

**Articles and Sermons :: Reclaiming the Church One Story at a Time****Reclaiming the Church One Story at a Time - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/4/10 17:35**

We've noticed a marked increase of people making an exodus from toxic mega churches and eventually writing their stories online, how they were mistreated by the former leaders they were devoted to. Accounts of abuse that make you shiver and shake your head in wonder. The question that begs to be asked is "what has happened to the Church and why are we allowing this malevolence to kidnap it?"

One such story is on a new blog called Joyful Exiles (<http://joyfulexiles.com/>) by Paul and Jonna Petry, a former elder couple on staff at Mars Hill. Paul was "wrongly fired by Driscoll for attempting to curb Mark's power by opposing structural changes and new bylaws that were being pushed through by Mark" (Brent Detwiler explains on yet a different blog) — these bylaws, by the way, were to give Mark complete access to the money and decision making without dissent. Since Paul is a lawyer he includes extensive documentation and resources (which we all can appreciate even if we may not have time to read all that), and Jonna's story goes into the heart of all they went through there and the 4 years since they left. The tone of the blog isn't vindictive, but instead sincere and heartfelt.

Interesting that it has taken 4 years to feel free tell their story. Jonna says she couldn't tell it before now. She didn't say she needed detox, but our guess she needed time to heal before moving confidently into the next phase of life. Even after 6 or 7 years for us, I'm losing count, we still benefit from rounds of talk therapy since we left our church. Healing has come, bit by bit, yet lingering affects of how we were treated can surface without warning. The major surgery took place when we recognized we were participating in deception then fled the compound (which wasn't as easy as it sounds) but we still see that the Lord is tweaking us and removing wrong concepts about Him that were deeply embedded in our psyche. You don't even know you still think a certain way till you are confronted with a circumstance that reminds you of the past. Anyway, I hope that the Petry's are free to take all the time they need to detox and heal. Not that there won't be 'ministry' opportunity along the way - we can all help others as we heal.

Stories like these inevitably turn our thoughts to the current state of the Church. It seems to be generally accepted now that pastors should be given almost exclusive access to the money and decision making and need to surround themselves with yes men who aim to please. It has produced a climate that instead of ripe for harvest is ripe for leader types with fatal character flaws driven by personal ambition. The body of Christ cheers this on since there is nothing new under the sun and people want a leader they can feel and see. We are no different than Ancient Israel in the Old Testament who preferred Saul over Samuel. We have naively handed the Church over to sociopathic dictator types who gladly seize the opportunity.

What some of us came to discern in the last 10 years, some earlier, is now becoming obvious to those who are under the abusive jurisdiction of the Mark Driscolls who behave no better than spoiled brats, kicking and screaming, bullying, to get their way. From the outside looking in, it seems pathetic and derranged; but the insiders, thousands who attend his churches, seem clueless and smitten as if in love.

At least many are seeing the truth according to the stories coming from a host of disillusioned and shocked people now in exodus mode. It only seemed like yesterday when we were reading glowing reports of Mark's avante garde leadership. He was certainly the new cool. Now the truth of who he is leaking out into the vastness of cyberspace. He not only dishes out way too much information about his private marriage bed in his recent sex book (??), stunning reports of mandatory shunning of those deemed disobedient have emerged, complete with church discipline contracts, like a new wave of revelation.

All that to say, if people finally see the light and leave these types of churches in droves, the remnant church growing on the internet and beyond will eventually be the new normal. Instead of our scarlet letter B for Bitterness, we will be labeled The Throng who dares take back possession what is rightfully ours, our true identity in Christ (because of Jesus shed blood for us and only because of that). Why have we allowed these tyrannical sociopaths to take over and tell us how to be Christians? They resemble Jesus no more than the Pharisees did back in His day. We should know better than to follow anyone who esteems him/herself too highly as the chosen elite. Jesus isn't about that at all.

It will be interesting to see what the next 10 years brings - what state the body of Christ will find herself in. What will the next exodus be? If it's Mark Driscoll this year, will it be Joel in Texas next year? Joel is way sweet - such a nice guy so

I can't imagine him bullying anyone. However, what we heard from his wife could make your head spin. It's not a prediction, I'm just wondering. Perhaps church as we've known it will no longer exist. One thing we keep coming back to in our talk therapy discussions, we can never, and will never, worship a pastor again. We'd rather go without and stay safe near the Lord, under the shadow of His wing.

With every strategy Lucifer has employed down through history, he eventually overplays his hand and tips us off that he's behind the evil schemes. This one seems to be quite the tangled web. We know he's behind it all. The body of Christ looks like a mess. Me included. People are wounded right and left by leaders in particular. But Jesus said in Matthew 10:26 "there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." He's the only one who can untangle the mess now. He's the only one we can look to and trust. He's the only one who can give the Church her identity back. But in order to do so, a lot has to be revealed and uncovered. Maybe if enough of us speak up and tell our stories, we, the Church, will operate in a spirit worthy of our calling and in the anointing both Isaiah and Jesus spoke of in the scriptures (Isaiah 61 and Luke 4).

Those are my rambling thoughts for today.

Everyone has a story, what is yours?

<http://detoxchurchgroup.blogspot.com/>

**Re: Reclaiming the Church One Story at a Time - posted by learjet, on: 2012/4/10 20:25**

Thanks for the testimony pilgrim, many of us have been down the same road but scripture assures us that 'all good things...' you know the rest by heart, we all do.

Perhaps the Lord was preparing folks in advance for a mass exodus, with people who have already fled? I don't know honestly, but one thing I do know, I worship and adore the Lord through all of the trash, and like you will never worship men again.

**Re: - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/4/10 22:21**

Amen to that Earl. Unless the Lord builds the house, they that labor, labor in vain. Everything is being shaken in these last days and those things that cannot be shaken (because they are of God) will remain. But whatever is not of God is coming down. That is what we are seeing more and more of today. Kingdoms of men falling and their grip (control) on the sheep is loosening.

Pilgrim