

Don't Do Life Alone

People from a church in Savannah, Ga., are grieving the loss of a wife, a mother, and a pastor's wife. The family, the Pastor, and his congregation are in shock at the loss, even more so because this precious saint was not taken from this earth after a cancer battle, or a heart attack (two of the leading causes of women's deaths). She took her own life after a life long struggle with depression.

She had been "healed" of depression years ago, but was recently in an all out war with her own emotions, and Thursday she decided that her only course for action was suicide. This bothers me more than words can reflect. How alone do you have to feel to make a decision so horrific, so final? More specifically, how did she become so desperate? Why didn't she reach out to some caring individual who could listen to hear pain? How did her quiet pain go unnoticed by those around her? Where was her "angel that was given charge over her?" Where was the Holy Spirit that "comforts?" Where was her God? These are very real questions, and there are no quick answers.

I have written materials for small groups called "**Learning Communities: Don't Do Life Alone!**" The whole premise of the material is our need for one another, yet too often the most alone person I know is me. Unfortunately a pastor and his wife have a very small group of real friends. It is drilled into us that we cannot have friends within the church. That is old school, but still a very prevalent thought in our society. It is sad, but quite true. People generally do not allow us to be human in the real sense of the word. They enjoy a freedom that we are not afforded – that of weakness, struggle, frailty, or failure.

I have had friends over the years, in fact, one of my dearest friends is an elder's wife, that has been in the church for twelve years. Other than my precious husband, she is my closest friend and has seen me at my best and my worst and still loves me.

She was with me after my pacemaker was implanted. I had a severe reaction to some of my medications and ended up in terrible pain with a rash over my entire body. I was in so much pain physically, emotionally, and even spiritually, that I was cursing, crying, covered with only a sheet because nothing could touch my body without making me scream. She sat with me, laughed with me, cried with me, and let me "curse the day I was born."

Do you *have* someone like that? Do you *want* someone like that? Because that is the first step. You must want it in order to have it. I CAN be very alone . . . lonely . . . if I want to be, but I don't want to be. Do you? Are you too proud to admit to someone that you are hurting? Are you afraid to appear needy or weak? Why? You are, you know! We all are. Without each other, there is no Church, because we are The Church, and if there is no church, there is no need for a pastor. People are the Church. People pastor the Church. People need the Lord, and People need People. Fight for relationship. Fight for friendship. Fight for time to make a friend, be a friend, and enjoy friendships. It is what God had in mind for The Church.

I teach the 6-week course I wrote called **Learning Communities: Don't Do Life Alone!** I am willing to teach it at your church on a weekend, if you are interested. I can also help you to organize the structure, and train the Lead Teams if you'd like. I've also established for our congregation something called iConnect and Circle of Friends, which are the social interaction and outreach side of the ministry. Let me help. stephanie@myepicfaith.org