



Emilie Paige

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It is a bit out of my norm to write posts over 100 words and definitely not about dirty laundry. But I have decided to explain why I am no longer a Christian. For many this will not come as a surprise; others may mourn the state of my soul; and some will wonder how/why I stuck to my faith for so long.

Many people in the church have supported and counseled me through some exceptionally dark times. I will forever be grateful for their love and care. However, I find I cannot trust the church as an institution. After the evil I have experienced, I doubt whether God exists or cares.

I was raised Christian and attended Logos School, a Christian high school. While in high school, I suffered sexual abuse at the hands of my church doctrine teacher, a respected elder of the church affiliated with my school. Even after his misconduct was discovered, Christ Church still allowed Jim B. Nance to serve communion. He remains an active member of that community while I was told to clean out my closet of slutty clothing, but I only owned school uniforms. The school decided to deal with the issue internally instead of immediately bringing the situation to the police. Because of this choice, I suffered additional years of abuse. The nightmares from that time still keep me up at night. I cried out to God over and over again. I begged him to end it or just to let me die. The shame I bore from what was happening to me was multiplied by feelings of guilt over my apparent sin. Jim fostered this notion using it to further torture and shame me into silence.

It took years before I was able to share what was going on with another human and escape that hell. Unfortunately, I was too old to be protected by the law but too young to understand or have the words to describe what happened to me. Sexual assault victims make unreliable witnesses simply by virtue of the trauma they have experienced.

When I moved to Washington, DC I attended Capitol Hill Baptist Church (CHBC), a "healthy" church filled with kind and supportive people. I received therapy and counseling through the church. I loved that community more than I can even put into words. It was a far cry from Christ Church led by the notorious Doug Wilson, known nationally for his misogyny and mistreatment of sexual abuse cases.

However, while at CHBC, I suffered from yet another sexual assault. My assailant has not associated with the church in any way. A few weeks after the assault, I made a life changing discovery: consensual sex. Through having sex consensually, I learned to differentiate abuse and sex. The guilt smothering me melted away. However, I still felt burdened by the "sin" of having sex outside of marriage. Within a week of my first having consensual sex, I confessed to my church counselor. Through this confession I experienced a betrayal which church members told me I would one day appreciate.

Around this time my parents, who I saw about once a year, visited me in DC. A week later the church leaders made me choose between going on trial before a church elder and saying goodbye to my parents as they boarded their flight home. The punishment, had they convicted me, would have been a public announcement to the 1000+ church members about my sexual sin. They called this putting someone on the "care list". The church's draconian reaction whipped me back to the dark state of mind I had suffered from while under Jim's control. The "care list" is the first step in the church discipline process ending with ex-communication. I knew as I sat in that church office; if the elders chose to put me on that list, I would never show my face in that building again. It turns out, that breach in trust nicked an artery and my relationship with religion began to slowly bleed out. For the first time in four years, I started skipping church services. I felt as isolated as I had when I was with Jim, too afraid to share anything lest the church reject me. Eventually I realised I did not need the church in my life whether by their rejection or my own personal choice. At some point, the idea of just walking away became bearable and even desirable.

The split was natural and uncomplicated. Rather than pursuing a new church community upon moving to Australia, I tried living without it. I discovered how good it felt to put forward an honest face instead of a rigid Christian mask. I can now say I am grateful for the care list, but not in the way the church would have preferred. Freedom from that authoritarian institution has left me happier than I can remember.

(Feel free to share. I have named names for the sake of those still trapped in the community.)



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Sexual abuse: any form of forced or unwanted sexual activity, including taking advantage of someone who can't give consent (15yr olds). The perpetrator may use physical force (gun), make threats (threatening arrest), or use their position of authority.



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Emilie Dye You have articulated the difference between abuse and assault so well. What Jim did to me was so much more horrific than any other sexual violence that could be done against me. And he set me up for future assaults by messing with my psyche and taking away the normal defense most people naturally have. Rape is a bad time, sexual abuse is a living hell.

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Emilie Dye I am not saying that to discount rape in anyway just to compare the two based on my personal experience. Rape also has the power to absolute wreck people particularly under certain circumstances.

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