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7 THINGS I NEEDED TO HEAR BEFORE I TRIED CHURCH AGAIN

A short guide for anyone thinking about giving church another chance



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The 7 Things I Needed to Hear Before I Tried Church Again

1. What happened to you was not okay

If you've been hurt by the church—whether by words, actions, or silence—it wasn't God's will for you. Hurt people can do harm, and sadly, sometimes that happens in places that should be safe. Your pain is real, and it matters.

2. You are not the only one who left

You might feel isolated in your story, but you're not. Many people have stepped away because they felt unseen, unheard, or unwanted. That doesn't make you weak or faithless—it makes you human.

3. Your doubts are not a problem to God

The church may have made you feel like questions were a threat. They aren't. Jesus welcomed people who wrestled with what they believed. Doubt can be the doorway to deeper faith if it's met with honesty and compassion.

4. You don't have to have it all together

If perfection was required, none of us could show up. The idea that you have to clean yourself up before you come is a lie that's kept too many away. Come as you are, and let God handle the process of change.

5. Jesus is bigger than those who misrepresented Him

Sometimes the loudest voices claiming to speak for God are the farthest from His heart. If people have used His name to control, shame, or push you away, know this—Jesus is not defined by their behavior.

6. It's okay to take your time

Re-entry doesn't have to be rushed. Healing can be slow work. If you're willing to move forward, even cautiously, that's progress. The pace is not as important as the direction.

7. Coming back doesn't mean going backward

Trying church again is not a return to the pain you experienced—it can be a step into something new. You can reclaim faith, find safe community, and write a different chapter than the one you had before.

Maybe the Church Got It Wrong

Series Overview

Week 1: All Lights, No Access

Matthew 23:25–26 — The Church got it wrong when we prioritized the show over the soul, creating an image of faith without authentic connection.

Week 2: It's Not Supposed to Be This Complicated

Micah 6:6–8; Matthew 11:28–30 — The Church got it wrong when we made faith harder than Jesus did, replacing relationship with rules and legalism.

Week 3: When Safe Spaces Weren't Safe

Ezekiel 34:1–10; Matthew 18:6 — The Church got it wrong when it protected systems over people, leading to betrayal and harm where there should have been safety.

Week 4: The Neighbor You Can't Ignore

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Week 5: When Belief Became a Barrier

John 20:24–29 — The Church got it wrong when it shamed doubt and discouraged questions, rather than creating space for honest wrestling with faith.

Week 6: This Is Not a Show—It's a Body

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 — The Church got it wrong when it treated worship as a performance instead of a participatory community where everyone matters.

Week 7: We Confused Power With Presence

Acts 8:9–24; James 2:1–4 — The Church got it wrong when it valued influence and celebrity over humility and the genuine presence of God.

Week 8: Jesus Actually Left the Building

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Maybe the Church Got It Wrong

Real Talk

When we say Real Talk, we mean it.

Starting right after each sermon in the "Maybe the Church Got It Wrong" series, we'll have an open conversation space we're calling Real Talk. These will take place immediately following Sunday service, right here at Thankful Baptist Church. We'll have light hors d'oeuvres, pull up some chairs, and get real about the things you've been wondering, wrestling with, or maybe even holding back for years.

What Real Talk Will Be:

- A safe, respectful space to ask honest questions—about faith, the Bible, church culture, and real life.
- A place where you can share your perspective without fear of being shut down or shamed.
- An open dialogue that's grounded in Scripture but not weighed down by churchy jargon.
- An opportunity to hear thoughtful, compassionate responses, even if the answer is, "Let's explore that together."

What Real Talk Will Not Be:

- A debate stage where someone has to win and someone has to lose.
- A place to gossip, attack, or shame people or churches.
- A substitute for worship or teaching—it's a follow-up, not a replacement.
- A one-way lecture. Everyone's voice matters here.

We believe questions aren't a threat to faith—they're an opportunity to deepen it. So come as you are, bring what's on your mind, and let's talk about it together.

If you already know some questions you'd like addressed during Real Talk, send them in ahead of time here:

www.maybethchurchgotitwrong.com/realtalk

Maybe the Church Got It Wrong

Try Church Again

Let's be honest—trying church again is a big deal.

For some, the hurt is still fresh. For others, the memories have faded, but the distrust lingers. Maybe you've seen hypocrisy up close. Maybe you've been made to feel like you didn't belong. Maybe you just quietly slipped away because it stopped feeling real.

I get it.

Church can be beautiful—but it can also be messy. And if you've been on the receiving end of the messy, it can leave scars.

But here's what I know: The story isn't over yet.

The same God who sees you, knows you, and loves you has not given up on His church. And He hasn't given up on you. What happened before doesn't have to define what happens next. This 7 Things guide isn't about convincing you to ignore your pain or pretend the past didn't happen. It's about creating space for honest questions, honest answers, and an honest look at what church can be when it's done the way Jesus intended.

So take these thoughts. Sit with them. Wrestle with them. Ask yourself the hard questions. And when you're ready, I hope you'll give church—and yourself—another chance. We'll be here.

– Pastor V

www.maybethethechurchgotitwrong.com/planyourvisit