

Losing My Best Friend to God

Shôn Ellerton, August 9, 2023

My upsetting experience of losing one of my best friends when he 'found' God in the most extreme of ways.



Have you ever come across an old friend only to find out that he or she ‘found’ God? Well, I can tell you, I certainly have and, to be frank, it’s kind of shaken me to the core. And not in a good way.

This story relates to my own personal experiences, but no doubt, there must be others who have had similar encounters.

My story is as follows.

I had a best friend back in elementary school days in Colorado, in the heart of mid-West USA. He was a physically strong chap who partook in athletics but unlike most of the jocks, who were far more interested in which cheerleader is going to be the next lay, my friend had a penchant for literature, the esoteric, and good old-fashioned science. We shared many of these interests. In addition, we were both adventurers, having hiked many mountains, explored many dangerous caves, and did such exciting things like trespassing onto construction sites and climbing radio antenna towers.

However, he lived a very different life at home. At least, certainly, what I witnessed. You see, kids in their early teens or younger often experience what other family lifestyles are like during playdates and sleepovers. In the case of my newly crazed Evangelical friend, he lived in a family with an overbearing meathead of a father who tried to instil discipline into their kids by beating the living crap out of them, usually with a thick leather belt or some other implement.

I had other friends living in a similar family dynamic and in nearly every case, four things were common throughout.

One. The father was a lazy ass beer-drinking pig who did nothing except be glued to the TV watching an endless series of sports game.

Two. The parents were Christian evangelists and claimed that God said it was okay to levy any amount of corporal punishment to misbehaving kids.

Three. The families were living not too far over the poverty line, relying on state handouts.

And four. The kids were, themselves, prone to violence and exhibited often erratic and unpredictable behaviour.

Taking a little deviation from the topic, I find that inflicting corporal punishment on children a disturbing activity which only fosters hate and anguish in their future years. A quick and impromptu slap on the behind. For example, when stopping your kid from running across a busy road or behaving badly at the grocery shop checkout line isn't what I'm talking about. It's that ritualistic act of telling one's kid that they're going to get taken behind to the woodshed to get a severe ass whoopin' as a sort of 'eye for an eye' act of reconciliation.

There was a great Swedish movie made in 2003 called [*Ondskan \(Evil\)*](#) which illustrated this beautifully. A rather sadistic stepfather took pleasure in taking the belt to his teenage stepson's backside in quite a savage way. In the movie's plot, he was sent to a rather brutal boarding school in which students often did bare knuckle fighting with each other just to maintain a degree of separation from being bullied. Now, on his return home during the summer holiday, the stepfather attempted the same again with his belt when his stepson spoke too candidly that he wasn't being very nice to his mother. Learning the ways in a boarding school, the stepson turned the tables around and then beat the living shit out of his stepfather. Violence breeds violence and it is often within these fanatical 'I Love Jesus' households, I found this almost too commonplace.

Returning on some of the common traits these families shared, what struck me most of all, was the lack of personal love between the parents and the children. There was this all-pervasive love of God and Jesus. It did not really matter if you were good friends with someone you knew for many years or whether you loved your family as all families should do. Everything was because of God and the *only* thing that mattered was your unswerving love and affinity to God.

To religious zealots like my friend, any display of personal love of anything over God exhibits selfish and arrogant individualism. I tried to argue the point in suggesting that if one is kind to each other by demonstrating the traits of charity, goodwill, and friendship, then surely this is what God wants. After all, any higher being that creates subjects of his own to obey every command and love the creator profusely without question must, surely, be one of ultimate narcissism.

Apparently, this line of reasoning does not ring true with the religious fundamentalist, or more familiarly speaking the religious nutcase. Being kind to each other takes second place to worshipping Him. Apparently, we must all be part of his flock of sheep and be obedient unquestioning children. Only God knows of true knowledge, or indeed, be allowed to have access to true knowledge.

There is no logic when it comes to God. Ultimately, I lost my friend because my religious beliefs did not match up to his religious beliefs. His religious beliefs were the only ones that mattered because it was the only one which portrayed the so-called 'living God'. Any other religion or faith, or for that matter, any other denomination of Christianity was a false religion.

To be clear, most families who are faithful to their religion consider love and connection with each other as being equally important as the doctrines contained in Scripture. This is what differentiates the fundamentalist and the non-fundamentalist. The fundamentalist displays no tolerance or deviation from the tenets of a belief even if it may harm someone else.

The breathtaking arrogance of the religious fundamentalist or extremist taking the view that practicing any other faith or religion is equivalent to being a heretic and being amongst one of Satan's little helpers is utterly alarming. But this is the thing. Most faiths and religions are very tolerant of others to those whose are different. Christianity and Islam, being the two largest monotheist religions, are the worst offenders when it comes to lack of tolerance to others of different faiths. Even amidst their own denominations and variations. Take Catholics and Protestants. Shias and Sunnis. They seem to hate each other more than between Christians and Muslims. It's quite awful.

Returning to my friend, he has turned more and more evangelical as time passes. His own family disowns him. He has lost most, if not all, his friends. He lives in a car somewhere in Florida because he doesn't own anything as he can't keep or get a job. Presumably, he upsets everyone with his extremist views. He's repeatedly blocked me from time to time only to then send me an invite when his

temper pipes down. He was like that as a kid because I remember when we got into an argument, and then he proceeded to start bashing wooden fences on his way back home.

These days, he frequently posts his little sermons on Facebook, sometimes several a day. Most all of them are condescending, threatening, and all so terribly tiresome. He may start out with something interesting in the first couple of sentences, presumably to entice the reader. For example, sighting an unusual electrical storm the night before, but the topic will quickly devolve into his usual Scripture rantings culminating in near threatening jargon like how you have already been judged and sentence will follow. That sort of rhetorical crap.

It really dawned upon me that there is no way to converse logically to an extremist fundamentalist. I asked him the question if he would ever harm someone who didn't follow his faith. The silence I received was deafening. I asked other questions. For example, what about those in the world who have never heard about Christianity. Would they be consigned to the pits of Hell? The answer I got this time was completely unrelated and bucked the question entirely.

After finding out I was a Freemason, he let unripped his thoughts on how I was a devil worshipper and that I would not be spared from the gates of Hell. I tried to explain in a most calm and collected manner that Freemasonry is not a religion, but this held no sway over his seething hatred of it.

Well. Enough was enough. I sent him a polite message that he should seek professional help because I genuinely think that he has become a very dangerous man. And this further explains the reasoning to me how religious fundamentalists are so dangerous. How they can spray a group of innocent people with bullets from machine guns. How they can slit the throats of infidels in front of live television cameras. And how they can fly into tall building with the intention of killing thousands of innocent people.

It has been so upsetting to find that one of my best friends had turned into a raging Christian evangelist extremist. Furthermore, it has been an eye opener for me considering how many millions of other religious zealots are out there favouring the harm and destruction of others in the name of their chosen god or gods.

I have learned just how dangerous a religious zealot can be. Even if that zealot was one of your best friends.