

“This Happens Everywhere”: The Coward’s Escape Hatch

When spiritual abuse is met with deflection instead of repentance, we have a problem deeper than doctrine.

Stop me if you’ve heard this before:

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“Yeah, we’ve got our problems, but this happens in all churches, not just ours”

Often said in defensiveness, sometimes with a dismissive shrug.

Always a deflection.

As if a pattern of spiritual abuse, coercion, secrecy, or grooming is no big deal, because hey, **every church has its issues**, right?

This is a rhetorical escape hatch. An abdication of responsibility.

And, there’s a number of reasons why this happens.

Probably in most cases, at the heart of this is the doctrine of exclusivity, and the fear of:

“If I acknowledge what’s real, I might actually have to deal with it. And, if I have to face what’s real, will I lose my faith?”

And that’s at the crux of the issue.

Because, when you’re raised in an exclusivist church or fellowship, (*as in this is THE way to salvation, and every other denomination or church is going to Hell*), it’s a terrifying reality to face.

When “losing out” is equated to losing your salvation, you’ll do anything to keep your faith in the institution.

Even if it means whitewashing or dismissing altogether the horrors of abuse, broken lives, and unregenerate evil.

Spiritual Dysfunction DOES Exist In Other Churches

I'm not naive. Of course other churches and denominations have problems.

Pretty much any time you get a group of people together and form a hierarchy, the temptation to abuse power arises.

Which speaks to the importance of accountability.

So yes, pride, control, manipulation, secrecy? They show up in Catholic cathedrals and evangelical mega-churches, and yes, even in that tiny home meeting led by two workers who "don't take a name."

Problems *can* show up anywhere. But that truth doesn't do what people think it does.

It doesn't erase reality.

It doesn't erase accountability.

And it sure doesn't justify any form of abuse.

Ok, What's The Problem?

When you say "It happens everywhere", you're pulling rhetorical sleight of hand.

This statement:

- Minimizes the **specific harm** done within the group
- Gaslights survivors into doubting their experience ("Maybe I am overreacting...")
- Muddies the waters of accountability ("You're just 'bitter' and looking for a way out" ...)
- Protects Predators at the expense of victims and survivors

This is the absolute polar opposite of what Jesus taught, and the very epitome of the hypocrisy he railed against when he decried the religious leaders and institution.

The Failure of Others Should NEVER Be The Standard of Truth

Imagine a CEO of a charity, embezzling millions of dollars intended to protect and improve the lives of vulnerable children.

And then, responding with: *“Well, theft happens everywhere, what’s the big deal?”*

Or *“Every Nonprofit has a little bit of double dipping, right?”*

No, when theft is discovered, it is investigated and those responsible are held accountable.

So, why is it different when spiritual leaders are involved?

Because, when righteousness becomes based on the *appearance of holiness*, as opposed to actual holiness, it becomes necessary to deflect blame, rather than self-examine.

And, once again, the dilemma of... **If I examine this issue closely enough, and I have a conscience, I’m going to have to speak out.**

And speaking out is COSTLY. It might cost friendships. Fellowship. Family. Even marriages.

But turning a blind eye to crime and abuse? That’s the antithesis of Christlike.

It’s self preservation. And self-preservation is what Jesus was highlighting when he said:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” — Matthew 16:25

Because real righteousness doesn’t protect power structures.

It protects the vulnerable, no matter the cost.

Real Healing Requires Real Accountability

I’m not here to tear down anyone’s faith. I believe that most denominations have sincere believers, and genuinely want to follow Jesus.

But... If your system protects predators over victims...

If it protects image and reputation of leaders over survivors receiving healing...

If obedience and meekness are used to silence dissent...