



“Hanging with the Herd” Notes

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If anyone thinks they can live the Christian life all alone—they are deceived and living dangerously. Isolation naturally breeds deception. People who get hurt and disillusioned by the church or other Christians often make the decision that they don't want or need interaction with other Christians. God's plan is to teach us and heal us and make us strong and mature so we can help and protect the young believers. Trying to grow ourselves up and becoming our own authority, leads to deception, disillusionment, despair, and destruction.

“When you are isolated, you believe whatever you perceive or feel to be true.” “When you are deceived, you don't know what you don't know.” We need help to Biblically rebalance. When we are hurt, we naturally isolate ourselves, pull back, hide, avoid, withdraw, and justify our decision to do so. We need to be taught between the pain of an immunization and a hot burner on the stove. One is for our good, the other just causes damage.

We need accountability in our lives to stay spiritually healthy. We need someone getting into our stuff. We need parents, teachers, pastors-churches, counselors, and even governmental officials to help us understand our world to learn what is truly good and evil.

The Church “family” is God's idea; He created it. The beauty of the body of Christ/his Church, isn't that the body is perfect but is being perfected by God in order to present her to his Son Jesus Christ as a reflection of the glory of what God can do. This is a mystery. He loves us even in our imperfection, and he loves the church even in its imperfection! He doesn't leave us broken like he found us, but is always committed to conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ. Jesus fell in love with us even when we were ugly with sin and rebellion. The glory of God is to transform an ugly unloved and unloving people into a beautiful bride fit for his Son—if we will only submit ourselves to his righteousness and design for maturity.

Illustration of Musk Oxen; Musk oxen are native to the Arctic areas of Canada, Greenland, and Alaska. Despite their common name, musk oxen have no musk glands and are not oxen. Although they may resemble bison, musk ox are more closely related to goats and sheep. Muskoxen are social and live in herds, usually of around 10–20 animals, but sometimes over 70.

Defensive Behavior: They thrive on the tundra where there is nowhere to run, nowhere to hide when faced with an enemy. Muskoxen have a distinctive defensive behavior: when the herd is threatened, the bulls and cows will face outward to form a stationary ring around the calves. This is an effective defense against predators such as wolves.

Life in the Herd is not easy; The oxen learn to live in community with all of its headaches and hassles. Alone, they cannot outrun, out climb, or outsmart their enemies. If they think they can, they are deceived. God must teach us how to live together. Romans 12 talks about the transformation by the renewing of our minds that is absolutely necessary to live in the “herd.” Romans 13 talks about submitting to and respecting the authority structure that God has established in government, the family and the church, without which we cannot live and work together. When we isolate ourselves spiritually we will be picked off by the enemy.

The Church “herd”: **We stay in the “herd”/church not because it is easy but because God designed it.** We need to stay put until God says move. We are not free to go wherever we please, when we please because we are not the lord of our lives; God is. He says where he wants us to be. God has designed Christians to live in the church family; period.

True Authority vs. False Authority: True authority increases our trust, understanding, belief, and obedience to God and Jesus Christ. It produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and peace. False authority increases our dependence on people, picks and chooses what it will obey, and produces the fruit of rebellion and destruction.

- **Col. 2: 18-19,** Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

The true purpose of authority in the church is not to wield power over people but to provide a place of instruction and safety which involves love, acceptance, protection, direction, and correction. (Ephesians 6:1-9)

If God calls you to leave this church or any church after you have become a member, let me give you some guidelines for your protection.

- Try to work out differences face to face Biblically first. (Matthew 18:15-18)
- Check your heart-is God actually disciplining me or is He truly calling me out (usually he calls us when there is peace and prosperity-not strife) (Hebrews 12:11)
- Ask to be released from the current spiritual authority so you can come underneath under another. Everyone must be under spiritual authority for their safety. Do it with respect knowing that you are actually relating to God, not just men. (Romans 13:1-2)
- Satan is out looking to pick off the offended, independent, rebellious, unsubmitted Christians. He walks around like a roaring lion and is very skilled at what he does. (1 Peter 5:8)

1 Peter 5:1-11 puts it all together when he says,

- To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Teachability and correctability is crucial in our defense against deception. (Hebrews 12: 10-15)

Beware of the trap in making changes: It is deception to believe that *we alone* have to making the changes. It's too overwhelming and we may reject those who correct us and respond by defensively. That's because *it feels like it's all up to us to make the changes*. However, if we humble ourselves, expose our sin-failure-weakness, etc, and cooperate with the corrective, restorative work of the Holy Spirit and the authority structure God established, we will get healed.

- 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, *he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

The goal is to be *willing and humble* to accept his forgiveness and conform to the promptings/teaching of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts, words, and actions.

The narrow road vs. the wide road. Short term if we get our own way it seems easier but long term the fruit of it is confusion, fear, distress, heartache, and eventually disaster. It comes from leaning to our own understanding Proverbs 3:4-5 and not trusting in what God says. **Matthew 7: 13-14** "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.