

Interview Questions

Possible interview question and answers, so you can evaluate my potential as a guest on your show.

Why did you write this book?

[The writing was part of my own effort to recover from an abusive church experience. Then I realized how prevalent the experience is and wanted to create something to carry a warning to others.]

Why did you take a fictional approach to such a serious topic?

[We live in an entertainment culture. Many people won't even approach a non-fiction book on this subject or any other subject – but they will read a novel.]

Do these kinds of groups really exist in average communities?

[Absolutely. As our country's Christian population moves away from mainline denominations in search of a more heartfelt church experience, the door is wide open for groups like this to draw them in. I think many Christians will feel a kinship with the main character as she seeks after a God who is real in her life.]

How can a person know when a situation crosses the line into “abusive”?

[One of the hallmarks of abusive churches is a sense of superiority that their members assume over time, feeling that they have more of the truth than anyone else. Much of the teaching of abusive groups directs the believer into shame and fear. An abusive group has its own agenda – which is to hold power over the people in the congregation.]

What is the most difficult part of an experience like this?

[There is a sense of betrayal when people come to their senses and realize they must separate from a group. Betrayal by the people who led them to become involved, by people who didn't try harder to stop them from getting involved, and even betrayal by God – who could have stopped them and didn't. It can take years for the believer to recover from those wounds and get back on the right track. Coming to terms with your own foolishness is never a pleasant thing.]

Who is vulnerable to a spiritually abusive situation?

[Ironically, it's not the weak Christian or the lazy one. It's the one who is striving for more intimacy of God. Also, anyone who has had a major trauma in his or her life recently and feels a need for spiritual consolation that perhaps is missing from the traditional church. There are warning signs, but someone who is spiritually hungry can choose to put aside that God-given uneasiness.]

How prevalent is this? Do we really need to worry about it?

[In researching cults, I discovered there are estimated to be at least 3000 spiritually deceptive groups operating in the US alone at any one time. If each group has anywhere from a few dozen to thousands of members, you can do the math. Nobody sets out to fall into a cult – yet many thousands of people have done so.]

What have you learned that you hope others will learn without having to go through something similar?

[To scrutinize everything that a church teaches, an individual teaches. Listen to that small voice inside you that says, “Something isn't right here.” My husband and I blew past so many red flags, simply because we were caught up in the experience of serious worship and the excitement of finding what we thought was the answer to our prayers for a solid church. Watch the faces of friends or family when you tell them about your “new church”. If they seem skeptical or worried, have the courage to take a step back – and possibly turn back altogether. It's no crime to be wrong.]