

Marginalized

by

Mark A. Cornelius

©2017 All Rights reserved

Marginalized

Copyright © 2017 by Mark A. Cornelius. All rights reserved.

ISBN 9781723957413

Kindle Direct Publishing

QUOTES FROM THE MARGINALIZED

OUTSIDE OF MY BOX:

Mark invites us into a real, honest conversation and self-exploration about an issue that is centuries old but still plagues us as a society today. *Marginalized* motivated me to look at “my box” where I want to put those I’m comfortable with and then push out all others. I quickly realized that my box is too small and this limits my ability to share the love of Christ. In a day where, as a society we quickly substitute virtual or contractual relationships, Mark calls us to consider living in covenantal relationships with all those around us and especially with our one true God!

—Susan Cress, Spirit Mind Field Specialist YMCA OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

A SPECIAL TALENT:

As a student of life, Mark A. Cornelius sees how easy it is for us to formulate opinions, find others with similar notions, and then harden our collective ideas into a scheme. The scheme becomes prejudice, supports our sense of community, and allows us to marginalize those not following the path of our mindset.

As a writer, Mark can take on the tangled association between spiritualism and humanism in a mature and humble style that appeal to both those readers preferring an ideal, mind-conscious approach to reality, as well as to those leaning hard toward a practical, everyday-life experience. Mark has a way of presenting his thoughts as adventures, guiding us on the journey and allowing us to make discoveries for ourselves along the way.

—Paul Uhrig – Book Review America

THE DEEPER LOOK:

Not only a good look into the meaning of marginalization, but makes you look into your own inner self. *Marginalized* is an informative read and a look into why we treat others the way we do, and why what we see to be helpful is not always the best answer.

—Mark Mitchel – Astro Publishing Review

FOREWORD

The Rev. Sam Clarke

We live in a world torn apart by division and strife. Groups of people are marginalized from each other over a whole variety of issues. Gender, ethnic background, ideology, world view, and a myriad of other factors make for a divided and often contentious world. At times this division has been tempered by an overriding factor that creates a sense of unity. For example, the United States is a melting pot of ethnic groups often marginalized from each other by their backgrounds but share a common loyalty to their country. Historically they see themselves as Americans first and then whatever ethnic affiliation share. Sadly, this paradigm has undergone a transformation since the 1960's that has created a very divided nation.

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, history demonstrates that humanity is incapable of sustaining any system of unity for a prolonged period. As a result, conflicts, divisions, wars, etcetera are inherent between individuals and groups marginalized by some factor. Therefore a society requires a system of agreed upon norms or standards (laws) to help alleviate potential conflicts.

Mark insightfully explores the dynamics of human marginalization to help us all better understand their impact on us as individuals and as members of groups. We are all marginalized in the context of the broader human community and we all marginalize others in this same context. For the most part, we tend not to be concerned about marginalizing others or being marginalized. At the same time there are times when marginalization results in significant conflict.

Besides a set of norms to help maintain peace in a culture made up of different individuals and groups, there are ways for these individuals and groups to coexist and even work together to overcome whatever else may divide or separate them. One of the most common is a contract. A written agreement to insure both parties live up to the stipulations laid out in the contract. This helps the individuals/groups function together but it does not resolve non-contractual sources of division or conflict.

The question then becomes, is there a way of creating a harmonious, peaceful relationship between individuals or groups separated by sometimes serious, seemingly insurmountable differences? The answer is an emphatic yes, and it is found in understanding the nature of a biblical covenant.

I invite you to join Mark in an in-depth exploration of the issue of human marginalization and how it can be overcome through entering a biblical covenant; particularly the covenant cut between Almighty God and His creation through His Son, Jesus the Messiah.

*This book is dedicated to all who labor and are heavy laden...
—each of us, all of us.*

INTRODUCTION

OVER THE YEARS, as a business person, traveler and student of life, I've witnessed and experienced many cross-sections of life. Humankind's diversity across the planet is amazing but I have also seen that we continue to struggle with our commonality. Why are we so divided into cultures, belief systems, identities and classes? What is the cause of our pride, our individual drive to segment ourselves from others? When we want to celebrate our uniqueness, words like *individualistic*, *exclusive*, *outstanding* and *singular* are used. But when our eccentric natures cause harm, isolation or discord to others, words like *narcissistic*, *egomaniacal* and *self-centered* enter in.

What makes one person be seen as harmlessly uncommon to others in a good way and what causes another with similar traits to be labeled as pariah? Could it be that the person's behavior might be seen differently depending on the culture and times in which they exist? And why is our tendency to isolate and separate that person, rather than attempt to seek inclusiveness?

Is there really any significant glue, other than our physical DNA that holds us together? In researching this book, I discovered one common thread among us. Each and every one feels a sense of un-belonging that has influenced a portion or all of our lives. Each of us strives to be different, but mourn at the brand it burns into our social self-consciousness.

As a first grader, I remember trying hard to fit in. I was small and not the most savvy socialite. On the other hand, I wanted to somehow stand out in some heroic way; not as an outcast. How to find harmony between the two-acclimation and distinction? The scales never remained balanced. Each of us at some moment in our lives, have become victims of the sting that comes with stigma. And so somewhere within, we have developed a defense mechanism to deal with it. Hungry to be recognized as acceptable, we have learned to separate others, categorizing them into lesser beings than ourselves. This is a painful admission because on the social surface we all want things to look equal. Amazingly, we have found ways of displaying pretended empathy, while in fact implementing conscientiously acceptable methods of enslavement upon those we perceive as less than adequate in the scheme of human society.

Do we convince ourselves that we want the best for others...as long as I, the individual have better? Our isolation tactics may be blatant. Humankind has polished the societal methods we have created to position ourselves above one another in belief and social status, into fine gems, subtle and sublime. We have become clannish masters at defining cultural norms and equally as skilled at stacking the deck against those who do not match our sense of values; those who think and act even slightly differently from ourselves—the *marginalized*.

This book is an exploration of both the marginalized and the *marginalizers*. What distinguishes one from the other, what impact marginalization has had on us socially, and spiritually? And most important, what can be done to unify...is *de-marginalization* even something we honestly want to strive for, and if so how can we seek community with those who we think to be “not quite up to snuff”?

As I develop the idea of our *marginalization mindset*, other strange words and concepts are used in new context, *slanged* to help clarify this radical paradigm: Words such as *covenant*, *midrash* and *echad*. My hope is to shine a light on the nearly invisible cultural constraints we have set forth and by revealing their affects, help through awareness to begin reversing their effects. This will require some dialogue and

paradigm shifting, but I'm up for it if you are. To that end, throughout the book, you will see headings marked **WAIT A MINUTE**. In these moments, I'll present some radical discoveries, things we are doing either intentionally or subconsciously to perpetuate a state of marginalization.

Whether or not you agree with my premise, I'm anxious to get your reactions to these insights, hoping they will energize a whole new discussion about the great need to become more aware of, address and explore alternatives to our marginalization tendencies. You can reach out to me at www.MarkCornelius.me and I will do as best I can not to marginalize you.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Cornelius

Preliminary note: All Bible passages quoted come from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly thing of this world and the despised things...so that no one may boast before Him.

—Paul of Tarsus, 1st letter to the Corinthians

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE—GETTING TO KNOW ME	10
CHAPTER TWO—GETTING TO KNOW YOU	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER THREE—GETTING TO KNOW “THEY”	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER FOUR—A SCHEME FOR ALL AGES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER FIVE—THE CONSEQUENCES OF MARGINALIZATION.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER SIX—GETTING TO KNOW US	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER SEVEN—WHO’S IN CHARGE?	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER EIGHT—THE GREATEST EXPERIMENT	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER NINE—UNITY	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER TEN—DOING	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EPILOGUE.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

CHAPTER ONE—GETTING TO KNOW ME

*Who causes sadness, among the gladness, what makes us cry?
What is the reason, for friends who leave us—it drains my laughter dry.
Where do I fit in, where do I belong?
Thought I had it all, thought the price was paid,
But here I am alone again.
Where do I fit in, where do I belong?
I didn't get back what love I gave—I'm just water down the drain.*

—Mark A. Cornelius
Lyrics-Where Do I Belong

I HAVE TO ADMIT, until recently I've not given great thought toward our natural tendency of separating rather than integrating. After all, I live close to Nashville. That's right, I reside just south of Music City, in Franklin, Tennessee, smack dab in the center of Williamson County, the 7th wealthiest county in the United States. Our median income is right at \$100,000 per year, and 95% of us have a high school education or above. We have a healthy mix of races and minimal racial conflict. We all seem to have nice cars and houses. Our population poverty rate is nearly absent at 5.2%, our unemployment rate is even more impressive at 3.7%. We are, to put it mildly, well off. There is economic growth, comfort, beautiful countryside, jobs for anyone who wants one and a community of people who like to "get along" in the way all Southerners in the United States like to get along. No one wants trouble here; everyone is friendly toward one another. That's just the way we do things in Williamson County. That's just the way it looks and feels. So, all of us in Williamson County and its surrounding region should be very, very happy and feel very well served...shouldn't we? After all, it doesn't get much better than here.

Yet, there are some other statistics hinting that maybe what I just bragged about is not quite accurate. The Tennessee Department of Health reported that in 2014, 25 people died from drug overdoses in Williamson County.¹ That doesn't sound like a lot in the bigger picture, but that was an increase from 19 the year before and, for our little community, one is too many. Rapes, violent crimes are also on the rise. Just up the street in Nashville, the rate of violent crime has been on a steady increase, rising 8.6% including 17,250 murders in 2016.² Suicides? Oh yes, we have those too although every resource I hunted down seemed to convolute the actual number by comparing it only as a lower percentage to that of our neighbor to the north, Nashville. As best as I can figure it, our suicide rate is also sadly increasing, currently recorded at 1375 people in 2017.³ There is even a bridge nestled in our beautiful countryside that is notorious for attracting people from all over the county to come in quest of ending their lives. The Williamson County Sheriff's Department records show tragically, at least 15 attempted suicides at the bridge from 2005 to 2017.

Statistics and reports are one thing, but what they don't measure is the struggle of those who live on the bottom rungs of the ladder; the lower income earners who work in, but are not able to live in the affluent areas. They may drive more than an hour each way to get to their daily jobs. They may live in beautiful rural countryside, but there lurks bigger problems. Western and southern Williamson County it seems is a hotspot for opioid traffic. It is also notorious for harboring one of the highest illegal meth-lab rates in the country.⁴ The infant abandonment, abortion and partner abuse rate is soaring and every day, we hear more unusual stories of sex-trafficking, including a recent sting leading to the indictment of 22 men seeking to have sex with minors.⁵

This book is not intended to be an analytical numbers dump—I want these facts to become part of a heartfelt mutual exploration, not a head-banging-question. So, from the heart—how can this be? How can a perfect place of panacea harbor a great cancer, a sore that either goes ignored or that we just won't believe to be real?

¹ <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/tn/franklin/crime>

² <https://patch.com/tennessee/nashville/violent-crime-tennessee-rose-2016-compared-previous-year-fbi>

³ <https://franklinhomepage.com/2018-state-of-suicide-report-shows-4-increase-year-over-year/>

⁴ This is a difficult statistic to track—an embarrassing one for our well-to-do population to advertise. Read <https://www.thefix.com/content/tennessee-no1-meth-pseudoephedrine91462>

⁵ <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/williamson/brentwood/2017/11/09/tbi-announces-significant-human-trafficking-sting-brentwood-22-indicted-brentwood-human-trafficking/848135001/>

We hear about these things happening, shake our heads and perhaps offer a prayer. Maybe we even donate to some governmental/social-service or faith-based group that assists with public awareness, legal enforcement, counseling or provisions to the victims. We feel better and then move on, enjoying our daily comforts until the next tragic news of abuse or calamity brings up the toughest question of all...

—*We are looking better, but are we actually getting better?*

We are very good at masking the very issue of marginalization: manufacturing charts and graphs, blasting and posting socially conscious blogs, loudly expressing opposing opinions. We claim better understanding from one group versus another and sterilize the dilemma called marginalization through our analytic discourse. Can we find a way to personalize the problem?

If you're willing to take a stab at "sticking with it" for a while, I invite you to join me in an exercise...right now. For starters, from this chapter forward, I'm going to be addressing you as "you" and would ask that you return the favor. Strange, I know. We're not in some room together or anything like that. But if you have a reaction to what I say, positive or negative, go ahead and actually speak it out. It will start us on a path of discussion that will seem more intimate. I hope that we can flex our "agreement and disagreement muscles" a bit and by some methods that will be suggested later, learn how to trust our common ground rather than abandon any hope of progression in the relationship of humankind.

WAIT A MINUTE...

—where's the fun in that? It's much more satisfying to throw rocks of reasoning at our opponents, isn't it? But maybe, just maybe, if we can somehow find a way to connect with those we marginalize, and recognize our own self-inflicted marginalization, then we won't be so prone to cast aside others in our future together.

DEFINING OUR REAL PROBLEM

A popular term for it today is *disenfranchising* which suggests enslavement, domination and oppression of another. There are plenty of media blitzes about this; who's doing the enslaving and who's being enslaved or abused—everyone has an opinion on it—all of these reports and sentiments can be included in a broader definition that I call *marginalization*. It's a concept with origins rooted throughout the fabric of human history.

The term recently came to my mind during a conversation with a friend who pastors a local church. We were talking about the community that the congregation served and how appearances suggested that our town was strongly unified in faith and services, both to the well-fit and to the downtrodden within our reach.

Both my friend and I recognized that this appearance was extremely deceptive, that there were many pockets of "unwelcomed" people. By lifestyle, events, economic condition, health or racial history (either through choice or circumstance), the *marginalized* have been shunted off. We, the community at large, and yes, our church, had even encouraged them into corners of convenience, so that we and they would

not have to engage in the difficult conversation of our differences. We had excused them away as not-able or not-caring to fit in to the community norm.

WAIT A MINUTE...

—If true, if the coined condition marginalized exists on a pandemic scale, then shouldn't we be alarmed? Shouldn't we be taking action to cure the ill? And if our action is not that shocking to us: why not? Why are we so accepting of the situation? What has caused us to become so acceptably distanced and calloused toward our fellow brothers and sisters on the planet? If our marginalizing is truly recognized as a faulty condition, what can be done about it? No, let's make this more personal: What can I do about it? What can you and I do about it?

THE MARGINALIZED IN REAL-TIME

Throughout this book, I'd like to share some true stories of marginalization in hopes that you might relate on a personal level with the reality of being marginalized. The examples are "real-life", but I don't want to point fingers in fault (there are likely well deserved fingers pointing my way as well). Therefore, the *tellings* will leave out real names and will be generalized enough that (I hope) the message gets across without unnecessary embarrassment. I'll start with a story about one marginalized man's needs.

The man, whom I'll call Frank, had to return to the city where he had had a bad string of circumstances. He was admittedly responsible for much of his misfortune and ended up having to deliver some papers and penalty money to the municipal government in order to get his commercial driver's license reinstated. Frank had left the city to avoid a myriad of personal conflicts, but eventually made up his mind that it was time to get his life back together. His return journey required a cross country trip which included hitching a ride with a trucker who was able to drop him off within 20 miles of his intended destination. Determined, Frank began walking the rest of the way, hauling his large backpack up a main road into town on a very warm Sunday morning.

As he was passing a church, a couple who were just arriving for service, stopped their car beside the hiker and asked if he had far to go. He explained his objective and the couple offered to take him the rest of the way. There was only one catch. They wanted to first attend worship and so they asked if Frank wanted to join them.

Frank had heard the gospel preached, but had always avoided the commitment of faith. This day though, he felt compelled, whether by the opportunity not to miss a good ride into town, or by the friendly invitation, and agreed to share the moment.

The hiker parked his backpack, which contained all his worldly possessions, in the couple's car. They then walked into the building together. As their guest apologized for his appearance, the couple assured him that he would be welcomed, should not feel out of place and that this group was a very "casual" congregation. They appeared confident that there would be a great "reaching out" to Frank.

When they began introducing the traveling man, their Sunday friends seemed polite and conversational, but the only people who seemed to want to sit and learn more about Frank's story in depth was the couple whom had first reached out to him. They led him into the sanctuary and sat alongside him for the service.

The traveler asked if he could borrow some paper to take notes during the sermon, which he did. He borrowed a Bible and the couple guided him toward the scriptures that were being referenced. Frank had good reading skills and followed along silently.

After the sermon, the pastor asked for discussion and reaction to his topic. It was then that the couple stood up and once more introduced Frank as a visitor, so that everyone in the congregation would be aware of this soul in need. The couple explained the circumstances of their encounter with Frank and then asked him if he had anything to say. He did indeed.

Frank had remembered what the sermon was about, even referring to his notes and sharing how the message had impacted him. He thanked everyone for their hospitality and then said something extraordinary, "I appreciate all that y'all have done for me and I can see Jesus here. I want to believe in him."

WAIT A MINUTE...

—What had just happened? Did the Spirit just enter this man's heart and did he just confess faith? The couple became excited and asked him, in front of the fellowship, if he would reaffirm his belief. He did! He also asked for prayer to accomplish his goal of getting his life back together. The couple invited the others in the room to gather around this new man to pray for him and offer hands of support be laid on him. The pastor vocalized the prayers of these people in thanks to God for the work of the Spirit.

One would have expected the brothers and sisters in Christ to jump into a whooping celebration. Instead, after the prayers, the pastor announced, "Amen, praise God," and moved on to the next person's comments about the sermon subject. In other words, "Thanks, next topic matter."

Since that time, Frank continues to be encouraged by the inviting couple. They helped him with supplies, finding a job and supported him as much as possible for his life and spiritual goals. He did get his commercial license back and in fact now drives a semi-truck cross country, sharing the hope of the gospel to others he encounters on his journey.

As for the congregation? To my knowledge, not one person, beside the noted couple has asked after Frank. To them, at least in outward appearance, he remains a memory, marginalized into the ranks of the body of Christ.

Please understand in hearing this story. I don't want to disparage church groups or faith groups or any group for that matter. This is not a tale about the failure of religion, but rather a testimony to the common behavior of humankind. To me this is one of many examples of how we as a world-culture are prone to push away...casually dismiss...those who do not measure up to our standards. It may not be that we wish ill on others; more likely it is that we just want them to stay in the small corner of life to which we imagine they belong. They can succeed and grow all they want; we will even provide money and goods to

help them do so; as long as they do it marginalized, quietly and separately, outside of the view of our comfortable cabins. Or, there is the even less-attractive consideration: Are we just so busy accomplishing our agendas and schedules, that anything, anyone outside of our purpose driven lives, do not matter?

Why aren't we taking time to see, hear and respond to tragedies and needs happening all around us? How have we become so self-focused?

WHY DO WE MARGINALIZE?

For myself, in order to find answers to this compelling issue I had to first get a better handle on understanding the verb from which my neologism evolved. According to Mr. Webster, there is a very negative slant to the verb:

marginalize

v. —to relegate (see [RELEGATE](#) 2) to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group⁶

I was OK with this interpretation until I realized that, in the case of my own marginalization, I had freely chosen my segregation.

WAIT A MINUTE...

—My apologies to you, I neglected to point out that there is another nuance to marginalization. We can, and do, self-marginalize. How do I support such a bizarre hypothesis? Easily, the support comes from deeply rooted personal experience.

MARGINALIZATION IN REAL-TIME

When I was in High School, I joined the choir. Our choral director offered an ambitious goal of a two week singing tour in Europe. We raised funds as a group, planned and practiced as a group and became familiar with one another in the way that any mission-minded organization coalesces. But as with all associations, the individuals bring to the table some very private issues that can affect the entire batch. I was no exception.

I had just started exploring my adolescence. I was experiencing the emotional roller coaster known as dating and was also wading the waters of my newly found faith in God. In a word, I was zealous (some people from my past have said, annoyingly so) in my turn from atheist to worshiper. Honestly, although not unpopular, I felt a personal estrangement, observing other's practices and not feeling a sense of belonging, except to the "bigger cause" of the tour.

So, when we arrived in the foreign land, I felt doubly removed, both from my traveling companions and from the very different world into which we had been planted. Though I admit at the time I had pangs of loneliness, I also felt a true sense of freedom; being able to make of this

⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Marginalize?src=search-dict-hed>

adventure, whatever I wanted. I began watching and listening, asking questions (as best I could, considering the language barrier), writing down my observations and learning/integrating my discoveries into my newly developing spiritual mindset and worldview.

Though feeling apart, I also realized I desperately wanted to walk alongside others who might share my epiphanies. But when I tried to share my thoughts and observation, the rest of the crew seemed disinterested. Hence I continued as a loner, assimilating and logging my exploits for future reflection.

Over the years, looking back on that moment, I've come to recognize that my teen pilgrimage was the beginning of my love for penning the written word. I also now see the vast blessings it prepared in me. One evident example is how I have come to discern social nuances and filter my worldview of current events through historical and spiritual contexts. Though still not absolutely perfected, I strive to listen and watch prior to opening my heart and soul to others. And that requires a strange method—*self-imposed marginalization*.

So, to me, being set apart is not always bad. I like my exclusive club status and obviously argue that I am NOT powerless over my relegation. Am I alone in this approach? Am I missing something? I submit that many, if not all of us through the ages on this planet, have at least occasionally chosen a path of seclusion in order to evaluate new environments we are about to enter into.

Therein lays the danger. Knowing our own personal tendencies, we are likely to project them onto others, assuming (or justifying) that, at the particular time we are casting another soul aside, that they “probably” are grateful for our (my) avoidance in seeking deeper relationship. Thus, we have become a world of ships passing in the night, seldom attempting to engage one another at levels that are life, spirit and world changing.

And so, for the purpose of sticking to the main point of this book, I'd like to begin with the assumption that we will all at times self-impose marginalization on ourselves—our individual choice, our consequences, possibly good, possibly bad. That being said, most forms of marginalization are outwardly directed and therefore unhealthy and unproductive. If you disagree, there's a simple solution...close the book and...marginalize me. Don't worry, I'll survive, but regretfully, you and I won't have the opportunity to *midrash*— an ancient term for shaping opinion by honest, truly open-minded exploration. I would be honored to have you walk with me on this journey, and even more honored to discover together, concepts lost to society which may very well save us from marginalizing one another into non-existence.

Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely right there where you are — in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools. You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have the eyes to see. Everywhere, wherever you go, you find people who are unwanted, unloved, uncared for, just rejected by society — completely forgotten, completely left alone.

—Mother Teresa

Author - Mark A. Cornelius

Mark A. Cornelius has authored numerous books, musicals, video productions, and a journal ministry.

His works include *Believement—Breaking Through the Belief Barrier*, *RUT Management—Discovering Adventure in the Routine of Life*, *Thunder Buffalo Goes Home*, *Welfare Christianity*, and the popular fiction trilogy, *The Ruach Saga* including *The Singularity*, *Seconds*, and *Bronzeman*. Mark's most recent work is titled *Marginalized*. All of Mark's books are available at www.RUTmanagement.com.

Mark has authored other insights and blogs, all of which can be obtained on his website: www.MarkCornelius.me.



You can experience my passion for writing at www.MarkCorneli.us. Travel with me at my blog www.DeepEndFaith.blogspot.com. E-mail: markc91754@comcast.net

Facebook: www.Facebook.com/v4641singularity.

Thanks for the journey together!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C." in a cursive style.

Illustrations: Shay Nicole Cavender

Shay Nicole Cavender is a native of Nashville Tennessee. She began expressing an interest in art at an early age. She takes particular interest in drawing and creating animals and fantasy creatures. Shay majored in Graphic Design at the University of Tennessee at Martin to develop her unique style. She continues to hone her skills, working as a graphic design consultant and freelance artist/designer.

