried to God, "if it is possible, take this cup from me. But not my will, but yours be done."*

Jesus expected his disciples to support him during his time of anguish. Three times he returned to them. Each time he asked them to pray with him. Each time they fell asleep. Moments later, when the soldiers came to arrest him, they all ran away. He had been deserted in his most desperate hour.

Unfortunately, there are times when we today may feel deserted by friends or even our church in our most desperate hours. The reaction of Jesus to his disciples may help us to react better when others disappoint us.

The Bible says that the disciples were sleepy because their eyes were heavy. It was around midnight; they had had a long, difficult day. Jesus noted their humanness and said to them, *"The spirit is willing and the body is weak."*

So what did Jesus do when his disciples fell asleep? He woke them up and asked them again to pray with him. He did not break off his friendship with them. He did not turn his friends into his enemies. Perhaps the disciples were ignorant of the seriousness of his situation. It is hard to help others unless we know that they are going through a problem.

The Bible says that those who are sick should call for their Christian friends to come and pray for them. It doesn't say that their Christian friends are to read their minds. Mind reading is not a gift God usually gives to his children.

Several times I have received a phone call from someone I do not know who simply demands, "Why did you call me?" The fact is, I don't know if I called them or not. I probably called a wrong number and it showed up on their caller ID. Or maybe they called the wrong number when they called me to ask why I called them.

From their tone of voice it seems they are saying, "Did you call me because you have something against me? What right do you have to call me?"

Unfortunately, many persons have the attitude of "the world must be out to get me." But the truth is that when someone does something we find offensive, they often didn't mean it to be that way at all.

If someone fails to greet us it is probably because they are human and can only concentrate on so many things at once. When our names are misspelled (even in the church bulletin), it isn't that someone doesn't like us, it's just that they sometimes hit the wrong keys on the keypad. And if we feel alone when we are sick or in need it isn't that our friends or the church doesn't appreciate us, it's just that they are trying to do a million other things and may not even know about our needs.

Some people would have more friends if they were more considerate of their friends' shortcomings and less demanding of their friends' time and emotions. Likewise, some people would have a positive church experience if they went to worship God and to serve others instead of trying to figure out if they were accepted or if others liked them.