



Life After Church: God's Call to Disillusioned Christians

By Brian Sanders

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Life without church. It's getting easier to imagine. And maybe you already left. A leaver, then. Committed to Jesus, not an institution. Perhaps you've left your church in spirit, remaining in the pew. Outwardly silent. Secretly bored. In either case, Brian Sanders has a word for you. Out of his own experience as a leaver, Brian distills the complex problem into two viable options: Stay. Remain in your church with the blessing of Christ and in the power of his great vision for the church to come. Take the path of revolutionary leaving. Move purposefully, seeking the kingdom of God that is beyond institutions. Whether Sunday mornings find you alone in a one-bedroom apartment or isolated in a church of thousands, Brian reminds you that the choice is yours. Reform the church that is Christ's. Be it from the inside out, or the outside in.

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Editorial Review

Review

It helps to get the insight to what thinking goes on in the minds of some of those within or even outside of the church. (Matthew Christensen, TheoSource, April 28, 2008)

Brian encourages Christians not to give up on the church as a whole, but instead seek God for more clarity of mission, values, and vision for their life going forward. (LW, The Journal of Student Ministries, May/June 2008)

Sanders advocates a renewed focus on the missional call of the church to *be* the body of Christ to nonbelievers skeptical of faith without works and justice without mercy. (Sean Fowlds in Ministry Today, March/April 2008)

"Sanders offers helpful guidance to those who are considering leaving church as well as to those who have chosen to stay, providing the latter with practical suggestions on how to reform the church from within and maintain their joy in the process. For those who have chosen to leave, Sanders provides a chapter on how to leave respectfully and graciously." (Marcia Ford, FaithfulReader.com, January 2008)

"I certainly appreciated [Sanders's] emphasis on scripture. . . . His helpful and pastoral advice to those leaving the church is mature and practical. Sanders also has a wonderful grasp of the mission of the church. His vision for the church is a positive and enthusiastic vision that will benefit every reader. Most of all, Sanders helps all his readers see through the eyes and experiences of those who are 'leaving' the church in some way." (Michael Spencer, internetmonk.com, January 29, 2008)

"Wow!!! Sanders has my attention. And the book never gets bitter or ruthless. It expresses the pain, not of unrealistic idealists who are not able to be satisfied, but of honest men and women who see what the rest of us do not want to see, for whatever may be our reasons. *Read this book. Read this book. Read this book.*" (Don Bryant, pastor, Coastal Church, Hanover, Massachusetts)

"This is the only book I know of that is about leaving church, not in the sense of tossing in the towel, but of thoughtful, deliberate, wise leaving because one's heart burns for the kingdom more than one's local church does. This book is not crazy or angry; it's thoughtful, judicious, and programmatic for those who want to pick up stakes and do church differently, more radically." (Scot McKnight, from jesuscreed.org)

"I'm blown away by *Life After Church*. I've never yet seen a book of its kind that addresses those who 'stay' in church *and* those who leave! It's a significant book." (Mike Morrell, editor, The Ooze, and emerging church coordinator, Not For Sale Campaign)

"Hopeful, prophetic, Brian Sanders speaks for the many among us who long for the kingdom of God--but find ourselves frustrated by the church as we know it. In *Life After Church* he offers a gentle, constructive and hopeful vision of how we can reform ourselves as a body to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our world. Simple but not simplistic, prophetic but not angry, Brian's writing is honest about the struggle to live authentic faith, striking a careful balance between honoring the past and inviting us to imagine what could be." (Mark A. Scandrette, author, Soul Graffiti, and executive director and cofounder, ReIMAGINE!)

"For anyone who really believes Christ is Lord and head of the church, this book is a real roller coaster. At first I found myself angry and defensive in response to Sanders's critique, and yet I also found myself resonating with his deep longing for the church to be more. For those of us staying, Sanders and his 'leavers' articulate important questions. They are critical questions for the leaders of any church that desires to be faithful to its Christ-given mission and relevant to a new generation." (Candie Blankman, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Downey, California)

"There is a growing awareness of the extent of the 'back door' problem facing many churches. It is often assumed that church leavers represent either the disgruntled transferring to other churches or those who have abandoned their Christian faith. In reality, many are leaving churches out of disillusionment and frustration to continue their spiritual pilgrimage. Brian Sanders tackles this important topic with a clear, analytical mind. He identifies the complex process of leaving a church, and suggests practical ways it can be done in a responsible manner. Most important of all, he argues that leaving must lead to a fresh vision and renewed commitment to Christ, community and the kingdom of God." (Eddie Gibbs, author, ChurchNext)

"I love this book; I hate this book. I love this book because Brian's longing heart is so big he can write a sentence like 'God's vision for his church is so magnificent, so beautiful, that we can never leave it without leaving him.' I hate this book because it might encourage disillusioned people to leave the church--and as Brian says, that would be leaving God behind too. But if you're wrestling with the church, Brian is a great wrestling coach." (Kevin A. Miller, executive vice president and publisher, Christianity Today International)

About the Author

Brian Sanders was part of a large group of people who all left churches at the same time. Gradually they realized that while their criticism of the church was prophetic, it wasn't productive. Brian is now executive director of the Underground Network, a coalition of churches united by a call to biblical justice and love for the poor. And he is the lead pastor of the network's founding church, the Underground Church. The Likewise book *Life After Church* comes out of Brian's dream for a new kind of church. That dream has been formed in part by his degree in applied theology from Spurgeon's College, where he saw what it would take for a church to become a source of life to a community. Here are a couple books that have influenced Brian's thinking: *The Shaping of Things to Come* by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch and *Houses that Change the World* by Wolfgang Simson. You can access Brian's articles on the resources page of tampaunderground.com.

Users Review

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Gerald Dews:

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Marc Gaul:

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Jared Carter:

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