

That day, I sat in my favorite spot—out of everyone's way, in peace, alone, with God.

The deacons moved through the church, preparing to serve communion. It was a sacred moment. The pastor's words filled the air, soft music played, and the lights dimmed, emphasizing the holiness of the service. As the deacon reached my row, something unexpected happened. He skipped over me, withholding the small plastic cup filled with wine and bread. The woman sitting next to me, kindly offered me her cup. I politely declined and sat there, waiting for the service to end, quietly grappling with the moment.

I later emailed the senior pastor, asking for clarity on what communion represents and why the deacon felt it was his duty to deny me participation. Days passed, and I received no response.

A week or so later, I saw the senior pastor at Publix. I approached him, said hello, and asked if he'd received my email. He chuckled, made an offhand remark about the email possibly going to spam, and walked away. I was left standing there, astonished. How could a senior pastor, someone tasked with guiding others in their walk with God, dismiss me so easily, especially when I was new to Christianity and seeking understanding and looking for answers?

A few weeks later, I sat in the congregation as the senior pastor stood at the pulpit, "tears" in his eyes, announcing he was leaving. He left without giving me any answers—no explanation, no resolution.

Afterward, I penned a prayer:

Prayer Request:

Dear Jesus,

I come before you with a heavy heart, seeking your guidance and comfort. In the face of hate, discrimination, and marginalization, I ask for your strength to endure and your wisdom to respond with love and compassion. Please mend the hearts of those filled with anger and hostility, replacing it with understanding and empathy. Grant me the courage to stand against injustice and the resilience to foster peace in the church. May your healing touch bring solace to those who have been hurt, and may we all strive to create a world where kindness and acceptance reign.

Tears can often reveal the depth of our experiences. It's important to acknowledge that, and it's equally important to share our confessions in a space free of judgment.

In my journey, **Psalms 73:15-17** talks to my heart: *"If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."*

I came to the church searching for answers on how to coexist peacefully within my community, only to face unexpected challenges.

Reflections on My Journey:

1. Seeking refuge in the sanctuary: Like the psalmist, I sought answers and comfort within the sanctuary of God, hoping it would be a place of peace and guidance.
2. Finding hope and strength: In the midst of adversity, I found hope in Jesus' teachings. These moments of hardship reminded me of a higher power—one who sees the injustices we face and will bring about justice in time.

3. Understanding God's plan: My experience mirrors the psalmist's realization that God has a plan for those who perpetuate hate and injustice. Through scripture, I've found comfort in knowing that there are consequences for wrongdoing, and this gives me patience and resolve to endure.

4. Personal connection to scripture: Like the psalmist, I found my story reflected in the pages of the Bible. My pain and suffering echoed the struggles I read about, which has only deepened my faith and strengthened my resolve.

Psalms 73:15-17 reflects the struggle of trying to understand difficult circumstances and feeling troubled by them. The psalmist experiences inner turmoil until entering the sanctuary of God, where spiritual clarity and peace are found.

For someone who has faced rejection, like being denied communion, this scripture speaks to the importance of seeking God in those moments of confusion and pain. The "sanctuary of God" could symbolize returning to scripture, prayer, or a personal relationship with God, where true understanding and peace are revealed. It encourages them to not lose hope, knowing that God's wisdom and grace surpass human judgments and actions.

This passage reassures that even in moments of rejection or uncertainty, God will provide the understanding and answers needed, often through deeper engagement with His word.

In His Spirit,
Teddy