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We can—must!—do better.

AUGUST 10, 2022 BY D CHRISTIAN HARRISON 33 COMMENTS



While this post is certainly inspired by a recent—and explosive—[AP news article](#) and Salt Lake’s entirely predictable and altogether [rapid response](#), it isn’t (strictly speaking) about the scandal. I don’t know enough about the particulars of the serious and credible allegations against the Church to really weigh in... But I’m a careful observer of the human condition and an active member of several policy making circles, so I hope you’ll indulge me in a little bit of sideline commentary.

The rage over the allegations is still white-hot, and who can blame folks? We’re talking about children, here, our most vulnerable—and literally the “[least of these](#)”, “[our little ones](#)”. But at some point, we’ll need to step back a little to collect our thoughts, if we’re ever to actually effect change. Burning stuff down is cathartic—and can actually be useful—but longterm success requires cooler heads and reasoned arguments.

It’s only in the rarest of circumstances that evil is naked and unadulterated. In our fallen world, most evil is actually found in the cracks between what we should be doing and what we actually accomplish... It’s not the incendiary evil of dictators and movie villains—but the dry, scratchy evil of a whole bunch of people doing less than their best. It’s the wages of mediocrity. It’s banale. It can even be boring... And it’s often (though not always) the direct (but largely unintended) consequences of bad systems.

Lay of the Land

When I step back from the headlines, these are the various systems I see at play (in no particular order):

- Sexual impropriety/misconduct/violence is pervasive in our society—from creepy to violent. The chance that there is sexual impropriety/misconduct/violence in any/all our congregations is extremely high.
- Churches and other religious bodies concern themselves with what the good life and the contours of moral behavior look like. The Church is not an outlier, here.
- Churches and other religious bodies believe (correctly, I’d submit) that how we treat each other—socially and sexually—is at the core of these two questions. Again, the Church is not an outlier here.
- The Church does not, however, have a well-formed socio-sexual moral framework; it’s mostly just listicles (3 things not to do with your penis, 7 things not to do with your vagina). This makes talking about social and sexual morality difficult... But, more importantly, it makes it ineffectual (see [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)).
- Bishops (and their equivalents)—again, correctly, I’d submit—engage in varying degrees of pastoral/counseling work with their flocks.
- Bishops, however, are—by design! this is something missionaries often tout as a sign of a true-and-living church—not trained in any meaningful way in pastoral/counseling work.
- Congregants (and bishops) have been trained to see bishops as unencumbered conduits for God’s wisdom—better than professionals, because they can get answers straight from the source. (Never mind that this isn’t how inspiration works—we’re to train up our minds and then use the Spirit to help us ask the best questions and then to discern the best answers—and what is professional training, but a rigorous approach to “[studying it out in \[our\] minds](#)”?)
- Bishop-congregant communications are popularly believed to be private—even though they are not. Bishops often and with the blessing of Salt Lake share the details of our most private moments with their counselors, with auxiliary leaders, with the stake president,

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and if you attend a Church school or are employed by the Church, with faceless (soulless) bureaucrats, there.

- Because of this (incorrect) belief, many expect bishop–congregant communications to be treated by others—especially policy-makers—like they treat the priest–penitent communications of other churches and how they treat attorney–client and/or doctor–patient communications.
- It's widely believed—and with good reason—that these privileged communications are an important part of encouraging proper behavior from folks who might otherwise not seek the sort of help they need.
- Around the world, though, governments have begun to carve out exceptions to these sorts of privileged communications, designating certain people as “mandatory reporters”—requiring them to report things like sexual violence to the authorities. The list of who qualifies as a mandatory reporter, what qualifies as a triggering event, and who qualifies as an authority all vary widely—and lay people (most of us, frankly) would be hard-pressed to accurately describe the mandatory reporting landscape for where we live (let alone the next jurisdiction over).
- The Church is heavily/surprisingly/uncomfortably reliant upon/deferential to the legal advice they seek from their retained attorneys*—and news headlines of the last half-century are littered with truly cringeworthy fallout from that codependency.
- Returning to the subject of sexual impropriety/misconduct/violence... It's an incredibly broad spectrum of behavior, but we've yet to develop anything but the crudest and bluntest of responses to it. Our laws, our penal system, our therapeutic system, our intervention systems, and our culture all lack the nuance one would expect in response to such a complex problem.
- To add insult to injury, LDS language around the whole issue of sex is *toxic*. We identify consensual pre-marital sex as the “[sin next to murder](#)”. What this means is that, not only do we not distinguish between consensual sex and child molestation... We have constructed a vocabulary that is incapable of making that distinction.
- Worse, our response paradigm favors punishment over treatment—but such punishment is doled out in a frighteningly arbitrary fashion—with unhealthy doses of get-out-of-jail-free cards for wealthy, white males (or their progeny).

So what do we want?

If we're clamoring for change... What sort of change do we want?

I know what I want. Perhaps you might disagree... Though I suspect we won't disagree too much.

- I want fewer acts of sexual impropriety/misconduct/violence to occur, and for what acts which do occur to be less grievous in nature.
- I want intervention to be more pervasive, earlier, more granular, less institutional/authoritarian, more therapeutic, more restorative, and less punitive.
- And I want all of our efforts to undergird a wholesale shift in our culture. We simply cannot build a regulatory framework robust enough to achieve our goals in the face of cultural intransigence, indifference, or (worse) animosity.

And how do we get there?

My response could literally be a book (or two)... So I'll limit myself to my ~~top-ten~~ top-eleven suggestions—all of which assume that the Church doesn't merely “allow” these changes to occur, but uses its not inconsiderable resources to *champion*.

1. It all starts with a robust, age-appropriate, uncensored universal K-16 sex education that centers consent and bodily autonomy in the curriculum.
2. We need to standardize mandatory reporting across jurisdictions and expand it to include bishops (and other pastoral counselors).
3. We need to expand and improve training in identifying victims and perpetrators of sexual impropriety/misconduct/violence—not only for mandatory reporters but for students of human development and associated fields—and in best practices around common scenarios where sexual impropriety/misconduct/violence occurs.
4. We, as a church, need to develop a robust, sex-positive, and affirming socio-sexual moral framework that is fully ingrained in our pastoral, devotional, doctrinal, and administrative spheres.
5. We, as a society, need to better define the contours of what constitutes impropriety, misconduct, and violence. We've come a long way in recent decades—mostly, it would seem, due to the efforts of so many brave souls to center the topics of consent and bodily autonomy in our national dialogue.
6. We, as a society, need to shift from a punitive framework to a therapeutic and restorative framework. Institutional responses to allegations need to be swift, universal, data-informed, and non-destructive.
7. We need to greatly expand and support [foster care](#), [grand family](#), and [Court Appointed Special Advocate® \(CASA\) / guardian ad litem \(GAL\) programs](#)—including deeper supports for front-line social workers.
8. We, as a Church need to fund centers at colleges and universities with established writing programs across the nation tasked with developing healthier tropes and ways of engaging unhealthy tropes in our mass media. Modeling healthy behavior in our mass media—and identifying and calling out damaging behavioral tropes will be key to shifting entrenched and toxic narratives.
9. Our nation needs universal healthcare—including mental health; we need universal

The Book of Mormon App: Download the Latest Version - Church Newsroom

Latest from Mormon Land: Church may have to up its ante to settle Boy Scout abuse cases - Salt Lake Tribune



In 2018, when the Loyola Ramblers burst into the NCAA basketball Final Four, my school burst into the national spotlight. But it wasn't just Loyola University Chicago: it was also the Ramblers' chaplain, Sister Jean. She became a fixture on TV, on the internet, and even in the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum. [...]

basic income; and we need universal paid family leave. Getting help for ourselves or our loved ones shouldn't bankrupt us... Many forms of sexual misconduct and violence happen at the workplace and we need to put more tools in the hands of families to make smart decisions based on what matters most and not strictly on what pays the bills... And we need the scheduling flexibility to do all of it while keeping those jobs.

10. The Church needs to Roll out a help line that prioritizes the wellbeing of the victim(s), getting help for the perp, AND indemnifying our lay clergy—and when any conflict with the first, we prioritize the first. It can be done.

11. *Edit: I can't believe I left this one off!* The Church needs to commit fully to bishops referring congregants to professionals, as appropriate—and by fully, I mean committing to funding such care as necessary, and in parts of the world where such services are unavailable or under available, committing to calling locals to attend schools and become the professionals our people need and deserve. Imagine an army of Saints—well trained and properly outfitted—blessing their communities with better medical care, better therapy, and abundant social work. We'd move mountains!

Them's my ~~ten~~ eleven.

There's a lot more. But this would be an amazing start.

While we're waiting, let's get the perps in front of mandatory reporters: "Ted, I'm so glad you came to me. I want the very best for you and for these people you've harmed. Let's get you and your family into counseling. This is non-negotiable. We're going to use all the tools that God has given us—including professional helps."

We can be a light on a hill, we can be the force for social change that the Lord expects us to be, we can be doers of the word and not hearers only.

** Yes, I'm talking about their pet lawyers at Kirton McConkie—which is a notoriously middling firm—who have, time and again, prioritized client legal liability over any/all moral/social concerns while lacking the vision or wherewithal to see that ignoring moral/social concerns is a long-term client legal liability.*

Photo by [Thiago Cerqueira](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Comments

A Non-E Mous says:

August 10, 2022 at 3:33 pm

Re your point that "bishop-congregant communications" are not private: Yes, and no, right? Some conversations – particularly those that take on a confessional nature – are indeed supposed to be kept private, even from counselors and the ward council. And even when a confidentiality is not exclusively to the bishop, there is still an expectation that information will not be generally shared but limited to those who are working in church roles. It seems like you're throwing the baby out with the bathwater in those bullets.

Matt W. says:

August 10, 2022 at 4:43 pm

QQ- what does "We need to standardize mandatory consent" mean? Do you mean mandatory reporting?

A Turtle Named Mack says:

August 10, 2022 at 5:55 pm

I've been in over a dozen Wards in my lifetime, with even more Bishops. There's never been something I told a Bishop that I didn't hear repeated later by some other member of the Ward. It's simply naive to think communications with your Bishop will be kept confidential, so let's just formally do away with that expectation.

And, thanks for these thoughts, Christian. Very thorough and reasonable and realistic.

Geoff - Aus says:

August 10, 2022 at 7:58 pm

We now have available 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave, to allow a person to get out of a domestic violence situation, without endangering their job. Might add to your list. And in my state there are no exceptions to mandatory reporting even for catholic priests.

D Christian Harrison says:

August 10, 2022 at 7:59 pm

Matt W ... Good catch! Fixed. :-)

Amy says:

August 10, 2022 at 10:41 pm

I wanted to share a conversation I had with my mental health professional (therapist) about my reaction to this heartbreak. It was a long, involved conversation. I am lucky that my nuclear family unabashedly prioritizes mental health. I realize that having this conversation is a privilege. Knowing the years of training and study that mental health professionals devote to their profession and the miracles that occur because of their work and dedication... The lives that have been saved and healed... I get a little sick thinking that we expect untrained bishops to fill those same shoes.

Anyway, the takeaways from my conversation:

1. The church's values are not my values. There is much sadness here because this church was the place where I learned that God's love is unconditional and that Jesus is not only my savior but brother and friend. There have been many heartbreaks in the last ten years where I've seen that my values are at odds with the church's--this latest business about prioritizing the church's reputation over the safety of innocent babies and children is just the latest example.

2. The community that I enjoyed as a young person and that I crave as an adult can't be found in just one institution. The idea that the church could fill this need or that there could be a one to one substitution for the role religion assumed in my life as a young person in the 90s and early 00s is old fashioned. The world has changed. I need to understand that finding community for me and mine will come in bits and pieces from many different organizations/places.

3. I have sacrificed and given so much of my time to this church. So much time. Time I can't get back. Creating my own boundaries with how I continue to associate with the church is healthy and right. Also me being weary of the time and energy it would take me to formally leave the church (or to even arrive at the decision to leave) tracks because it is more of my time gobbled up.

So here I am... Still a member... Not going anywhere even though I'm heartbroken... Again. I have been asking myself if I'm as bad as the pharisees for staying in an institution that knowingly does nothing to protect its children from rape and abuse. I've wondered how I will be able to justify staying as a member when I know that the system is not just flawed but perpetuating evil. Is this the flaxen cord that will become a stronger cord that destroys me(2 Nephi 26)? I don't know. I do know that as a member there is very little I can do to express my disgust, disappointment, outrage and broken heart. I can send my tithing to charities that I believe align more closely with my values. I can be more vocal in my concern, but I'm a woman (and not a young, fit influencer type with a platform) and my voice doesn't carry far in our church. So I can pray. I can fast. I can hope for better. I can maintain my boundaries.

I appreciate the discussion here and being able to participate in the discussion.

I know what a game of roulette ward leadership is. When it comes to mental health, or in this case health and safety, the stakes are too high to play such a reckless game.

You know how kitchens were down graded to "reheating and serving areas" only? Something similar needs to happen with the church's approach of pastoral care. An institution that believes and practices that some members (those that can hold the priesthood or pay a full tithe) are more valuable than other members (babies, children) can't be retrofitted to become the mandatory reporters, social workers, or mental health professionals its members deserve and need. Volunteer bishops who aren't adequately trained cannot provide the support that ward members need.

I like metaphors. I am aware that kitchens that don't allow for cooking translates to a pretty sad state of affairs. I dream of being part of communities that value kitchens and the necessary training and best practices that allow for the real work of cooking to take place in them.

I've been told for years and years now, "That's not the church's job." The church isn't a social club, a cafeteria, a moving company, a cleaning service, a day care, an employer, a school, a soup kitchen, a dating service, a therapist. The church isn't responsible for teaching its youth or its members--that has to happen at home. The church isn't responsible for preparing youth for temple worship or missions: that has to happen at home. And now the church isn't responsible for reporting the abuse it is aware of: that has to happen at home.

What IS the church responsible for? What IS the church's job?

Former bishop says:

August 11, 2022 at 6:19 am

I think that President Oaks (and probably Elder Bednar as well) would answer Amy's question, "What IS the church responsible for? What IS the church's job?" with the following: "To provide the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to those who qualify to receive them." Full stop.

Anon says:

August 11, 2022 at 6:57 am

It will be difficult for the church to implement the changes it needs if it continues to exclude women from its leadership at every level and stifles robust discussion of issues we all face.

The line "Not about us without us" has relevance. Gregory Prince talks of "trickle-up revelation"

and how many of the greatest programs in the church were developed at local levels and adopted to be used church wide. Correlation, strict enforcement, and excommunications have worked to disempower members at a grassroots level.

Until the church develops a more egalitarian model of leadership, failures of leadership are going to be a constant. The church is effectively burying its talents.

Amy, that was so beautifully stated.

Former bishop, that view just doesn't match what I read in the New Testament, sections of the Old Testament, and really even the Book of Mormon. Maybe take a look at Mosiah 18 tonight. If your vision is what the celestial kingdom is going to look like, then I guess I'd rather be in the terrestrial where we sit with one another, share some hugs, dance, cry on a shoulder, and now and then drop off a casserole.

Amy says:

August 11, 2022 at 7:07 am

@Former bishop. I think you're right. The problem is the answer doesn't make sense with my testimony and knowledge of the gospel.

I believe Jesus already did that work of salvation for all of us. It's the work of a corrupt patriarchy that tries to intercede between that love, salvation and redemption that Jesus offers us all freely and without equivocation. I believe God is love, and that heaven isn't a pyramid scheme of merit based rewards based largely on privileges few will have in our blip of a mortal life.

But suspending my beliefs and testimony. If the church only exists to provide temple ordinances necessary for salvation for those who qualify... The problem it has is probably with the word "qualify." It needs to get out of the qualifying game just as it got out of the cooking in kitchens game. It should automate the qualifying process... Create a self reporting on line form/portal for recommends, interviews/confession/mandatory reporting/etc.

But that would rob people of community of the counseling and support that comes from meeting face to face with their priesthood leader... But that's not the church's job.

Alma Frances Pellett says:

August 11, 2022 at 9:54 am

@Former bishop – As “full stop” as that statement might be, there is a lot of space under that umbrella. The help line as it is can boast that simple statement. Similar has been used when the Church fought against womens rights, lgbtq+ rights, civil rights, etc.; “helping direct the world” has been the go-to since our founding.

It's such a “it means what we want it to mean at this time”.

jpv says:

August 11, 2022 at 12:04 pm

Maybe just me but UBI seems way more likely to produce sexual deviancy.

Seems a strange addition to a reasonable list.

Anon says:

August 11, 2022 at 1:26 pm

D Christian Harrison—this really is an excellent list you have put together. Thank you for all of the thought you have put into this.

Mary says:

August 11, 2022 at 1:34 pm

The reality is sexual violence is inextricably linked with maleness. Of course there are women who abuse and commit sexual violence, or who are bystanders, and do nothing. But these issues are overwhelmingly male problems. Men need to take responsibility by policing and stopping other men. Men need to model respect for women and consent to other men. Men need to choose the women they love over a patriarchal system. This includes, as Anon said, the egalitarian participation of women in all aspects of society, and especially religion. I know the average man likely feels he doesn't have much power. But there is such a spectrum with sexual misconduct, and misogyny starts so young. It's an ocean we swim in, and there are instances everywhere. When you see something, say something. Point out all the issues to the men around you. You are the only ones who can end violence against women and children.

If a large percentage of men at church demanded women get the priesthood and the entire structure change, how could the leadership say no? Priesthood holders are their bread and butter. Many men love patriarchal systems more than they love women. It was the same story with women's right to vote. The same story with polygamy. The same story with any epidemic of misogyny that men perpetuate against women.

I commend all the men in world who see women as human beings, who are outraged by injustice, and who do what they can to create a better world for the women around them. This type of character and respect for women can only be taught to men by men. Hopefully, we can get to the point where women can teach men this too, but often their voices fall on deaf ears or are silenced altogether.

Sam Brunson says:

August 11, 2022 at 1:45 pm

jpv, I'll confess to being a little perplexed by how you arrived at your conclusion that UBI produces "sexual deviancy." (I'm also a bit perplexed by what you mean by "sexual deviancy," but that's an entirely different issue.) Christian's looking holistically at how we can, among other things, create a wholesale shift in our culture. And a shift that allows for more economic security is likely to reduce all kinds of stresses and incentives that allow for abuse. Unless you have specific data linking UBI to increased abuse, then, I suspect that Christian is right to include that on his list of things that would generally improve society and reduce abuse at all levels.

Not to zero of course (and unfortunately). It's not that kind of magical-thinking list. But it's an excellent set of policies and practices that, if enacted, would create a safer and more equitable society, including one with a better chance of significantly reducing the abuse of children.

D Christian Harrison says:

August 11, 2022 at 4:06 pm

This may be, perhaps, the oddest response to universal basic income I've ever encounter. I'd love to have you flesh out the idea a bit? How on earth does a basic, guaranteed income for everyone lead to deviancy — and where did you encounter such an idea?

D Christian Harrison says:

August 11, 2022 at 4:07 pm

You are too kind. Thank you. It's just the way my very strange mind works... Connect the dots, find the patterns, name the systems. <3

D Christian Harrison says:

August 11, 2022 at 4:10 pm

I well-and-truly believe that one of the great undertakings of humanity is the domestication of men. Bringing men into hearth and home and creating the cultural frameworks that free us from some of our more brutish instincts. It's a fraught endeavor; not a few injuries along the way. Not to belabor the title of the post... But we can—must!—do better.

D Christian Harrison says:

August 11, 2022 at 4:12 pm

Thank you, Sam.

So often—not always, mind, but so often—sexual misconduct is about power dynamics... And money is power. The sooner we can unhitch our fate from the accident of where in the social hierarchy we're born, the better. And UBI can get us a good ways down that road.

Mark I says:

August 12, 2022 at 9:36 am

There is more abuse happening in our public school system than our churches. It is a particular concern when school teachers believe that they know better how to parent a child than the actual parents. I don't like it when adults teach children to lie to others. Abusers like their power over their victims, and teachers love their power over students.

So I support Bishops and church leaders changing whatever policy will lead to less abuse happening, but I also want less abuse to happen in schools.

Dsc says:

August 12, 2022 at 11:38 am

I really like most of the suggestions, but I want to critique two of them. First, the call for "sex education that centers consent and bodily autonomy in the curriculum" is necessary but woefully insufficient. Many abusers are masters at eliciting "consent" while using other people as objects. Sex education, especially in Church but also in society at large, must also emphasize connection and fulfillment. In the Church, the focus is on marriage, but public education must at least focus on personal readiness and maturity and train people to understand their own goals and views with respect to sex.

Second, I don't think I'm too popular here for constantly saying this, but confidential communications have immense value in certain settings, and efforts to impose reporting responsibilities should be careful to preserve that value wherever possible. Although people should not be allowed to in essence make clergy parties to their ongoing crimes through confession, some people will never open themselves up to counsel to stop abuse and set things right if they believe that confession to clergy is tantamount to a confession to the authorities. The victims of those people are not served by rules that prevent an important first step to stopping abuse. How to preserve confidentiality while maximizing the ability of clergy to report requires care and attention to unintended consequences of setting policies designed to protect children.

The Other Brother Jones says:

August 12, 2022 at 12:44 pm

I listened to the latest "This Week In Mormons" podcast where they interviewed a therapist who is also an abuse survivor. She mentioned that reporting to authorities sometimes be detrimental. If a CPS authority with a police officer comes out to investigate, and everybody claims there is nothing going on. So the authorities leave. What happens in the home next? Likely more worse abuse and violence because the abuser now knows somebody ratted him out.

I like the idea of mandated reporting in general, but it must be applied wisely and carefully because it can blow up on your face just as badly as not reporting did in this case.

I don't have the answers, and I don't claim the experience that some of you have; but I think this problem needs to be solved carefully, and not in this immediate environment of anger, and knee-jerk reaction.

...and how do I get my paragraphs to look like paragraphs?

Alma Frances Pellett says:

August 12, 2022 at 1:06 pm

Dsc – It seems to be giving extra power to the abuser, knowing they can report something but the person reporting can't tell anyone. If something is found out, does the confessor become endangered because the perpetrator thinks they are the one to "ratted them out"?

Your "if mandated, people would confess less" has been proven as untrue as "criminals don't obey laws" and "if you believed women, false accusations would skyrocket".

At one point, rape and assault were rarely the concern of the police. Your argument seems to be that making it illegal forced most of the perpetrators "underground", where they wouldn't get caught. Heck, we -still- dismiss "locker room talk" even when it describes crimes, excusing them with "statutes of limitation".

Being able to talk about something without fear of reprisal increases -acceptance-, not absolution.

Alma Frances Pellett says:

August 12, 2022 at 1:08 pm

Darn it, that last word can't be right. Something not absolution. :P

Loursat says:

August 12, 2022 at 2:07 pm

I've been reading with interest the points of view being expressed about the confidentiality of communications with bishops. For me, the most significant lesson is the folly of standing on a principle of confidentiality when so many bishops care little about it in practice. If the Church is indeed telling bishops not to report abuse, the Church is getting the worst of both worlds. When bishops have a disturbing discussion with a child abuser, they call the help line and are told not to report, even though the correct choice is to stop the crime. Meanwhile, many experienced ward members assume that bishops are loose-lipped and should not be trusted with anything important.

For what it's worth, my experience with bishops has been that whether a confidence will be kept is a toss-up at best. I have known only one bishop who was absolutely scrupulous about keeping confidences. He did not discuss confidential matters with other members of the bishopric and ward council. He persuaded the Relief Society president to do the same when she was privy to confidences. That bishop and Relief Society president were impressive. Every other bishop I have known was loose with information, to varying degrees.

Loursat says:

August 12, 2022 at 2:36 pm

In my experience, ward clerks have been much, much, much less likely than bishops to divulge information. I'm not sure what that means, but maybe there's something to learn from it.

JT says:

August 12, 2022 at 3:26 pm

I have been utterly amazed at the sweeping, general conclusions that have been drawn from a one-sided review of 1.5 cases.

Jimothy says:

August 12, 2022 at 4:46 pm

I think that the idea behind JPV's comment that UBI is more likely to "produce sexual deviancy", is that people (presumably not needing to work as much) will sit around at home and consume more pornography instead of working. And thus, I guess, pornography viewing is apparently a correlate of sexual abuse of family members.

Not agreeing with the comment, but I think that's the rationale operating here. Sort of an "idle hands are the devil's workshop" related idea.

Chadwick says:

August 12, 2022 at 5:02 pm

@JT: "I have been utterly amazed at the sweeping, general conclusions that have been drawn from a one-sided review of 1.5 cases."

I can't speak for everyone, but for me this information isn't new. Certain Mormon podcasters have noted for years that the abuse hotline is answered by a law firm and not therapists. So I think we saw this coming. Additionally, there are also podcasts where multiple interviewers have further discussed that their reporting of abuse to their Mormon bishop was often met with skepticism, an inclination not to report, calls to forgive, and an overall feeling that the abuser was supported more than the victim. So perhaps for some commenters, they are dealing with more data points than a recently-dropped 1.5 cases.

That being said, given the horrific nature of the 1.5 cases, I firmly believe that this is 1.5 cases too many. YMMV.

Kristine says:

August 13, 2022 at 10:43 am

And some of us have seen these problems IRL long before there were podcasters. If your knowledge is limited to these 1.5 cases, JT, count yourself lucky, and start listening to people who know more.

D Christian Harrison says:

August 13, 2022 at 11:49 am

Mark I ... This isn't really relevant? The post isn't, strictly speaking, about sexual assault at church or by people in positions of power at church sexually assaulting others... It's about how the Church should respond to the prevalence of sexual assault, etc, in our communities — including at church, at school, in the home, and elsewhere.

And also, it feels like you're just trying to advance some other agenda? Stay on topic.

D Christian Harrison says:

August 13, 2022 at 11:57 am

DSC ... I agree with your first comment. I had to keep this short; I necessarily left things out. Connection and fulfillment — or, perhaps, the presence of disconnection and feelings of emptiness are red flags, and we'd all do well to discuss this more.

As for your second comment... I, too, believe there is value in having safe spaces to discuss hard things. Doctors, therapists, spouses, clergy — they're each part of our extended safety net. We need to be careful how we encroach on these safe spaces. In the short term, I err on the side of rescuing targets of sexual violence over the sanctity of the confessional. If our mandatory reporting system were more robust, there would be more and better options for reporting and more and better outcomes from such reporting.

MDearrest says:

August 14, 2022 at 8:15 am

I've been following this but have been unable to comment until now. Forgive my confusion, but I have a question about JT's designation of "1.5 cases" — which cases exactly does that refer to?

Beth says:

August 15, 2022 at 4:02 pm

I was sexually abused and raped by my stepdad when I was 9. He went to jail after I testified against him. Later in a student ward a Bishop told me to read the Miracle of Forgiveness so we could discuss my part in what happened. This was after I told him that the State of Nevada had already determined my part. It's hard to respect people like that and he's pretty lucky smart phones weren't a thing at the time. At the time I did not read the book nor did I follow up with him because I knew that I would kill myself. I get a lot of 'I'm so sorry' from people when they hear this story and he was just a man... but he should never have opened his mouth.

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