

Foreword by Jim Henderson, D.Min

Are you an explorer? Do you enjoy taking back trails when you hike? Do you like deep sea diving? How about skydiving or bungee jumping? Or perhaps you're the scientific type who enjoys staring endlessly into a microscope, watching microbes move around, or maybe you want to be one of the first people to experience space flight or cure cancer.

I have discovered that there are two kinds of explorers. There are those who return from their exploits saying, "Wow, you should've seen what I saw." Then there are those like my friend, Tamara Buchan, who return with a *map* guiding others to the place of her discovery.

In the 15th century, a wealthy Venetian senator asked a cartographer to create a map of Venice. He returned with a map of Italy on which Venice appeared as a small dot. The senator ordered the mapmaker to redo the map and make Venice larger. Maps are always subjective and limited in scope.

Unboxing God: Reclaiming Faith in a Post-Church Culture is a map of Tamara's journey in following Jesus into and out of the Church. Sometimes her map shows a Church that appears large and influential, but at other times it's small and distant. She reminds us of the lost message of the centrality of the Kingdom of God and wonders out loud about why the Church and seekers have to be at odds with each other. She goes out "into the field" and explores how the other half lives on Sunday mornings, while many of us are in our churches singing and listening to professional Christians remind us why we need to keep coming back. She asks importantly how the Church became more focused around right beliefs than around experiences with God.

As a self-designated, spiritual anthropologist, I have been exploring religious spirituality for 50 years with a specialty in evangelicalism. Like Tamara, I have tried to create maps for people who are not natural spiritual explorers but are willing to travel if you can give them a map that provides them enough guidance to travel to new places in their spiritual lives.

I have almost no curiosity about the natural world, such as mountains and lakes, but if someone I admired or loved invited me on a hike and I knew they had a map, I could be tempted to travel with them. Maybe you aren't a natural spiritual explorer like Tamara. Maybe you can't imagine God telling you to "stop going to church" or like the Apostle Peter, to eat with the Gentiles. Not to worry. In *Unboxing God: Reclaiming Faith in a*

Post-Church Culture, Tamara Buchan translates her explorations into a map you can use to reacquaint yourself with *the people Jesus misses most*—the people formerly known as lost simply by not going to church on Sunday—and instead, hang out with them and practice the lost art of *noticing* others.

It turns out that traveling into Tamara's world with Jesus doesn't require that you physically travel, but it does require you to suspend judgment, pay attention, and let go of preconceived notions you may have inherited from spending too much time in church and not enough in the world Jesus invited us to explore with Him. In our day, the Church has earned a reputation that might be encapsulated in this slogan, "Safety first, Jesus second." If that offends you, I highly recommend you spend time reflecting on and putting into practice some the ideas Tamara Buchan suggests in her wonderful new book, *Unboxing God: Reclaiming Faith in a Post-Church Culture*.

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