

Come Out!

Joe Slater

Throughout the Bible, God has called people to come out of their sinful surroundings in order to serve Him. Almost four thousand years ago, Abraham heard God's voice: *"Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you"* (Acts 7:3; Genesis 12:1). Abraham broke off his relationship with his idolatrous kin, went to the land of Canaan, and so lived as to become the "father of the faithful."

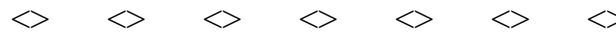
When some of Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, became unfaithful, God allowed the pagan Babylonians to take them captive for a time. Then, as He brought them back from Babylon, He said, *"Depart! Depart! Go out from there. Touch no unclean thing. Go out from the midst of her"* (Isaiah 52:11). The Jews who were faithful cut all ties to paganism.

Jesus told His disciples that *"because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you"* (John 15:19). In His prayer, Jesus said that the disciples were *"in the world"* but they were *"not of the world"* (John 17:11, 14). That is to say, although they were physically upon the earth and living among the population, they were far different from the world in belief, behavior, and relationship with God. Jesus had called them out of the world, not geographically, but spiritually.

Today, God adds the saved to His church (Acts 2:47). By the gospel, God calls us *"out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9). Echoing His words to the Jews of the captivity, God calls us to reject false religion of every stripe as He says, *"Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Note that He did not say, "Go in among them and be tolerant, accepting, and non-judgmental"! Just as ancient Israel longed to be like the nations around her, we have a significant element in the church today that craves to be like the denominations. May it never be! God has not called us to be conformed to the world – not even the religious world. Instead, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

All that remains is for us to make up our minds what means more to us: the approval of other people, or the approval of God. Brethren, what shall it be?



False Proverb

**"Everything is worth trying at least once!"
False! Adam and Eve tried the forbidden fruit
only once: OUT!**

**Uzzah touched the Ark of the Covenant
only once: Death!**

**Put a match to an empty gasoline tank once
to see if the fumes are all gone: BOOM!**

**Transgress God's moral law just once to see
if the consequences are really as bad as the Bible
says they are: Scars forever!**

**Run with the wrong crowd just once to see
if they really do have more fun than "squares":
Reputation and influence damaged forever by a
society so reluctant to forgive and forget.**

**Instead, shun evil every time it appears. No
apologies needed. No explanation demanded. No
corrections in order.**

Wyatt Sawyer (via Sweetwater, TX)

Outlive Yourself

My wife and I just returned from a visit to Mt. Airy, NC, the home of Andy Griffith. Since we're fans of the Andy Griffith show, we thought it would be fun to go to Mt. Airy, Andy's real-life home town, and the model town for the fictional town of Mayberry. We went through the Andy Griffith Museum, took a few pictures, and headed home. Within hours, we learned that Andy Griffith had passed away.

Since hearing the news of his passing, I listened to an interview he gave a couple years ago. The interviewer asked him if he could remember all the episodes of the Andy Griffith Show. Surprisingly to me, he said, "no." Oh, he remembered many of them, had some favorites, but just didn't remember all of them. I found that amazing because there are thousands of people across the country who remember every episode, can tell you what's going to happen next, and even quote lines. But Andy, himself, couldn't.

That caused me to reflect on how our influence can long outlive our lives. Some of the episodes that Andy Griffith actually participated in were not remembered by him, but thousands of people who simply "looked on" remember every detail. What that tells me is that I had better be cautious about my words, attitudes, and actions. What I might say or do today, and forget about tomorrow, may never be forgotten by an "onlooker," even long after I am dead and gone.

The passing of Andy Griffith reminded of a truth spoken by the apostle Paul, *"for none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself"* (Romans 14:7). Make sure that the influence you have on others is the kind that you want to outlive you.

--Steve Higginbotham (Oct. 2012) via Bulletin Gold