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Evans' "Searching for Sunday: Loving, leaving, and finding the church" (book review)

Julie A. Ellis
Biola University

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Book Reviews



Evans, R. (2015). *Searching for Sunday: Loving, leaving and finding the church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. 288 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9780718022129

Have you ever read a book that goes straight to the heart? That's what Rachel Held Evans' narrative about her experiences in the church will do for many. Evans offers a beautifully written memoir of what being a Christian means to her, including the struggles and joy she found in "loving, leaving" and finding her way back to the church. Indeed, she places great emphasis on how an entire generation longs for Christ; and yet, cannot seem to find authentic Christianity in the church.

Evans arranges her story in seven sections using imagery from the Catholic and Orthodox sacraments including baptism, confession, holy orders, communion, confirmation, anointing of the sick, and marriage. She speaks to an audience of believers (and seekers) who, much like herself, have experienced doubt and disillusionment, and have been disappointed with the answers the church has provided to difficult questions such as biblical interpretation, religious pluralism, sexuality, and social justice. As she shares anecdotes, she draws from a variety of traditions: Baptist, Mennonite, Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal, and non-denominational. Her re-telling of what it was like growing up as the daughter of a Bible college professor is especially endearing and poignant.

Two stories in particular I found compelling focused on the sacraments of Communion; and then, Confirmation. In one chapter, she shares the story of her time serving communion at a youth event she spoke at. One by one, she offered the elements of bread and wine to participants, and spoke the words, "This is Christ's body, offered for you." That evening, she gained an understanding that knowing Christ had died, Christ had risen, and is coming again – this simple faith within the mystery of communion, was enough. In the chapter entitled "Wayside Shrines," she tells of a famous labyrinth located in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France. The labyrinth's spiral pattern draws pilgrims far and wide to engage in prayer and meditation, a metaphor for the journey of faith each believer must travel. Here she contemplates examples in the Scriptures; moreover, that the Bible doesn't "speak of people who *found* God, but of those who *walked* with God." She encourages believers to press on, keep the faith, and share their faith with others.

In closing, there will be those who may find her reflections off the beaten path of basic Christian fundamentals, which may lead some astray. To these I say that Evans always returns to her love of Christ's Church and speaks both encouragement and hope to those who feel they have been forgotten. In her Prologue, she states that "it's less about searching for a Sunday church, and more about searching for Sunday resurrection." She declares to those who are in the church to offer a place at the table, a place to listen, a place to accept, and a place to lead others to Christ.

Reviewer

Julie A. Ellis, Biola University