

Commentator:

There are about 10,000 Exclusive Brethren in New Zealand. They have meetings every day and four times on Sunday.

EB Allan:

Exclusive Brethren mean everything to me. It's a support system - It's my life – It's a Christ like system and has everything we ever need. It's caring for people

EB Greg:

We separate from evil and the world, but we don't live in a monastery or behind walls. We live in the world but are not from the world.

Commentator:

Problems arise when one decides to leave or when one deviates from the strict rules of the Exclusive Brethren.

xEB Martin:

You are brainwashed when you are in there. You are told that if you leave you will go straight to hell. That is so wrong.

Commentator:

People leaving are ostracised for the rest of their lives.

xEB Laura (Young lady - daughter of Carolyn)

I always wanted to be a singer. In there a women's goal is to marry, have children, and look after your husband.

Commentator:

When people leave their social circle has gone. Family and friends ignore them.

Dr Arnold Staite. (Psychologist who has been involved with xEB.)

The most destructive thing that happens when a person leaves is the profound feelings of loss.

Commentator:

Carolyn left with her four children. She is not yet excommunicated and her parents sometimes have the children, but they won't eat or drink with Carolyn.

xEB Carolyn:

It's like my parents are dead, but they are not. It's like I go through another grieving process each time I see them.

EB Allan's wife:

I love fellowship. Its just great.

EB Allan:

TV and Cinema are evil, as its man's wild imagination. It's all fiction. We don't believe in fiction.

EB Allan's Daughter Sophie:

I don't miss TV because I have never had it and I have no desire to have it because it's a sin.

Commentator:

The rules of separation are strict.

EB Allan:

In the 90's when schools got more into IT, we felt it was better to have our own schools. We felt it was better for the other schools, for the teachers and for the students. Our schools are proper schools and are registered with the Government. They are like all other schools.

EB Josie:

We wanted our children to be away from worldly activities so sent them to Brethren schools. I mean – schools today are into drugs and all that kind of thing. We wanted our children out of that atmosphere. The children do the normal curriculum. They have worldly teachers. We vet the books they read. Normally its junior fiction books. We don't normally go in for adult fiction books.

EB Allan:

I protect my children because I love them. We don't have to go into evil to know what its like. We need to keep the children away from where man's imagination is rife.

Commentator:

Exclusive Brethren work for brethren. University is forbidden.

EB:

We recognise that University is a valuable place to fulfil, but we believe for Christians it causes a narrowing of the mind and a questioning of God's truths for us. We believe true Christians are the most broadminded of persons and that's true.

We understand that we have to go through the world, but we want to keep ourselves from evil in the world.

Commentator:

Gives short explanation of Ngairé's situation.

Assoc: Professor Peter Lineham. (Religious and social historian – Massey University):

The most important aspect is "Family" Not human family – it's the family of God that's important.

Commentator:

Exclusive Brethren separate from the world at a young age, including staying separate from worldly friends.

EB young girl:

I don't have worldly friends because I don't need them. I couldn't trust them because I don't know them.

EB Boy Joel:

I don't need friends outside the church. I have plenty of friends in the church and it would go against my conscious to have worldly friends. I would feel as though I was betraying the church.

Commentator:

Explains the role of the MOG saying that Bruce Hales is the current MOG.

EB Allan:

The Man of God means everything to us. He is the closest we have to Christ. He is not voted in, its spiritually manifested who the Man of God is.

Commentator:

Becky was bought up in the Exclusive Brethren in the USA. When she was a child her Grandfather found out that the Man of God was found in a compromising position with a married woman.

xEB Becky:

My Grandfather was at a house where JT junior was staying. The husband of a lady came into the room and was very distressed. He spoke to two other men saying that JT junior was in bed with his wife. My Grandfather went up to investigate and found it was true. The woman explained that she was only washing JT junior's feet with her hair, like Jesus had his feet washed. It was all covered up.

Commentator:

Overseas, many left the Exclusive Brethren after this, but by the time the news had filtered down to New Zealand members were threatened with excommunication if they said one word against the Man of God.

xEB Becky:

JT junior had my grandfather excommunicated by the time he reached home. My mother followed him and left. Growing up, I didn't understand all this. I just remember having lots of relations and then suddenly only a few.

Commentator:

Becky's husband Martin also had his family split apart by the Exclusive Brethren. In the late 70's his father was one of the leaders in the Christchurch fellowship. He was well acquainted with the Man of God who followed after JT junior.

xEB Martin:

The head honcho (MOG) stayed with us on a visit to New Zealand. That was a huge thing for me. I could show you where he sat and where he slept.

Commentator:

Although Martin's father was high up in the Exclusive Brethren he fell out of favour with the Man of God shortly after that visit.

xEB Martin:

Maybe he was threatened by Dad's behaviour. I don't know but have often wondered about that. Anyway, he was losing his power – his heyday was over – I can remember seeing changes in him – his body language changed. He was paler. He knew his number was up.

Commentator:

During an assembly meeting Martin's Fathers name was read out. He was perceived as questioning the Man Of God and would have to be isolated until he repented. They call it – being shut up.

xEB Martin:

Dad got up and started to walk out. I had a decision to make. I felt pressured to stay, but he was my Dad. I decided that if he was walking out, so was I. I had seen so many people walk out those doors into oblivion. When we got in the car, Dad, who was not one to show emotion, leaned over to me, stroked my cheek and said Thank you. I will never forget that.

(Martin breaks down)

Commentator:

13 yr old Martin was not allowed to stay with his parents while his father was “shut up”. His Parents were expected to live separately in the same house and the children left the family home.

Ngaire:

Explains that “shut up” is akin to having leprosy. You must be isolated so as not to contaminate others.

Professor:

A person is delivered to Satan as it's termed and silence around them – not being able to attend meetings etc, means that they begin to realise the enormity of the price they will pay if they break off from the Exclusive Brethren completely.

EB Allan:

Withdrawal is what we use for them to “get right” again. That's the only reason we use it.

xEB Martin:

I remember packing with my siblings and decisions being made as to who would go where. I remember thinking that Dad must have done something wrong, but he would “get right” again. Give it six weeks and he would repent and we will all be together again. I was so wrong – it was the start of an incredible journey.

(Martin sobs)

Ngaire:

Explains the difficulty of changing cultures – how even going to the supermarket made you feel vulnerable.

xEB Martin:

I knew that if Dad didn't "get right" and was excommunicated that he would go to hell.

Commentator:

Martin and his brothers and sisters, lived away from their parents for over 18 months. Their parents were excommunicated. After many attempts to see his children Martin's Dad turned up at his school.

xEB Martin:

Dad was starting to delve into the history of the Exclusive Brethren and the more he learnt the more questions he had. He started to think... "why are my children not living with us.. they are underage and should be here. He decided that step one was to get his family back together again.

Commentator:

Children bought up in the Exclusive Brethren are taught that "shut up" people are evil, so they are terrified of returning to their parents.

xEB Martin:

I was called to the office at school and the teacher told me that my father was at school to see me. I told him I didn't want to see my Father. The teacher explained that he hears what I am saying but that he has not right to stop my Father from seeing me. Dad came into the room. I wouldn't look at him, I wasn't interested. Dad wanted me to go home. I said No. Eventually I agreed. I was very disturbed and not happy. I put my bike outside and went in. I sat on the couch with my head down and I wouldn't look at my parents. My Mother burst into tears. Poor Mum wasn't one to burst into tears like tat. I remember going up to my room and looking out the window. I saw the go-cart and all the other fun things we use to do. I thought to myself. I am meant to be here.

Dad tried to get Rachel back. She was my youngest sister. In fact he tried three times. I remember Dad driving up with her bike in the back, her schoolbooks in the car and even her coat, but no Rachel. That was when I knew that I wouldn't never see my three brothers and sisters again.

Commentator:

Women have defined roles in the Exclusive Brethren. They have never talked about their lives before.

EB Josie: *(sounded relaxed and confident. Came across as a fun person)*

My role in the household? Well I get up in the morning, get the kids breakfast, get them off to school, then its general cooking, washing and shopping *(laugh)* that's always a big one. When the kids come home I help them with their homework and that's about it.

EB Greg (Josie's husband):

Men and women are equal before got. We follow the divinely set order of God – Man Woman.

(Greg turns to Josie smiling "Is that right?"

Josie says smiling "100% correct".

EB Josie:

We work together as a team. I don't feel suppressed. I don't feel that I can't do things without my husband welding a stick or anything. It's not like that at all. It's a really happy relationship.

(Josie turns to Greg asking "Isn't it")

Greg replies "Excellent"

Ngaire:

Talks about long hair.

Unidentified Male speaker:

In some respects Exclusive Brethren women are like Victorian women at their most kept form. So women are like flowers who have never seen the light.

Ngaire:

Explains how she met Denis her husband, the lack of sex education etc.

Commentator:

While compliance is the norm among Exclusive Brethren Carolyn married a man she hardly knew, who expected her to be in total subjection.

xEB Carolyn:

He was delivering ministry books and for some reason asked me to marry him. My mother pushed me into it. She must have wanted to get rid of me. I tried to get out of it somewhere down the track but they pushed me into it.

Dr Staite:

Lack of options and choices – stifled autonomy – prescribed relationships – heavy handedness – the way people influence young couples to come together with very limited choice as far as husband or wife – I personally find these things unhealthy.

xEB Carolyn:

I was very naïve when I married. I didn't know that a husband could rape a wife. He would say, "You're mine now – do as you are told. Your body is mine."

Commentator:

Carolyn was to find she had entered into a very controlling marriage and that there was no way to get out of it and stay in fellowship.

xEB Carolyn:

I used to go grocery shopping and have to line everything up on the bench when I got home, with the receipt. My husband would go through everything crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's and if there was any money unaccounted for, he wanted to know where it was.

He would constantly nudge me at night. Sometimes till 2 or 3 in the morning. He would continue till I cried and then he wanted to make up because you can't let the sun rise on an argument. The "making up" was always one sided.

Commentator:

Laura's room was next door to her Mum's.

xEB Laura:

It's a hard thing is to hear your Mum cry but its worse to know why she is crying.

xEB Carolyn:

Laurie remembers me running, crying into her room and dragging the dressing table in front of the door. She remembers him dragging me along the hallway, after I had got to the lounge just to try and get a little sleep. They say too much.

Commentator:

Carolyn's midwife, a worldly, was married to a police officer and noticed something wasn't right.

xEB Carolyn:

I had no-one in the church I could turn to because I was continually rebuked for even talking about things that happened in my marriage. I was told I shouldn't talk of such things so was virtually told to shutup and put up with it. I turned to people outside the church.

Professor:

It's a conspiracy of fear and you don't are voice anything because for the sake of truth, every mans' brother must witness against his own brother, if he steps out of line.

xEB Carolyn:

I was so desperate and hurt. Yes, I nearly committed suicide. It was like – do I kill the kids and me to get out of here – or can I find a way to run away. I did some real deep soul searching stuff, such as do I stay and end up in a mental asylum or do I leave? After he hit one of the kids, I waited for him to go to church that evening. Then I phoned a police friend and said "help".

Professor:

Women grit their teeth – their role is to obey, no matter how bad the marriage is with beatings and bad behaviour. Its all part of coping and I think you end up with women who have lost their personality.

xEB Carolyn:

I used to hate 5pm. That was the time he would come home. Its horrible to think about it now but I used to hope he would have an accident and never come home.

Commentator:

After 13 yrs, Carolyn took her four children and went to a women's refuge. This meant she had to leave the church also.

When all was made known, her husband was withdrawn from, but before long he was back in fellowship. Carolyn's husband never faced a court of law.

EB Allan:

Life out of fellowship would be terrible, the fact is, I wouldn't have all the people that I love and adore. We have a saying, how can two people walk together unless they agree. With Christianity its Christ or the world first. You can't have it like liquorice allsorts, all mixed up – you are either true to Christ or you want to go the worldly way which will only bring you to sorrow.

Dr Staite:

If you live in the Exclusive Brethren it can be a wonderful way of living and existence. Everything is laid on, friends, relatives all there – people you share common beliefs and interests with. Worries about employment tend to not exist. Worries about accommodation and how to survive don't exist either.

xEB Matthew:

My Parents were good to me when I was a kid and growing up. I had a lot of support, a big family and lots of get-togethers.

Commentator:

Mathew loves his Family, but wasn't happy in the Exclusive Brethren. It took him five years to gather enough courage to get out knowing he would lose his family and friends.

xEB Matthew:

I knew I had to get out. I was struggling in there both physically and spiritually. It was the biggest decision I have ever made.

Commentator:

Mathew questions the rules and sometimes broke them. He loved sport, but could only play with other Exclusive Brethren. He wasn't allowed to go to games or watch them on TV.

xEB Matthew:

I'd get out the bedroom window at night, go to a game and come back through the bedroom window.

Dr Staite:

Conflict arises when people don't toe the line. Toeing the line is a defining characteristic of a cult and in terms with Exclusive Brethren I've met compliance and conformity are a most important part of membership in Fellowship.

xEB Matthew:

Two weeks before I left, I was really stressed out. I lost quite a lot of weight also. I didn't tell anyone I was planning to leave, I just packed and left.

EB Greg:

Exclusive Brethren is a large family and it is painful for a person to leave, BUT you must realise that its painful for us also. I have members of my own family who have left. It's very painful. We pray for them and follow them in prayer. We would love to get them back.

Commentator:

Mathew left the Exclusive Brethren at 24 yrs of age. He went through a deep depression. He had to leave his home, his job and all his family, just to leave his church.

Dr Staite:

The hardest thing for those who leave is the estrangement and alienation from friends, family and loved ones. In response to untreated depression, people have taken their lives as a direct and indirect response to the huge loss and feel the alienation of people who meant everything to them.

xEB Matthew:

I remember something that happened recently, where an individual who had left and then came back to the church grounds and hung himself. It was all hushed up. I did contemplate that kind of thing in my late teens.

Ngaire:

Explains that nervous breakdowns are not allowed. Ngaire continued, explaining the circumstances surrounding her and Dennis being withdrawn from and excommunicated.

Commentator:

Martin's father was withdrawn from for questioning the Man of God. Mathew was withdrawn from for attending a different church. Carolyn was withdrawn from for leaving an abusive husband.

EB Allan:

Withdrawal is a last resort. Its not easy to get out of the Exclusive Brethren. We don't want to put people out. It's only when there is excessive evil – evil so bad that even the world would know it was wrong.

Ngaire:

Explains more about the period she and Denis were withdrawn from and how Denis was withdrawn from for a single lie that he has admitted to. This was the only lie that Ngaire ever knew him to tell.

EB teenager Sophie:

I go shopping with my friends. We have family outings and sometimes go to the beach. I spend time with my friends.

I don't wonder what goes on, on the outside. I have my church – I don't want to know about the world – probably because I have never been part of it.

EB Allan:

(Quotes from bible about the Rapture). We don't know the day or the hour. The Father knows though, but it's getting closer. We are going to get brighter – some of us as Christians are pretty dull, but we are going to get brighter. Its going to be brighter when the Lord comes. It will be beautiful.

xEB Carolyn:

My life started six years ago. I really feel that was when I started to live.

Commentator:

When Carolyn left, her former life was gone forever. She slowly began to make friends and when they kids go off to school she spends time helping her friend on their farm. These friends look on Carolyn as their daughter, and she looks on them as her parents. They help one another.

xEB Carolyn:

I now have all these decisions to make. No-one makes them for me. I have a life. I can give my kids a life. They can go to University if they want. They can follow their dreams. They can **have** a dream.

Unidentified girls voice:

In the brethren you grow up in it. Its Religion not Christianity. There is no opportunity to give yourself to God. If I stayed in there I wouldn't know God.

Ngairé:

Explained about her book Behind Closed Doors.

Commentator:

Ngairé received a letter from the Exclusive Brethren lawyer, two days before the book went on sale. They were threatening to sue her.

xEB Martin:

Leaving the Exclusive Brethren doesn't mean that you throw religion and God out the door. In fact I believe I only got through all this because of my faith.

Commentator:

Martin and his Becky supported Mathew with his transition into the outside world. Mathew was excommunicated six months ago for attending another church.

xEB Becky:

People ask - when they know you have been in the Exclusive Brethren, why didn't you just leave. They don't understand that it's similar to a child being born to a Mother in prison and growing up in that kind of situation. All your decisions are made for you. You know no other life. You base normality around what you know.