

The tragedy of older folks bitter disappointment after a life time membership and now how 2x2ism has proven to be so morally false.

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The other day, a man nearly 80 years old told me how disappointed he is in the 2x2 church after all of the revelations of child sexual abuse and criminal activity have come out. And I realized another perspective that I had not yet considered: that of the faithful elderly people who are nearing the end of life and realizing how they had been duped.

An entire life controlled by a system that wasn't what they thought it was.

And it's so sad.

This man told me about how he loved to play baseball as a young boy, and he was good at it. He asked his mother if he could play on the school team, and she told him he'd have to ask the workers about it. When he asked the workers, they told him that since it was a competitive situation, he shouldn't participate.

He also wanted to participate in 4H, and when he asked the workers about being involved with that, they told him he shouldn't because it was an organization.

And there are many stories like these: 2x2 church members who wanted to enjoy life a little by doing the things they loved, only to be told they shouldn't, for whatever reason.

Even before we left, I had a rule for our child that if she wanted to be involved with something it couldn't interfere with meetings—which were at a minimum twice per week, making it difficult to be involved in sports. Some people's meetings were accommodating for children, who were allowed to participate in sports, and would host their Bible studies on Thursdays instead of Wednesdays. But I would have never considered even doing that—because we knew the schedule, and that was just the way it was.

I'm not saying that being committed to attending church is a bad thing, but it shouldn't control our lives. We shouldn't be so legalistic about attendance; after all, it's not attending services that saves us.

As a nearly 40-year-old, I know that, God willing, I have about half my life left to live. When I think about my childhood, I don't really feel like I missed out on much in terms of activities, just because of who I am as a person. I was allowed to play softball in high school for a year when I wanted to. I was in the choir and on the newspaper. I could participate in school clubs as long as they didn't interfere with meetings.

And I'm glad that we don't have to hold our daughter to ridiculous standards. She is free to be herself and pursue her passions.

We've broken a generational cycle. She won't have to sneak pants in her school backpack, so she can change out of her skirt when she gets to school.

She doesn't have to live a life of constantly trying to balance being a member of the 2x2 church with being a normal person—she gets to just BE.

But what about these elderly people who have already lived the vast majority of their lives? How must they feel?

I've talked to women who wanted to get a college education and were told women didn't go to college and that they needed to get married and have children. So, they listened and have always regretted not being able to attend college.

I've seen talented musicians put their instruments down and forget about their dreams.

I've heard of men and women wanting to serve in the military or law enforcement who were told they could not carry a gun, and so had to pursue some other career.

The list goes on and on.

Sometimes I wonder what kind of person I would have been had my personality not been stomped to the ground as workers continually encouraged us to be meek, quiet, and humble, if I hadn't been treated like I was worthless by my peers in the 2x2 church, which heavily impacted me as a person. If I wasn't so obsessed with the judgement and opinions of others—a result of being around incredibly judgemental people all of my life.

But, at the end of the day, I have no regrets. And I know that my experience was relatively good compared to others, so I don't expect everyone to feel the same way I do.

I don't know what life would have been like otherwise, and I just can't go there.

We can get stuck in the what-ifs.

Every experience I've gone through has shaped me into the person I am today. It gave me empathy and compassion for others. It helped me value authenticity in both myself and others. Ultimately, I was taught values that have directed my life in a good way. I met my husband in the church, and he's a great guy.

I think if we focus on growth, it can help us move forward without regret. Viewing this experience as one that has helped us grow into the people we were always meant to become. Not looking back with regret and bitterness (I know we hate that word), but looking forward with gratitude for what we've been brought out of and with hope for both our future on this earth and in eternity with the God we have come to know more of recently.

I hope that those of you who are elderly can find peace in this experience. I hope that you've led full lives, despite the restrictions placed upon you. I hope that you can find the strength to move forward and live out your life boldly and authentically in the time you have left.

And I am so sorry for the damage that was done.

I am in awe of those of you who have courageously left the church in your old age, standing true to your convictions and being brave enough to enter a new frontier even at this point in your life. And you've done so in grace and joy. I admire you for it, and I hope you know what an incredible inspiration you are for living with integrity.