Growing Up With Abuse

I went to Faith Christian Academy in Sellersville (which later moved to Quakertown) from kindergarten through 12th grade. There were many people who liked it and many people who didn't. You might assume it is what you make of it, but a pecking order played a large part in it as well. It wasn't as much as bullies vs. nerds--that was more or less a non-serious game. The more serious game was whether someone had the right parents in the church. Faith Baptist Church founded the school and ran it up until long after I graduated.

The experience was uncannily like the movie "Saved!" (2004). There were self-righteous people, and I tried to become one of them. I barely made it into the "good Christian" group (which was actually heavily distorted in contrast to the Bible) toward the end. The teachers were required to be members of the church, and some of them were leaders (deacons, etc.). They seemed to mean well in retrospect, but in some cases I think their legalistic backgrounds held back their own maturity. The ones who stayed much longer after I left were able to change with the times, but back then several seemed strict or uncaring.

I ended up going along with being a "good" legalist, and everything that goes along with that including condemning others for things I did. That isn't to say that doing wrong was good for either of us, but I made many assumptions and distortions regarding others, and didn't recognize nor address many of my own problems. The adults who accepted me for behaving this way were the only stable ones in my life. I thought it was necessary and right. Of course, it was also a convenient way to feel better about myself. My home life was not great. I had one older brother Ray. We both had it bad, but he also took out his frustrations and abberant tendencies on me.

Legalism isn't a term in the Bible, but Christ had a lot to say about people putting burdens on others they themselves can't carry. That is one important aspect of hypocrites that he was against. If someone merely fails to attain to their own standards but is sincere, that doesn't necessarily mean the person is a fraud. However, when someone hides their wrongdoing that is of public concern (or from whom it concerns) or ignores or is in denial about such wrongdoing of others, that's where you may get into "religious fraud" territory.

I had first or second hand experience with a few genuine religious frauds. First hand would be my brother Ray, my ex Chameleon, and Dennis Dembrosky (convicted pedophile, later my landlord due to odd circum stances). Second hand experience would include with John Longaker, though I've heard him "preach" and teach first hand since he was a teacher while I attended. He was convicted and went to jail because of what he did to Kelly Romig, a girl in my brother's class.

The school wanted to "handle it internally" until Jason Brunt, the brother of Kelly's friend, stepped up. He said to Pastor Paul Auckland, basically "If you don't report it to the police, I will."

Even with the people who were sincere, there was a big blind spot caused by legalism. Someone who was good at "virtue signaling" could be supported even if they weren't in the right. It is

arguable how conscious people like Ray or John were about being phony. I know I wasn't very conscious of being phony. I was mostly desperate to overcompensate for insecurities. However, those with wisdom and the ability to confront these issues should learn to notice red flags.

Believing I was unusual was pretty easy for some people to notice, but it is harder to notice that bruises, lack of hygiene, sudden underachievement, or suddenly becoming quiet or aggressive are just some of the signs that someone is potentially being abused. Now these red flags are now taught in "mandated reporter" training, which I've heard some Christians say they think is "overbearing" government involvement or something like that. I wish my teachers had that training back then and that they had noticed, or that I even had the vocabulary to explain it when my fourth grade teacher seemed concerned.

I hit my classmate Ryan in the back of the head, one way my brother often hurt me, not the way my parents did. For some reason I just kept answering the teacher's concerns that it was my brother who hit me that way, not my parents. I wouldn't have even had the strength to hit Ryan hard enough to stun him and stop his breathing. If there was mandated reporting back then, there would have been an investigation despite the fact that I myself was the one in denial. Believing that something horrible happened under your oversight, and having the courage to do something about it can also be difficult. Like with my classmate Jared, one of the kids who helped put Dembrosky behind bars.

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