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**Subject:** Chapter 9: The 'Out-of-Church' Christians.

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Dear Saints

Below please find Chapter 9 of Andrew Strom's book: The 'Out-of-Church' Christians. Please visit his web-site at <http://www.streetrevival.com/>. His e-mail is [prophetic@revivalschool.com](mailto:prophetic@revivalschool.com). You can also subscribe to their newsletter by sending an empty e-mail to [anzac-subscribe@welovegod.org](mailto:anzac-subscribe@welovegod.org).

Enjoy!

Eben Swart

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## CHAPTER NINE

### THE "IN-CHURCH" OUT-OF-CHURCH

It seems that there is a tremendous groundswell of "dissatisfaction" occurring in the church right now. Could it be that God Himself may be causing this, to prepare for great change and reformation amongst His people? A number of those who wrote to me are still within their churches, but are having a hard time finding good reasons to stay there. The following emails explain the reasons that many of them give for this growing dissatisfaction.

*From: Noreen (-South Africa):*

I am one of those who is in but is out, if you know what I mean. I find I feel much safer with my personal relationship at home with the Lord. I also find that I am never sure about whether what is going on in the churches is right. It is awful as this evening I could have gone to church but chose not to. This leaves one feeling guiltily. However, I have never felt closer to the Lord.

*From: Candy (-USA):*

I am not "out of church" right now, but sometimes I feel like I might as well be. I went back to a Spirit-filled church that I had "joined" seven years ago. (I had gone to another Spirit-filled church for 3 years that fell apart, then went to a non-Spirit filled church off and on for 4 years). I knew I needed to get back to a Spirit-filled church.... I found out my membership had been cancelled and I needed to "rejoin" to become a member.... I still haven't done that.... I don't know why I need to. The pastor is promoting different things trying to get new members. It's not wrong, it's just that if we had true revival, people would come on their own, right? Anyway, I am struggling to keep going, even though I know I need to. I feel like I am in a very dry place, including when I am in church. For every person who is "out of church"... there is probably at least one "in church" who wonders why he is there.

*From: Vicki (-USA):*

Is it possible to be in the wilderness and still be actively involved in a church? I identify with those who are in the wilderness and have left the church, and have considered doing the same, but I am getting mixed messages and until I am clear on my marching orders, I dare not move, yet I am so done with church programs. I think I'm an "In Church, Out of Church Christian", done with programs and empty worship, hungering for real relationships centered on what God is doing, and longing to bear fruit even if it means pruning some very old branches.

*From: Alistair (-Australia):*

We are still going to church but despair of it. I have wondered for some time whether the present Structure will be destroyed and the true bride will arise as a phoenix from the ashes, or whether the true church will be raised up beside the present one which will become even more irrelevant.

My wife & I have two aching desires deep within us. To see the arts redeemed, and to see the church actually being Jesus to the world around it.

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Many of these people told me that they feel as though they simply "don't fit" with what is happening in their local churches. They hang around but they simply cannot get into what is happening:

*From: Jill (-New Zealand):*

My husband and I, after being actively involved in Spirit-filled church life since 1965, have spent two years "out of church" and just

recently started back again... in another fellowship.

However I sit there every Sunday feeling so out of place, and wondering what is wrong with me. I even have difficulty getting involved in corporate worship... yet at home... alone I feel so much closer to the Lord. We are not church hoppers, and have been very involved with home groups and Bible studies during our time in church. But since we have been "out there" I have found it far easier to communicate with others who are out of church for various reasons... some who have simply fallen thru' the cracks. We have no desire to be Lone Rangers doing our own thing, but it does seem to us, to be something God is doing.

From: Claudia (-USA):

My husband and I were just having a discussion about whether or not we are being called out of the organized church. We are still attending a church on Sundays but, we do not seem to fit anywhere. We sit among thousands and hear a "good message" but "we are not connected to the body". We want to be. We have tried to connect only to be pushed out . We are seeing so much control in the local churches we attend. I know that being isolated is not the answer.

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A number of these "In-church" people say they have noticed many others around them who seem restless and dissatisfied right now. This seems to be a very widespread phenomenon:

*From: Peter & Doreen (-New Zealand):*

I have a tenuous tie with the Anglican church and have met so many people who are hungry for they-know-not-what! A restlessness is in their hearts, and like you say, 'They wander from church to church'....

From: Erlene (-USA):

I have friends who have (for the most part) left the church. I am still going to mine. The reason is that I have NOT heard God tell me to do otherwise. I teach adult Bible study Sunday morning, some other Bible studies with various other people in their homes, and I know God has called me to teach. However, I am very unfulfilled with "church as usual". Frustrated that we do not see a lot more "signs following those who believe", and the routine of sameness. The gifts of the Spirit are very scarce, salvations are not happening on any grand scale, and church has become more of a Christian social club in my opinion....

From: Eileen (-USA):

We are part of those Christians who have been totally unsettled at church. The only thing that is keeping us tied to this one church recently, is that our children are involved in the youth group and we feel they need that contact.

Every church we have been in, whether Pentecostal, Charismatic, Baptist... whatever... there is something missing in every church. I feel like the church of this generation is lacking the "fullness" of Christ. There always seems to be a major weak area. I'm not saying we are perfect Christians and know everything... that is far from true... but there is so much missing.

I have learned and grown so much more (exceedingly) at home in my prayer closet seeking the Lord and studying His Word. My husband's and my spiritual growth has not come from attending church. It has come from spending time with HIM at home. Church has become more of a social hour than of truly seeking God. We should be doing the things that Jesus did (miracles, healing, deliverance, restoration, etc.) and even greater!! Especially in these last days!!

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Many who wrote told me what an "empty" experience church has become for them, and how they have been wondering what on earth could be done to make things different:

*From: Ruthie (-USA):*

I just seem to warm a seat in my church. The "activities" and the "programs" in the church are so empty. We have become a social club with a "bless me" mentality.... I find myself more eager to spend time alone with Jesus and feel His presence than I do seeking Him in a body of people that spend the entire service looking at their watches, trying to decide how much of their day off is going to be used up in the church service....

From: Hollie (-USA):

I myself feel that I have been in a place of spiritual limbo for the past 4 or 5 years. The church I attend has some awesome services, programs are bursting out of the walls, etc, but it mostly just leaves me feeling unimpressed and listless in my heart. Because....

Because, maybe, I look at others, perhaps, and don't keep my eyes focused on Jesus (????)

Because I look at others, and after a great service, they are right back to doing all they were doing that wasn't quite perfect before the Lord. What good is a tremendous "touch" (goose bumps) from the Lord, if there is no lasting change when the goose bumps disappear??

I'm reluctant to witness to others in case they want to come to church with me. I feel that for the most part, bringing them to church, would/will only lead them into bondage to a church, and not into relationship with the Lord... I don't want someone to just "come to church" with me, I want them to "come to Jesus!"

Personal relationship of the individual with the Lord doesn't seem to be too stressed. It is mostly relationship with the pastor or the ministers, or our own ministry within the congregation.

I have no desire whatsoever for a ministry or leadership role within the congregation. I've seen it all before, done much of it myself, and am just really weary of it and unimpressed (as well as unmoved) by it.

There is no greater joy, I think, than just going to visit the shut-ins, the widows, the sick, the hurting, those who slip quietly out the doors of the congregation, and no one notices because they are so busy "ministering" to the lost. (The lost get lost, and the saved get overlooked). Or, if they do notice someone hasn't been coming for a while, they are too busy to really find out why and/or where that person is. (Often, that very "busyness" is even church-related!)

Yet at the same time, I am hungry. So desperately hungry to find within a local congregation whatever it is within my spirit/soul that is making me so terribly hungry and feeling dissatisfied with what is being served to me within the local congregation.

I have examined my heart to see if it is "me". If there are things I need to repent of, get taken care of, put under the blood, etc. Of course there are. But, it isn't this alone, I think, that is making me feel so starved spiritually.

I don't want a "good" service at my local church. I don't want to participate in "more" programs and outreach ministries. I don't want a position within the local congregation.

Maybe I just want to be fed. But, fed what? And why do I even feel so starved spiritually? The Word says to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Perhaps I am not "tasting". If so, I want to! But I don't want to just taste something the pastor cooks up to dish out each service. I don't want to be at a spiritual smorgasbord and pick and choose what might satisfy me spiritually, or give me Holy Ghost "goose bumps," that someone else has prepared for me.

I just want GOD!!!

From: Marilyn (-USA):

It has been a long time since I have gotten anything out of church. The worship is weak... everything in a rush since we have services back to back. There is no time to let Holy Spirit in. But I want to tell you why I stay. I stay for the children. I am not there to get but to give. We can make the services for the children alive and meaningful. The children need us to be there. I get more out of giving to the kids than I do attending services.

From: Donna (-USA):

I cannot tell you how many times I have gone to church desperate to meet with God only to leave disappointed and sometimes even in tears.

The churches that I have experienced here in America (in Oregon where I live, and in Texas) are so dead and dry (yes, the so called "Spirit-filled" ones) that I have to force myself to go, or can't force myself to go.

I wondered if there was something wrong with me for hating it so much, when all of my friends always gushed about "the presence of the Lord was so strong" or "that was really powerful." While my thought (never spoken of course) was UGH! I like my dentist better.

I love Jesus soooooo much and have such a good time just "hanging out" with Him at home, that I couldn't understand why I often felt so "icky" at church. I talk to so many of my unsaved friends and family, who without exception have been abused or even out and out stolen from by "Christians" and "ministers", and am constantly trying to convince them that that wasn't God that did that to them.

Unfortunately, most "Christians" give God such a bad name that the unsaved don't want anything to do with Him. I now pray constantly, "Lord, if I am misrepresenting you, stop me by any means necessary." I don't want to have to give an account on judgement day for all of the people that I kept away from God.

Now that I know there are probably millions of us that feel the same way about "organized religion", I'll bet my socks that the exodus from the "church" is a move of God. He does say "Come out of her my people, and don't partake of her sins anymore."

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Many of these "In-church" people told me that they are in a state of perplexity as to what to do or where to go. There seem to be so few options. They really do not see God moving in their church, but it does not seem much better elsewhere. What on earth can be done to remedy this malaise that has overtaken Western Christianity?

*From: Sondra (-Australia):*

*Although I have remained within the church system (uncomfortably) I just don't know what to do. I have been thinking its all "me becoming strange and out of order."*

*I don't want to be out of the Body, just out of the "commercialised" church.... such a lack of intercession, seeking God, and quiet times of deep prayer. (In fact, none at all!!) And to be quite honest, no repentance at all! In fact, repentance seems a dirty word in our church. Far too uncomfortable to give it the amount of mileage it deserves and God requires for a healthy spiritual life. In fact, repentance has been pushed out in place of self-building and pride in all we do! Our church seems to promote itself as if it were so worthy of being right at the front of God's plans, purposes and blessings. I cringe inside my spirit, and feel sickened every Sunday when I have to sit through two hours of "Let's seek God" when all we seem to do is seek ourselves and have a good social time.*

*From: Cheryl (-USA):*

*We have yet to 'let go' of church altogether but really, really want to, as we are frustrated and fed up with playing church. We have been dedicated youth leaders for over 10 years and have been labelled as rebellious for our concerns on the state of the church the last few years. We find we have backed off from church but are hesitant to let go completely. Our feelings are this - if all of 'us' leave, who will tell the others who are feeling the same way that they are not alone and are not "weird"?*

*We are very dedicated in all aspects of our lives to God, and really are much closer to Him now than we have ever been. Funny how that works! We know many, many people who are either on the verge of leaving the church completely or have already done so. It is happening at an alarming rate here in Ontario. For so many of us to be feeling this way and making the same move, without prior knowledge of others going through the same territory, I cannot help but think that God is indeed leading this army out for a time, how long - who knows?*

*From: Tait (-USA):*

*Since the first of the year I've been feeling so frustrated at my church and their worldly ways of doing things and their fearing man (the people in the pews) more than fearing the Lord that I've been feeling that I had to leave (because I was more focused on what was wrong than I was focused on the Lord). The Lord is very obviously moving at my church creating a new wineskin, but my frustration at people wanting to hold on to the old wineskin and rejecting even the possibility of the new is almost overwhelming.*

*From: Lea (-USA):*

*Sometimes I feel like it would be easier for me to attend church regularly so I could avoid the concerned remarks from my Christian friends who believe that I am in disobedience. In fact, I have gone to church on occasion out of guilt but each time that I do, I feel like God reminds me again that He has called me out. Not out of fellowship with brothers and sisters, but out of the organized church.*

*On the occasion that I go, I feel so empty. I hear a pastor tell me how important it is to be part of a church. I have heard this message so much that it makes me wonder why so many pastors constantly remind us of this. I wonder whether they do not feel that God is big enough to meet us in our own homes without the organized worship, sermons and Sunday school for kids.*