
Subject: Chapter 4: The 'Out-of-Church' Christians.

Dear Saints

Below please find Chapter 4 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. You can also subscribe to their newsletter by sending an empty e-mail to anzac-subscribe@welovegod.org.

Enjoy!

Eben Swart

CHAPTER FOUR "CALLED OUT"?

A significant portion of the people who wrote to me were adamant that the major reason they had left the churches was because they felt "called out" by God. It was not because they were "hurt" or offended or any other reason. They insisted that they had received a call from God to "come aside" and so that is what they did. In this chapter we will take a look at what these particular Christians said about their reasons for leaving:

From: Anne (-New Zealand):

I do not come from a background of hurt. I have been out of the structure of the Church for 3.5 years after I very clearly heard the Lord call me out. I am not sure I am going through a wilderness experience as such, but more of a time of growth in learning and total dependence upon my very faithful, closest friend. I am open to going back into the 'system', but not until God calls me in, as clearly as He called me out.

From: Sue (-Australia):

I too sensed that God was "calling me out" - and even though I had the usual Scripture verses quoted at me, and had it insinuated that I too was being "rebellious", "not willing to be under authority" etc, etc. But the sense of God's calling was so strong that I just had to heed it.

I didn't leave my church without telling my pastors why I was doing so. This was a church that was so "seeker-friendly" that what it was serving up was even less than spiritual milk. I informed my pastors that I needed spiritual meat. They seemed quite happy with the idea of one of their flock leaving because she needed meat; I'm sure they are continuing on with their "You can have a happy life" series of meetings, with a few references to God thrown in here and there.

Funnily enough, I have grown stronger in the Lord and learnt more in the two years I have been out of the church than the eight years I was in it...

From: Pete (-New Zealand):

I felt 'called out' a year ago and went through a very difficult and trying time both within myself and from the Christian community. I have spent long hours in prayer and in seeking God for answers to something that quite frankly broke my heart. While the persecution continues somewhat I have come to know God and my Lord Jesus Christ in a much deeper and more personal way than I ever thought possible within 'the church'.

I realise now that God wanted me to come to rely on Him and Him alone for my growth and sustenance and while I was well into leadership roles within the denominational system it was not where God wanted me. We have started our own home fellowship called "Reaching Out" Christian fellowship and we have now a number of others attending regular Sunday fellowship and Friday night prayer groups. We are ministering in the community to those who are less fortunate and to folk who just need help and we are reaching people that the churches seem to be unable to reach. We feel strongly that this is just the beginning and that God is building a foundation among His people.

From: Darcy (-USA):

Since the Lord "called me out" of the church that my family was a member of, I/we have suffered great condemnation, misunderstanding and criticism for our decision to follow the Lord rather than man. It has been difficult and there have been many times when I just wanted to walk away from "fellow believers" who keep asking me, "Where are you going to church now?" When I tell them that I am not going to any church at this time, they are quick to either invite me to their church (I have tried them all) or they judge me and tell me that I am forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. For a long period of time I was in a state of being numb from it all. Then, the Lord kept bringing people into my life who were in the same boat. What a gift it was to know that I was not alone.

There were also many Out-of-church people who spoke of a far greater 'intimacy' with Jesus now that they had left all the activity and bustle of church life behind. The Bible tells us that the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your mind, and all your soul, and all your strength." Such an overwhelming love for God can only be developed through "seeking Him with all our heart". I have noticed that there is a very strong emphasis on this kind of close personal relationship with Jesus amongst many Out-of-church people. It really is a dominant theme of many of the emails I received, as you will see below:

From: Robin (-USA):

I am no longer hungry for Jesus, I am Starving for Him and He isn't in my local churches! I obeyed His calling to just rest in Him and I have been doing this for almost 4 years now. When the Lord calls me back in, I will run for I know what His voice sounds like for my ear has been pressed upon His chest for a long time now. I am not full of rebellion against the churches for I cry out for their eyes to be open so that they too will learn to go deeper into Papa, an intimacy that nothing in this world could ever fulfill!

We are the church, not the four walls that have been built! These walls must come down and embrace the lost with His love, embrace one another with His hunger, His Fire, and we will never be the same again! I do believe the time is coming very soon when all who have been called out and have been resting and waiting upon the Lord will be called back in, but with them will be His torch that will set the hearts on fire!

From: Louise (-Australia):

I have been out of mainline "church" for 2 years now and the Lord has led me on a much deeper and intimate journey in that time. I have found new fresh freedom in our relationship and consequently find the "church" systems only that... systems which are ultimately man made and man centred. It has been a time where I have learned to go directly to the throne for all wisdom and He has been faithful. The Scripture, "Draw near to the throne of God and He will draw near to you" has been a daily drink.

From: Cindi (-USA):

I have seen this for quite some time as like a mass EXODUS of God's disciples who truly hunger and thirst for God's REAL life and intimacy and a REAL daily walk with our Father... Did you know Webster's defines religion as "back to bondage"? The majority of so-called denominations of every NAME have been so involved in their own "agendas" for so long they have either forgotten or have never known total dependency on Christ and His Holy Spirit... And many of us who have left have discovered God personally in a way that is indescribably powerful and intimate and radically different from the ways we were taught through church services.

From: David (-Canada):

I have been an "elder" and involved in more than one denomination. Eventually I came to the place where I had to stop everything. It was a very real encounter and the result was a "Woe is me" much like Isaiah as I caught a glimpse of what my sinful nature is really like and how so very much of all that I had ever done was for me in His Name. A hired hand, not a friend. I had prayed for revival, for His Presence in the church, you name it. The answer was to begin to see Him and abhor myself. I could not go on. Not one step. No-one understood what had happened to me, least of all me.

The fellowship that I enjoy is freer and deeper and more marvellous than it has ever been. None of it occurs within traditional boundaries. None. He has led us into the desert to speak tenderly to us. Its a place where there is only wilderness and Him. No distractions. He then makes the wilderness into a fruitful garden.

From: Lorraine (-Location unknown):

I am one of the 'some' who you mentioned as having heard the Lord call them to 'come out' of the system and get alone with Him. From experiencing this one on one with Him for the past 3 1/2 years I can honestly tell you that nothing can compare to how wonderful it is to grow closer and closer to Him in intimacy every day. My relationship with the Lord has deepened in every way through this experience. It is impossible to describe how real He has become in my life. Everything I do and say revolves around what He is telling me to do or say. In this place of aloneness with Him, He has proven Himself to be enough!

Many think in their minds that 'aloneness' with Him, means outside of the Body. They think that this means that those outside the system do not fellowship with other believers. I don't know about others, but I have more fellowship with other believers now than I did when I was still in the system. The fellowship with others that flows from this intimacy with the Lord is so much more honest, open, and fulfilling than the fellowship that I had with others when I was in the system. It is real, heartfelt, communing with other believers. It is completely a Spirit to Spirit connection, rather than a natural gesture of being friendly towards others because they go to the same church as you. I feel more a part of the Body now than I ever did when I was sitting in a natural building full of people.

The one thing the system can't offer to believers is intimate relationship with their God. The system can offer us numerous fleshly activities, but has no power to affect the inward heart of mankind. Outside the system I have encountered the Living God, who is in the process of renewing me to right relationship with Himself. I am getting to know Him personally in a way that I have not known Him before. In the system, I had only known about Him... now I am actually getting to know Him intimately every day.

Natural thinking tells us that those outside the system are disconnected from the Body, but this is not the Truth. Those who are learning to know Him intimately are finally becoming the Body that He created us to be. Whether one is a part of the Body does not depend on where one naturally is, but on knowing the One who is the Head. If one is intimately connected with the Head, then they are connected with His Body wherever they are naturally.

I will never give Him up and return to the emptiness of religion. This is hard to understand for those who have not yet known Him outside of their religion. Those of us who are experiencing the reality of Him in our lives outside of our religion cannot help but desire for all to know Him in this wonderful Way.