

Stumbling Alone

Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come." Jesus also tells us, "In the world you will have trouble. Take courage, for I have conquered the world."

To stumble means to be pulled away from your values or beliefs from anything that causes us to act to the contrary.

Many Christians have stumbled out of the Church. They never made a concrete decision to abandon God or the Church. In fact, according to Pew research, 71% of lapse Catholics said they "just drifted away". A stumbling block here, there, and after a while they find themselves far away from where they started.



Jesus said it is impossible to go through life without bumping up against things that will cause us to stumble or that will give us trouble. For instance, money- its lack or surplus- causes people to stumble. Wealth brings options, and options lead to distractions. Hardship, on the other hand, causes us to wonder if God even cares.

See, the thing is, it is easy to stumble out of the Church. Late night on Saturday means you're going to sleep in on Sunday and skip Mass. It is easy to stumble out of faith or belief. Maybe you read something or saw something on the History Channel that became a stumbling block to your faith. It is easy to stumble out of your relationship with God, too, as people get too busy to pray. But it is almost impossible to stumble out of community.

If you are connected, doing life together, praying and learning about God together, it is impossible to stumble out of the that because it is like family, only better.

It is better than a family because when we are in trouble, when the stumbling blocks are thrown in front of us and we are tripping and falling on the ground, the last people we would ever listen to is our family- not our parents, not our spouses, not our children. We roll our eyes at our parents or get downright mean to our spouses. We don't want to hear it. Not now!

Make sure you hear this next part. This is why it is extraordinarily important for you to be in some kind of structured community so that you don't just stumble out of your faith, out of your marriage, out of your values. Because you won't listen to your family when things are making you stumble, you need someone else that you will listen to.

In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, the author states, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if they fall down (stumble), they can help each other out. But pity those who fall and have no one to help them up!"

Pity the person who falls, who stumbles, and has no one to help, no one to notice them falling away. And when people stumble morally, most of the time they do not want to be helped back up. They like the ground. That is why they resent their family's help or their spouse's intervention.

Here is an important pattern in human nature that pastor Andy Stanley summed up nicely: when you stumble you will need most what you desire least. In the middle of stumbling you need the people who love you to get you back on your feet, but you don't want them to. You resist them. You push back, dismiss, or resent their honest efforts.

If you have not already laid the groundwork relationally, if you have not intentionally built those connections with people prior to the stumbling, then you are never going to seek it out in the midst of it. Need proof? Just play "What if" with your own family to get some perspective.

Imagine the difference in your family if your father had a group of men that he was doing life together with that, when he stumbled, they decided they weren't going to leave him alone on the ground. They refused to let him stumble out into alcoholism or into an affair. What if these people fought for your father when he didn't have the energy to fight anymore?

What if your ex-husband or ex-wife had a group of people that would have come along beside him or her when the stumbling started? How different would your life be now if his or her friends loved that person enough to refuse to let them stumble out of your marriage?

"Two are better than one... pity the man who falls and has no one to help pick him up!"

Growth, accountability, belonging, and care happen in circles, not rows. People can easily drift out of rows. Circles are better than rows because you cannot hide in a circle, face-to-face. People know when you are missing and when you are checking out. No one drifts from a circle. They must intentionally get up and leave.

Because it is impossible to stumble out of real community we are striving to lay the groundwork as much as possible so that you will never have to be alone with the stumbling blocks start to fly.

Community
Groups