

Overcoming “Church Addiction”

By Kate Ward

My name is Kate Ward and I am a recovering “church addict.” I loved my church growing up. So many of my childhood memories were made within its four walls. God used those formative years to solidify in me a passion for God and a love for his people.

You can have too much of a good thing, though. I spent so much time doing church events and hanging out with Christians, I didn’t have any time to spend with people who didn’t know God. Christian fellowship is important, but we still need to be present in the world in order to share Christ.

I needed those early years to help teach and train me in what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. I needed the people in that church to show me how to love and serve God well. I needed that safe space to question and grow. But when I became a young adult I knew it was time to branch out beyond the “safety” of my church. I needed to use and share all the knowledge God had given me. But I didn’t leave. I stayed.

When I turned 21, God knew it was time for me to move ahead and He knew it would take His clear direction for me to make that move. About to graduate college, I was attending a national youth conference as a counselor. One night I felt very clearly that God wanted me to go overseas to do missions. I didn’t know where He wanted me to go. I just knew he was saying, “Go.”

I started praying and talking to the wise, godly people God had put in my life. I learned of an opportunity for a three-month internship to minister to college students in London, England. Five months later, I got on a plane and was ready for God’s next chapter in my life.

Those three months were the best and hardest times I had ever experienced. The minute I left my country, everything that was “normal” and absolute to me felt like it was being ripped away. I was living among people who didn’t seem to want or need God. I felt useless, since my reason for being there was to tell them about Him.

I cried a lot during those three months. I cried because I felt I was failing as a missionary. I cried because I felt I had made a huge mistake. Had I heard God wrong? Why did he want me there if I didn’t seem to be making a difference in changing people’s lives?

I was sitting in my room in a small flat in the middle of London, feeling like it was all a waste, when God gave me a realization. It wasn’t about me being able to change others. This whole trip was about me becoming more like Christ. I was terrible at “saving” people because that wasn’t my job. My job was to be obedient to Him and go. His job was to change people’s hearts, and he was allowing me to be a part of that amazing work.



The next day, I felt relief. I didn't feel like I had to say the perfect thing to people to try and change them. I just knew I had to care about them and live life with them. Now, I am not saying I didn't need to have boldness in speaking truth to people. I did. But I realized the source of all this was God's power at work within people.

So... I still love the church. I love my brothers and sisters in Christ and the community that we share. But I know the church can't be everything to me. God sent His Son to die for the whole world, and I am grateful to be able to share my salvation story with those who still don't know Him. When you live like this, you truly live out what God intended for the church. You will "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).