

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?**

**1100-A**

**Series: Why Do You Run When I'm Crying  
(The Caring Church in a Hurting World)**



**DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.**  
**INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO**

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • [www.dtm.org](http://www.dtm.org) • [dtm@dtm.org](mailto:dtm@dtm.org)

# Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

Picture, if you will, the almost frantic atmosphere of a huge metropolitan hospital. Nurses and doctors move methodically through the hallways like preprogrammed robots tending their flocks. The coldness of walls lined with charts and tables lined with computers seems to be broken only occasionally by the scent of fresh flowers awaiting delivery to one of the rooms. Inside room after room lie patients awaiting surgery, awaiting news of their surgery, or awaiting the hand of a friend who walks through the door to say, "I care."

Behind one of those walls, in one of those rooms, lies Misty O'Neill. Misty is a fictional character, but in a very real sense, she's not imaginary. There is a Misty O'Neill in every congregation in every city in the world. Misty is a Christian. She belongs to one of our eee-vangelical churches down the way who pride themselves in having a handle on Bible doctrine. The sign in the front of their auditorium reads, "The Fastest Growing Church in Belleville". Their bulletins read, "We Believe; Therefore, We Are." The Pastor is a graduate of "The" seminary. He uses all the right commentaries and was even written up in one of those fundamental news magazines as being an authority on church growth and planning.

There are sixteen deacons in Misty's church. Most of them are successful in their fields; all of them are active in the fellowship; some of them even come to church on Wednesday night. (I'm talking committed!)

When Misty O'Neill first took sick, she became the object of a great deal of attention at Belleville Church. They had special prayer for her on Sunday nights; her name was in the bulletin weekly, and the church prayer chain kept constant surveillance on Misty's condition. But Misty committed the cardinal sin. She didn't get well. And she didn't die. She just suffered. And soon, the church, not sure how to deal with her lingering illness, began to move on to other things. Elder Brown's heart condition, for one. Mrs. Anthony's slipped disc for another. The daily visits by the pastors became weekly, and the women's Sunday School Guild, who had taken on the project of sending food to her family grew weary of the burdensome task. "Enough's enough," Betty Barclay, the Guild President groaned. "Nobody wants to take food to the same family more than once or twice."

Misty's days grew long and lonely. Her husband longed for the

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

fellowship he had enjoyed from the men in the church when first his wife grew ill. Days grew into months. Misty O'Neill became lost in the shuffle of programmed Christianity.

Up the street from Misty's house live Billy and Veronica Jarman. Bill and Veronica have one child. That child was born blind. It was quite a cause for prayer when the little tyke was still in the hospital. It was quite a cause for prayer when she first went home. But now blind little Angie Jarman is two years old and nobody knows quite what to say so they say nothing. They don't know quite how to react to her, either, so they walk around her in the church parking lot to avoid contact, or they look the other way. Bill and Veronica had lots of encouragement and love that first month. But now the hurt goes on, and the questions go on, and the work of raising a blind child goes on, and on, and on, and they go on alone.

Now don't be too hard on Belleville Church. The folks there stay mighty busy. They have six choirs, nine adult Bible classes, a bus that never runs, a budget that's always short and a whole sanctuary full of people with needs. It takes time and money and work to run a church that big. It seems only natural then, that people like Misty and Angie and their loved ones sort of fade into the background after a while.

Then there's Ben Willis. Ben was a deacon at Belleville up until a year ago. Seems that after nineteen years of marital bliss, his wife, Elaine, up and left him and filed for divorce. No one knew quite how to treat old Ben. He'd been head of the building committee, vice-chairman of the Board, and taught Jr. High Sunday School for twelve years. Now he mostly sits alone on the back row, and while people nod to him occasionally as they pass, no one really wants to get too close to Ben anymore. They don't want to hear about his problems. They don't want to get involved and they really aren't sure that it wasn't his fault. (Though, of course, nobody says it.)

And there's old Freddy Barnhoffer. He's nigh onto eighty years old now. He used to be the pillar of the church. But Freddy's kinda lost his steam. His memory's gone, his eyesight's poor, and he sometimes has a hard time getting his words out since that stroke. Freddy's still loved, you understand, but from a distance. I mean, who wants to fellowship with an old man who can't remember what he said and can't say what he means?

But, Beloved, I mean to tell you that Belleville is one of the fastest growing, fastest moving, most successful churches in all

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

of the state. Pastors come for miles around just to study their program. Everyone leaves impressed.

Everyone that is but Misty and Bill and Veronica and Ben and Freddy, and the hundreds of others like them who week after week, month after month, walk the corridors of life, their souls aching, their bodies aching and their spirits aching for love. There are singles hurting because they long to be married. There are children hurting because they long to be accepted. There are those with mental illness hurting because they long to be treated like human beings, rather than lepers. There are those whose businesses are failing, whose health is failing, whose marriages are failing and whose ministries are failing. Sunday after Sunday they sit surrounded, but alone. They are part of a body that's supposed to hurt when any of its members hurt, but the rest of the body seems to have become anesthetized to pain, at least other people's pain.

They long for someone to stop running to and fro just long enough to listen, really listen, to how badly they hurt. They long for someone to miss a committee meeting or a board meeting or a choir practice or (sue me for blasphemy, if you will), a Bible study, and take the time instead to just put an arm around them, and say to them, sincerely say to them, "I care, what can I do?"

Every church in America, beneath its active exterior, has within its walls these kinds of people, not to mention the pain and the hurt and the grief and the needs of those we work with, live by, are related to, that aren't even Christians. It all seems overwhelming to us so instead of honestly looking and listening, we run the other way.

And do you know what the Misty's and the Freddie's and the Ben's of this world are saying? They are saying, "I hear your theology and if I hear one more time the meaning of the original Greek word, agape, I'm gonna die. I know what it means but if that's what it means, then, why do run when I'm crying?" Here's what they ask:

Why do you run when I'm crying,  
I am in pain, can't you see?  
Why do you scurry the other way  
Rather than looking at me?

Why don't you stop all your preaching  
That love is the only way  
And tenderly show me you love me  
Day after day after day?

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

Why do you try to avoid me  
Rather than seeing me through?  
Why do you run when I'm crying,  
I wonder what Jesus would do?

I'll tell you what Jesus would do. He'd spend hours by Misty's bedside, letting her know He still cared. You say, "How do you know?" Because He went so far out of His way to let a lame man sitting by a pool know He cared, a man who like Misty, had been sick for year after year after year, and nobody around him cared enough even to help him into the pool.

He'd spend time with Veronica and Bill and Angie, that's what He'd do. You say, "How do you know?" Because He stopped so tenderly to touch the eyes of a man born blind, that's how I know. And He would love old Freddy, stuttering speech and all. I know because He loved lepers. Nobody else in Israel loved lepers. He spent the bulk of His brief life on planet earth with the people the church can't stand. He spent most of His waking hours with those who were blind and lame and diseased, with the social outcasts and the town crooks who needed help. He gave Himself to the likes of tax collectors and adulterers who sincerely wanted to change. He gave His hours and His days to touching those who were mentally ill or physically helpless—the very people none of us want to touch. He went where the poor people were. He went where the sick people were. He went where the dying people were. He went where the mourning people were, the very places none of us want to go. Then He went back to the Father and sent us in His place to do the same things.

How His heart must break when those He sent us to love, tears flowing down their faces with their hearts breaking are heard whispering as we flee (rather than getting involved), "Why do you run when I'm crying?"

It will be our task these next few weeks to examine the life of Christ specifically as it relates to ministering to those who are hurting. We're going to ask why they have to ask, "Why do you run when I'm crying?"

Our outline for the study may vary some from the one below, but this will at least prepare you for the direction we will be going:

I- The Symptoms. For the first six lessons, we will be looking at the symptoms.

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

Lesson 2- "If Only You'd Been There." We're going to try to look at how Jesus related to Mary and Martha at Lazarus' death. We're going to try to look into the hearts of those who suffer grief and loneliness, who are asking the church through their tears, "Why do you run when I'm crying?"

Lesson 3- "Better a Millstone." It will be a look at the hurts and the hearts of children who are crying out to be themselves in a cookie-cutter world. We'll take a look as well at why we don't hear when they cry.

Lesson 4- "Made in Heaven; Destroyed on Earth." It will be a look at why Christian marriages tremble and die even amidst such an abundance of seminars and retreats.

Lesson 5- "Late Life Leprosy." It will be a Biblical look at old age, at the widow, the retired and the just plain tired. We will look as well at life through the eyes of the dying.

Lesson 6- "I'm Human, Too!" It's purpose will be to look through the eyes of Jesus at life's "different" people: the lame, the mentally impaired, the blind, the emotionally scarred, and the folks who just aren't like everyone else. These are ones we turn our heads away from when they pass and think they don't notice. God help us.

II- The Practical Solutions- "Jesus Stopped!" The final seven lessons will deal with practical solutions for the church in a hurting world, and will include specific assignments for us to undertake to make it work Monday through Saturday. This part of the series will be entitled: "Jesus Stopped!"

Lesson 7- "I Can't Hear, I'm Talking." It is a lesson on learning to listen, something God always has time to do, but most of us never do.

Lesson 8- "The Greatest of These is Love." It will be a lesson on learning to love by looking at the balance between James and John.

Lesson 9- "Love Never Fails." It will be a study from the Scriptures on learning to be a friend, the kind of friend Jesus is to us. We'll stop to look at Job's friends, Jesus' friends and our friends.

Lesson 10- "My Side of the Road." It will be a lesson on learning to minister. We'll stop to listen to the Samaritan's side of the story.

Lesson 11- "Adam, Where are You?" It will be a hands on study of how to search for hurting people the way God does. You may

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

want to miss that one.

Lesson 12- "Lord, Make Them One." In this lesson we will be a look at the prayers of the New Testament and how to take the first step to caring. These are the 12 lessons.

Lesson 13- "Go On and Cry, We're Here!" This will be the summary lesson. It will be, Lord willing, a time of commitment to become the kind of people we ought to be, caring people in a hurting world.

That's where we are headed. The names may be changed to protect the innocent (or the guilty), and we may just take a totally different course halfway through. I ask your permission to do that. But I believe we have a need to look at the issue of hurting Christians as we never have before, not simply to become more knowledgeable, but more usable.

I will admit to you without apology, that my motivation for teaching this series comes about partly because of some things I have experienced these past few months as I have gone through some deeply discouraging times and watched in unbelief at how impotent the body of Christ seemed to be to help. This time acted like a mirror to show me how insensitive, how uncaring, how uncommitted to continued caring I have been. It caused me to search the Scriptures for some answers. I know, we must not judge our theology by our experience, we must rather judge our experience by the Scriptures. II Corinthians 1:3-4 clearly teaches that it is our experience that sensitizes us and equips us to minister by causing us to seek the mind of Christ.



Before we embark, however, I think it is imperative that we look at the overall plan of God for the church in context one more time. Because what the church has done, I believe, is to allow Satan to keep the pendulum out of balance, lest we develop the kind of ministry God wants us to have. This little diagram illustrates the problem:

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

For generations, the pendulum has swung to and fro. As Bible thumping evangelicals, we proclaim the infallibility of Scriptures and call on men to repent and believe (and rightly so)! But so many can't hear through their pain. So many can't see through their tears. Because of this, there is a reaction in the body of Christ, and a radical movement to get involved in the lives of people. Orphanages are built. Hospitals grow. Ministries to the handicapped blossom. The church reaches out to the poor, the sick and the needy. And God is honored.

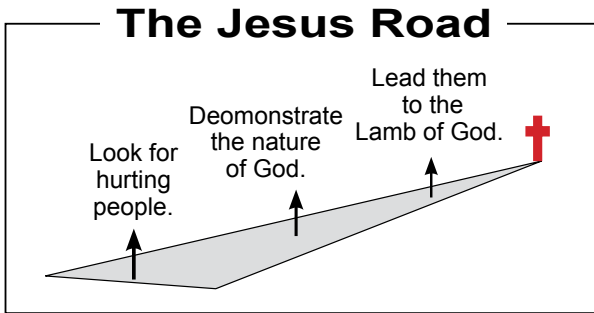
But Satan, as always, subtly tempts us to let the means become the end. Instead of using the opportunity to meet physical needs as a springboard to show people their spiritual needs, as Jesus did, the church becomes a welfare program, and the gospel gradually fades into the recesses of life, ignored by well-meaning theologians. Some call it the "Social Gospel". Not a good name. The real Gospel is a social gospel. The kind of message that feeds men's bodies and not their souls, ought better be called the "empty gospel". Often these ministries begin in Jesus' name, but often they become Jesus' ministries in name only. Hospitals and orphanages are often such casualties.

So the evangelical community recoils and responds: "We are not here to give men loaves of bread, but living bread," they cry. Back to the basics. And right they are, to a degree. So the pendulum swings beyond the balance to a kind of legalistic fundamentalism that totally ignores men's physical needs lest we somehow be guilty of overlooking their spiritual needs. For generations, that pendulum has rocked back and forth like a see-saw out of control.

The only way to see the Church in balance is to look at Jesus: what was His mission? It was clear. Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost. Period. He did not come to advance a social reform program, to free Israel from the grips of its captors, or even to start a new religious system, though all those things eventually happened. He came to save souls. He came to free men from bondage to sin and give them His Spirit. He came to take men destined for hell and by dying in their place offer them an opportunity to spend eternity with His Father in heaven. That is why Jesus came. If the church ever forgets that, it has forgotten its message. That was His mission.

But what was His method? Watch Him. Study His every move. Listen to His every word. It is amazing. Look:





1- He went where people were hurting. People who knew they were hurting.

2- He listened and looked until He found their point of greatest need.

3- He met that need, not simply to alleviate their physical grief, but rather to demonstrate that facet of the character of God that caused Him to give His life away.

4- Once they had seen and experienced that kind of love, He told them who He was, and invited them to ask eternal Love in the form of His Spirit to come into their hearts forever. Because they had been loved, they could.

Our task as a church has not changed in 2,000 years. We are still to go out into a hurting, dying, grieving world, and demonstrate through the heart of the Perfect Servant, what love is. Once we have done that we must tell them and those who are watching who love is and how to be saved. But my friend, shoving a tract in the face of a hungry beggar won't do it. Preaching a sermon on love to a hurting wife won't do it. Writing a book about love for a lonely child won't do it. The Father so loved that He sent. The Son so loved that He gave. What did He give? Everything.

Now the Son has returned to the Father, and He has commissioned us to do in this sick world what He did. Give ourselves away to the blind, to the sick, to the poor, to the prisoner, to the hysterical, to the lonely, to the bitter, to the aged, to the unlovely and to the unlovable. Beloved, if we who call ourselves evangelicals don't do it, it won't get done because we of all people know why we're doing it. It is not to alleviate suffering but to demonstrate the nature of God unto salvation.

This initial lesson has been more preachy than I like and has

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

given less direct Scripture than I like. But its purpose is singular. To call attention to a need, and to prepare our hearts for the weeks to come wherein we might surrender to God to meet that need.

I think it's time we stopped passing out spiritual clichés like chewing gum and learned to listen to those around us who are crying. Some of them are crying on the inside, but, Beloved, they hurt even worse. They have no outlet for their pain. I think it's time we stopped running so fast in our religious pursuits that we run right past our own children and our own mates and our own friends and our own employees. I think it's time we slowed down and listened carefully for the sound of tears. I've been the greatest offender of all giving out mimeographed answers before I even knew the questions.

Where do we start? I believe the Scripture teaches that we are to "do good to all men especially those of the household of faith," so our first priority must be to listen to the heartbeat of those in our own congregations.

The person next to you may be crushed to death inside over some form of rejection. The person in front of you may be grieving still over the loss of a loved one three years ago. The person standing alone in the back may be dying the death of loneliness just because he's a little different, because he's not socially acceptable in the mainstream of society. He may, in fact, be wondering if life is worth living. Jesus would have run right up to that struggling soul and loved him. We will walk clear across the sanctuary to avoid him.

In love, may I suggest a mini-assignment for this week. (There is a more detailed one on the back of the lesson.) The mini-assignment is this: make a list of the kinds of hurts you have experienced in your life so far. Maybe you were rejected by your parents. Maybe you suffered through an unwanted divorce. Maybe you have suffered physically for years, and no one has ever understood. Maybe you have been embarrassed for years because of how you look or how you talk or what you can't do. Your assignment is this:

List on a piece of paper the things you have suffered through. Now begin to ask God to lead you to people who appear to be suffering through the same afflictions. Paul said that's why God let you suffer "so that you may be able to comfort those who are passing through the same trials with the very comfort God gave you," as we read in II Corinthians 1:4.

The minute you make that list, you are in the ministry. The

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

very minute you enter the ministry, God will begin to surface from all around you men and women who need to be loved and who need someone who understands their hurts enough to love them. You do that and life will take on a whole new meaning for them and for you.

That's your assignment. Go out now and listen. If you listen carefully, you'll hear people saying,

Why do you run when I'm crying?  
I desperately need you to care.  
I desperately need to know for sure  
That someone who loves me is there.

Why do you whisper about me  
And say the things you say?  
No, I may not look the way you look  
But didn't God make me this way?

Why do you run when I'm crying?  
I'm part of God's Body, too  
And though I may not be exactly the same  
Am I not as good as you?

Why do you fail to answer?  
I need to hear someone say,  
"Jesus loves you and so do I,"  
And I need to hear it today.

Why do you run when I'm crying?  
I'd stop you if only I could,  
And I'd say to you, "Please don't run away,"  
I don't think Jesus would.

Let's pray.

*Our Father and Our God, may we be consciously aware, continuously aware, of our calling to call men and women unto repentance; to confess their sins; to fall down at the feet of Jesus Christ at the cross and be born again. But may we as evangelicals, be also ever aware of His methods to demonstrate in a dying and hurting world, the love of God, that those about us will recognize what love is so we can tell them Who love is, so they can ask Him into their hearts. Grant us we pray, a balance and make us we pray, available. In Jesus we pray, Amen.*

## Why Do You Run When I'm Crying?

### For Application

1- The first assignment is the one listed in the body of the lesson. It is as follows:

- a) Make a list of the kinds of hurts that you have experienced in your life thus far. They may include the death of a loved one, a wayward child, an incurable illness, or continual depression.
- b) Begin to pray daily that God would lead you to people passing through the same trials who you can comfort "with the same comfort God gave you."
- c) Once you have prayed, look out! God will honor your prayer, be available the way you needed someone to be available to you.

2- Take the New Testament and begin an overview of how Jesus spent those three marvelous years on planet earth. Note that He did two things:

- a) He invested His life in discipling the ones His Father had given Him to be His team.
- b) He spent most of the rest of His time seeking out people who were hurting and meeting their needs. Once they knew who He was, He led them to salvation by faith.

3- Using that set of objectives and that kind of a method, how can you develop a personal ministry that would correspond with your spiritual gift and the kinds of people God has equipped you to comfort? How can you see yourself more fruitful in evangelism? How can you see yourself more available to encourage and comfort others in the body of Christ? Begin asking God to make you more available to those around you who are hurting.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230  
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(09.07.17)