

# Bad Brother – Good God

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Dennis Kreiss

How do you respond when church people hurt you? What do you do when you are faced with a **bad brother or sinful sister**? I hate to admit that I have a lot of experience with church hurt. I'm an expert at hurting and getting hurt. Like everyone else around me, I'm damaged goods. No one gets through life without pain. **I've got more church hurt than you can shake a Bible at.**

So if you are hurting, I get it. I've been strung along, overworked, and taken advantage of. I've disclosed personal information in confidence and then had it shared broadly. I've had people sow seeds of doubt and mistrust. I've been misled, backstabbed, and left to pick up the pieces. I've been devalued, ignored, and publicly "made-an-example-of." I've had friendships fall apart and been forced to watch people I love walk away from me and from the church. That hurts.

And I'm not alone in this. **I've heard that Christians are the only army that shoots their wounded.** Has someone in the Church hurt you? Maybe it was a leader, a pastor, or another believer. Maybe someone lied about you, stole from you, betrayed you, shamed you, or ridiculed you.

Church hurt is confusing, concerning, and most often leaves hurting people isolated and unsure who to trust and who to talk to.

**If you've been let down, damaged, or dragged along by the people of Jesus, I'm sorry.** You aren't alone. Here's the good news: it is possible to heal from your church hurt and still hold onto your faith. And I want to share with you how I managed to do just that.

Here's the interesting thing: Today, I still love Jesus and His church. As unbelievable as it may sound, my church hurt has actually served to deepen my faith, not upend it. And it has essentially helped me love others more, not less.

No I realize that's unusual. The result is usually that hurt people just leave the church — and may not return. Most people who've stopped attending church regularly point to "personal hurt" as a primary reason. LifeWay Research, found that **66% of churchgoers who stopped attending church reported they left because of personal conflict or painful church experiences.**<sup>[1]</sup>

And I'm here today to tell you that there is another way. **What do you do when you've got a bad brother or sister? The answer is you still have got a Good God, a church full of awesome people, and a thing called grace.** If you've got that, you've got what it takes to stick around and work your way through pain and hurt.

Let's take a peek at how to deal with bad brothers and sinful sisters: The first thing you should tuck away in your little file cabinet upstairs is that

**Brothers will be Bad**

Christians are human. Christians are born sinners. Christians ain't perfect, you know. I'm not what I should be, I'm not what I'm gonna be, but thank God I'm not what I once was. We may be forgiven, but that doesn't make us perfect. It just means we're working on it.

**Some people find it difficult to accept that we Christians don't always live up to the standards we preach.** In fact, we Christians find it difficult to accept that other Christians don't live up to these standards. How dare they sin! How dare they gossip! How dare they hurt me!

But the reality is that Christians fail and Christians hurt one another.

What are you going to do when confronted by unruly brothers and misbehaving sisters? You already know the most important thing that you should do. You should forgive. Forgiveness is the crown jewel of relationships. Forgiveness frees us. Forgiveness brings restoration. Forgiveness is like the grease that keeps the gears running smoothly. When the squeaky wheel doesn't get greased... you start to smell smoke!

Jesus said, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." (Luke 17:3-5)

Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)

**The church is made up of imperfect, messed up people.** So they're going to have problems. Our first and most important response is to forgive them. You've got to do it. But that is not the only thing we should do. Let's see what the book of 2 Thessalonians tells us to do in response to the unruly brother:

**14 if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.**

There are two main scenarios that can potentially play out when bad things happen between brothers. #1 you can admonish your brother and point out his fault, and when he realizes his fault, **he may repent**, and everyone leaves happy. Or #2 you can point out the error of his way, and instead of repentance, **he responds with hardness**, inflexibility, argumentation or apathy. And he walks away living **in disobedience**.

What you going to do, what you going to do, what you going to do when that happens to you. God's answer is this: There comes a time when you have to cut ties with toxic individuals. Sometimes you have to let go of bad brother relationships.

If we could define it, here is what that process looks like.

#1 It starts with disobedience. "if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle." We must identify Disobedience biblically. Disobedience to the Word of God is defined as anything we say or do that transgresses the commands of Christ and the New Testament. If we are not living up to the Law of Christ it is disobedience. Disobedience always causes pain, chaos and havoc.

#2 We should respond by “admonishing him as brother, rather than treating him as an enemy.” In other words **if you yell back** and hurt your brother back, now **you need to repent!** If you strike back as you would to an enemy, then you will need to repent. So, When you admonish him, it should be in the spirit of Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if anyone is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

#3 If you can’t work things out, and if the bad brother won’t turn from his wicked ways, you are to make a mental note of it, and “**do not keep company with him**, that he may be ashamed.” In some circles this is called shunning. Christians have gotten a bad name for shunning people. And sometimes rightly so. **Because we haven’t worked through the biblical process of reconciliation first.**

But the same antagonists who give us a hard time about shunning are quick to point out that you **should** always sever yourself from toxic relationships! You should never put yourself in an abusive relationship. They say you should leave! That’s what shunning is! It’s cutting ties with people who are disobedient, hurtful and bad for you.

Don’t mingle with them, don’t associate with them, Let them go, in the hopes that they will miss the sweet fellowship of the church and be ashamed and decide that it is truly best to fix their problems, adjust their attitudes and turn from their wicked ways.

The word “ashamed” here **ἐντρέπω entrepo** – and it literally means to feel bad about things, so much so that you turn about and repent. We are not just trying to hurt people back, there is a purpose to this kind of pain. Restoration.

Now here is what I find interesting: when people get hurt, instead of doing the biblical thing – forgiving, admonishing and shunning, instead, so many people blame the church and leave. I got hurt at church, so I’m out of here.

But listen carefully “church hurt” really is a misnomer. It isn’t the Church that deeply hurts us. In fact, it usually is only a very small minority within the church. So my church hurt isn’t really church hurt at all. **It is Sally-hurt... it is Chester-hurt... it is Clarence and Amanda-hurt... but it isn’t really church hurt.** (Names are obviously fictitious to protect the guilty.)

Listen, **You’d never junk your entire car just because you got a flat tire.** Instead, you’d address the broken spot, get help if you needed it, and jump back on the road. **Neither should you junk the entire church just because of a bad brother.** Instead you should address the brokenness and get help, and jump back into the life of the church.

And here’s another thing; Don’t blame God for the actions of others. No matter what others might do to you, we can have 100% confidence that God cares. The sad thing about church hurt is that it misinforms and distorts our image of God. The Bible describes God as a good father, who lovingly cares for His children (Psalm 68:5, Isaiah 64:8).

**So no matter what we experience from men and women who represent Him, make no mistake— God is for you.** He loves you. He sings over you and wants to bring you into a new place with Him. Even when those religious leaders and institutions who represent Him do so poorly. He’s

better, kinder, gentler, and more loving than we can even understand. He is not the source of pain you're feeling

**You may have a bad brother, but never forget, you've got a good God!**

**God will be Good**

Look at the goodness of God in the middle of chaos and prophetic horror:

**16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.**

He is the Lord of peace. Even when the world is full of turmoil; even when the church has bad brothers and sinful sisters, He himself will give you peace, always in every way!

Consider how often you find yourself thinking the following statements: **Things never go my way. My situation will never change. I can't trust anyone. My situation is hopeless.**

If you turn away from God in times of turmoil, you turn away from your only source of hope. Without God there is no peace. Instead of blaming your problems on God, seek Him and he will give you His peace! And the Lord will be with you. Listen what you can only get with God:

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3

What you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9

The Bible promises that one great prophet day, God will ultimately resolve the pain, evil and suffering in the world. Revelation 21: says, that one day "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain..." What a comforting thought!

**The Father is good, Jesus is good and the Holy Spirit is good. He is the Good Shepherd spoken of in John 10. He's the good king, who hears the cry of the oppressed and mistreated (Isaiah 30:18, Romans 12:19). He is a good teacher, a good master, a friend that sticks closer than a brother.**

No matter how bad life is, God is good. And he gives us a good thing called grace.

**Grace Covers it All 17-18**

Paul ends his message with these thoughts: **17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**

Two closing thoughts. The first one is this; no matter how many bad brothers there are in church, there are almost always more good friends, fine people and awesome brothers there. Sometimes you just have to mark the bad brothers, look past them and remember to rejoice in the good old family of God.

Jesus taught that **there are wolves in sheep's clothing** and they desire nothing more than to kill and destroy the church and its members. So there are just some people who don't care a bit about treating you like Jesus teaches and their main objective is to stir up strife. On the flip side of that, there are some amazing believers in churches! I know many of them and am friends with some tremendous families in our church. So in order to experience the amazing ones, you sometimes have to deal with the crazy ones! That's just the way it is.

One of the best was Paul. He was a good brother. Good brothers will remind us that Grace covers it all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Grace is the goodness of God poured out on our lives bringing joy, pleasure, delight, kindness and favor. Grace is God giving us his bountiful spiritual gifts, free of charge, to all who will believe, if we will receive them.

Grace means that we can be free, be forgiven, be hopeful, and have eternal life. Grace is the gift of God that when the world is spinning out of control, his grace is sufficient. Grace is the vein of strength that enables us to hold on when all the fury of hell breaks loose. The good graces of a good God is what makes us able to heal from the hurt of bad brothers and sinful sisters.

As we close the book of 2 Thessalonians, I want to point out one last truth. Did you know that Jesus experienced hurt from church members? Jesus was **hurt** by His disciples who were the first church members. Jesus was **betrayed**. He was **sold out** by a church member. He was **talked about** behind His back. He was **lied** straight to His face. Think about Judas pretending to be someone that he was not and all the lies he fed Jesus. Jesus was **forsaken** in His moment of greatest need by all His members. **Jesus feels your hurt because He understands the hurt He felt from those closest to Him.**

**Bad Brothers, Good God, Great Grace.**