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## **Why millions are leaving the church, and finding God elsewhere**

*Former Baptist minister says, "The church is ill"*

**LOUISVILLE, KY** – It's no secret that millions of Americans have left the church. According to the American Religious Survey, an estimated 35 million Americans consider themselves spiritual, but have given up on religion. Known as "nones," if these individuals *do* have a religious practice, they are only marginally associated with it. And yet, some of our country's most prominent spiritual authors – Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle – are selling more books than ever before. Why then are more Americans seeking God, but fleeing the temple in which he supposedly resides?

Dr. Steve McSwain, former Baptist minister-turned-interfaith spirituality activist, says this is no accident. In fact, he says, religions have a tendency to subvert an authentic spiritual life and faith.

"Instead of peace and tranquility, religion has become a circus of endless activity, beliefs, dogmas, and doctrines that are more divisive, as well as dysfunctional, than unifying and healing," says Dr. McSwain. "No religious belief magically unlocks the door to God, and no religion holds a title deed on God. 'Awakening' to your spiritual self is actually quite simple, but religion – Christianity included – has made it infinitely complicated, even problematic."

Inside ***The Enoch Factor: The Sacred Art of Knowing God*** (June 2010, Smyth & Hewlys), Dr. McSwain speaks to an ever-growing body of church discontents and "church drop-outs," i.e., those who have left their religion, but hunger deeply for a real, spiritual union.

"The church is ill," says Dr. McSwain. "If church leaders are motivated more by having the biggest crowds and the loudest applause, more by ratings and recognition and other egocentric ambitions, they should not be surprised when people eventually look elsewhere for God. Some have already, and countless others will. The 20-somethings and 30-somethings of this world want authenticity and, for many of them, the church is the last place to find it."

In fact, the author himself didn't find spiritual peace until he left ministry – and regular church attendance – behind.

"I experienced a profound shift in consciousness, what Easterners would call a *satori*," says Dr. McSwain. "That's when I began living an authentic life, a genuinely awakened life. Up to that point, I had been a Christian minister for half of my adult life. But I had neither a clear sense of self, nor any clue as to what my life is about."

Today, Dr. McSwain knows exactly what his mission is. Rather than rejecting the church, he now meets with leaders from all denominations (and figures from other faith bodies) to foster a more enlightened religious dialogue. "The survival of humanity is at stake," says Dr. McSwain. "What must end is this religious insanity of thinking, 'We're right; You're wrong!' 'We're in; You're out!' 'We're the chosen ones, you're not!'"

"My Christian faith has become more meaningful to me than at any other time in my life, but it isn't a club I use to coerce others to convert to my way of thinking," says Dr. McSwain. "I'm free of believing Christianity is the only way to know God. Furthermore, being a slave to churchgoing and church dogma isn't a prerequisite to knowing God. The only place you need to go, to know God, is within. This book will help you to genuinely walk with God."

**DR. STEVE MCSWAIN** is the author of *The Giving Myths: Giving then Getting the Life You've Always Wanted* (2007, Smyth & Hewlys). He holds a doctorate in Christian ministry, and is a public speaker at churches, conventions, and corporate events nationwide. For more information, please visit [www.stevemcswain.com](http://www.stevemcswain.com).

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