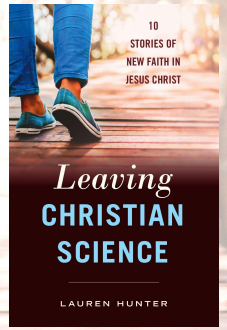
2021 FFCS Weekend Virtual Conference - BREAKOUT SESSION

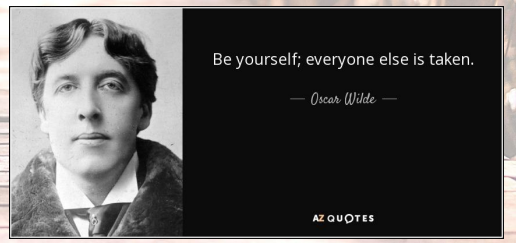
MY STORY, YOUR STORY, & GOD'S STORY



Presented by Lauren Hunter, Author of *Leaving Christian Science: 10 Stories of New Faith in Jesus Christ*

Your Journey is Unique

- We each have a story, and this story isn't finished. It's a "work in process."
- You might be questioning CS, or you may have already left.
- You may have left years ago, or recently.
- Regardless of your path, you have a story to tell, and your journey has the ability to impact yourself and impact others.



Common Threads - Dual Reality

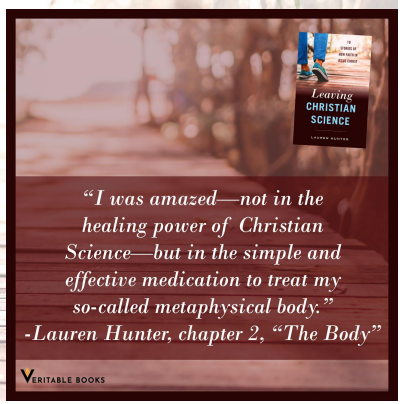
While writing *Leaving Christian Science*, there were a number of common themes that emerged during interviews and research:

- Difficulties with the worldview that the material world isn't real
- Mental gymnastics to be a participant in the world, but to believe that it wasn't a true reality
- This is perhaps the #1 hurdle.



Common Threads - Physical Body

- Guilt and shame over "trying" medicine when healings didn't happen
- Shame over imperfections in health as well as imperfections in beauty
- Dissociation from physical needs including noticing pain, anxiety, or fear
- Trouble recognizing boundaries, limits, and identifying needs



Common Threads - Receiving Love

- Physical and/or emotional abuse from lack of validation of normal emotions and experiences
- Lack of overall physical and emotional care
- Frequent maternal dismissiveness and lack of tenderness towards children



Common Threads - Denial

- Denial of evil in the world
- Denial of connecting between our healing success rate and our faith
- Denial of anger, sadness, anxiety; or being overly happy or excited
- Over emphasis on being grateful almost as a cover up for unhealed illnesses or unresolved issues
- Denial of traumatic events or experiences from small accidents to relational turmoil to large medical issues



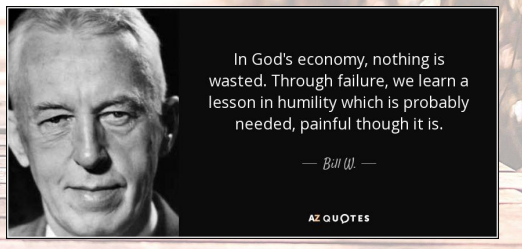
More Common Threads

- Struggle to "fit the mold" of Christian Science as an adult
- Disbelief when family or church member died suddenly with no explanation
- Arrogance and elitism that CS was the only truth that was acceptable
- Refusal to renounce Mary Baker Eddy as an enlightened leader.
- Difficulty in understanding the Trinity (God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit) as portrayed in the Bible
- Trouble letting go of debilitating thought patterns
- Difficulty in trusting people in authority

You Are Not Alone

Whatever your pain points are with Christian Science, you are not alone. Others, like me and like those I interviewed, have experienced similar issues. Hopefully, this brings you comfort in knowing that you're not alone.

This quote is from Bill W., co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA):



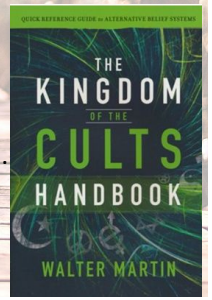
My Story - Lauren Hunter

- Raised a fourth generation CS.
- Began questioning in my early 20s.
- Several big medical issues.
- Experienced for myself that medicine worked.



My Story - Lauren Hunter

- Dramatic exit from CS after taking a new job.
- I thought I was a Christian, but realized there were huge differences between my beliefs and what the Christians at work believed.
- I uncovered CS listed in the book, *Kingdom of the Cults*.
- Was convicted that CS was heresy; gave my life to Jesus.
- Abruptly cut ties with Mother Church and branch church.
- Celebrated 20 years out of Christian Science April 2021.



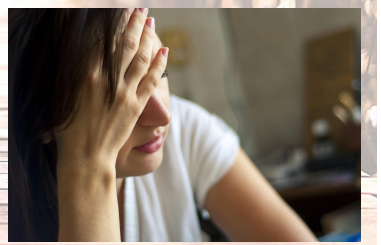
Your Story - Taking Inventory

- What did you notice growing up in CS?
- Did you agree and/or accept everything you learned?
- Did you willingly attend CS camps, Sunday school, and testimony meetings?
- How did you internalize the fundamental teaching that matter isn't real and sin, disease, and death weren't real? Did these principals make sense to you?
- Did confess any doubts about CS to anyone?

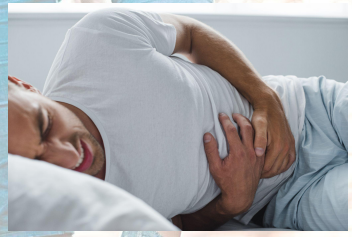


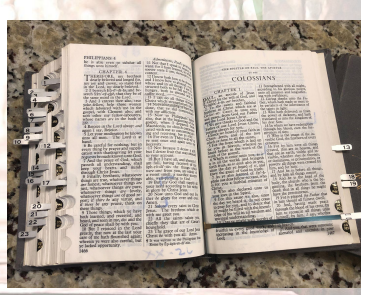
Your Story - Initial Doubts

- What events can you recall that caused you to start doubting?
- Did you have any unresolved health issues that caused you to seek medical attention?
- Did other kids question you for not receiving vaccinations?



Your Story - Initial Doubts





- Did you witness a loved one dying from lack of medical care?
- Did you ever read the Bible "outside the blue chalk lines" and find that the Bible conflicted with Science and Health?

Your Story - Initial Doubts

- Did many of your childhood needs often go unmet?
- Did you feel an inability to recognize and name your emotions and ask for what you needed?
- Other doubts or questions???



Your Story - Confirmation of Doubts

- Did you use medicine and/or doctors and resolve your needs?
- Have you admitted your doubts to someone you trust?
- Did you pray to God and receive confirmation that CS was false?
- Have you encountered signs or repeated interactions with former-CSers that seemed coincidental?



Your Story - Reaching Out

A vital part of deconstructing (a critical analysis of one's beliefs) includes getting support outside the CS community. Support options:

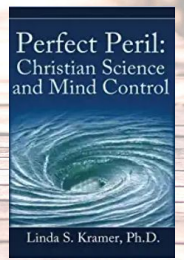


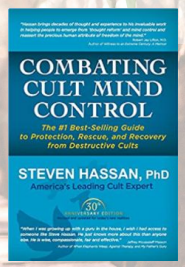
- This FFCS conference!
- Therapy: Interview mental health professionals to find someone who is trained in trauma-informed therapy practices.
- Support Groups: The Get Wise support groups are invaluable.

Your Story - Continued Education

There are many helpful books out there to continue learning:

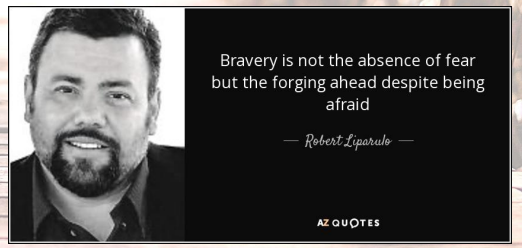
- *Combatting Cult Mind Control*
- *Perfect Peril: Christian Science and Mind Control*
- *The Kingdom of the Cults Handbook*
- *God's Perfect Child*
- *Leaving Christian Science: 10 Stories of New Faith in Jesus Christ*





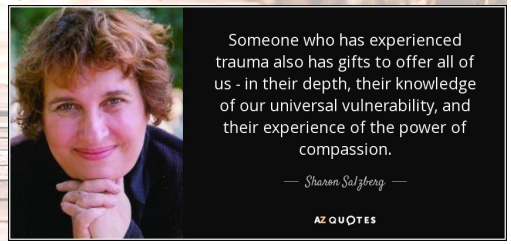
Your Story - Word of Advice

- Leaving CS takes courage, bravery, and conviction.
- It's not easy to connect the problems from your upbringing to the faith your family so lovinging bequeathed to you.
- They meant well, but CS has damaged you.

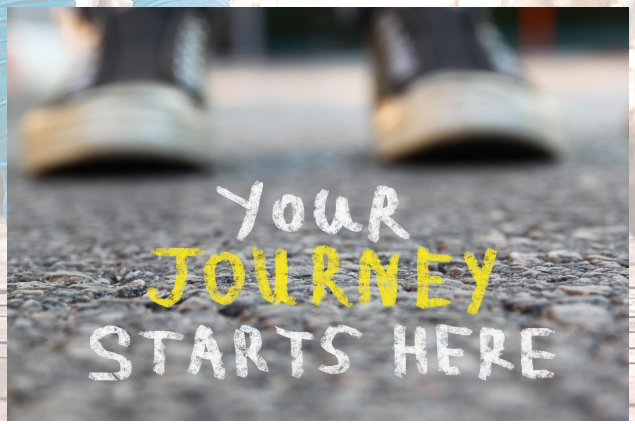


Your Story - It's Not Your Fault

- As you are thinking about the effects CS has had on your life, it's important to remember: Something has happened to you that isn't your fault.
- Trauma occurs when something is done TO you.
- Processing your journey out of CS is important to the reconstruction process.



Your Story - Starts Here



Your Story - Beginning

You can write about your journey out of CS if you like. Often, writing can be a cathartic way to process all we've been through:

- After this session is over, I encourage you to watch it again or review the slides.
- Go through and write down important events that are a part of your CS journey.
- Pick one or two major doubts that you had and detail the reasons why these were instrumental in your leaving CS.
- Describe your emotions, include internal and external dialogue.

Your Story - Middle

- Pick one big event that was a catalyst for you to begin leaving CS.
- Show don't tell. Describe the situation and events.
- Share emotions, be authentic, and be vulnerable.
- Use first person language to describe what happened (e.g. I, me).
- Detail the hard stuff, don't skip or gloss over suffering or difficulties.

Your Story - End

- Walk us through how the events you chose to share caused you to leave CS.
- If you had a conversion to another faith, please include details that are important to your journey.
- Wrap up your story on a high note if possible.
- Even if your life isn't perfect (no one's is) you can share what you learned, how you grew, or what you hope to learn in the future.

God's Story

- It's normal to struggle with religion after leaving a destructive and controlling religious group.
- If you hope to find a new faith, or need a break from faith, both are valid.
- Taking steps to leave is often the hardest part of your journey.
- Rediscovering your authentic identity will be hard, but worth it.



God's Story - The Bigger Picture

- Trusting in a Higher Power can help as you navigate your life post-CS.
- If you have a thirst to better understand historical Christianity and the God of the Bible;
- Or if you already have shifted your faith and are untangling the bad theology of the CS cult;

God is with you in the process. It's messy, it's complicated, but God can and will answer you if you ask questions.

God's Story - Putting it All Together

It's okay to be confused, to have doubts, and to be uncertain about how your journey out of CS will resolve. Remember, it's the journey and not the end. Your story is important, your story is valuable, your story matters. And remember:

WE ARE ALL IN THIS PROCESS TOGETHER

