Twitter Thread by Jo Luehmann

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“Don’t leave the church because of the people who hurt you. Nobody is perfect, only God”

I’ll explain why this comment is not only not helpful at all, but also very harmful.

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The comment assumes we can’t tell the difference between people and toxic theology, it assumes our issues are with a few people who are outliers and misrepresented God, and we just seem to think that’s the totality of divinity. Which makes us appear unintelligent and petty.

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But, that’s not the case at all. I didn’t leave because a few people hurt me in the name of God, in fact I stayed long enough to get hurt again, and again, and again, and again. Because it’s not a few bad apples hurting people in the name of God what we are dealing with.

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Instead we are talking about systemic abuse due to toxic theology that is taught as righteousness.

Go to any white evangelical church today and conduct all the tests you must to ensure only those who are “good Christians,” remain. I guarantee you people will be harmed there.
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Not because people just hurt people, not because Christians have good intentions but sometimes make mistakes; instead because the harm is caused due to indoctrination into toxic theology and a belief that their social and theological framework is not only good,

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but also the only way to have a better world and be a decent human being (which is a superiority complex that isn't based on facts but bias).

Assuming we left because some people caused harm is minimizing our commitment to our own faith too.

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Most of the people I know who left their religion, did so after years of prayer, studying, and grappling with the really hard questions christianity fails to answer. They did because they couldn't reconcile their commitment to this faith and maintain their integrity,

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not because the faith is inherently good and some people are bad. Instead because being in it made us harm people too. We didn't want to be complicit in harmful, abusive behavior toward ourselves and others. We didn't leave because our faith was weak, or because we didn't

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spend enough time with Jesus. Instead because we took the whole faith thing so seriously that we saw the inconsistencies and abuses embedded in it, and we refused to continue to betray ourselves and others to please a good god that isn't really good at all.

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The phrase also infantilizes us, making it seem like we don't understand the very obvious reality that nobody is perfect and makes it seem like our expectations of Christians are just too high and we are unreasonable. Like a young child expecting too much of parents.

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Except nobody ever asked Christians to be perfect, but to stop causing harm. That's a logical standard to have. However, it is also an impossible ask when your theological framework and moral standard call what's harmful righteousness and love.

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When bigotry is institutionalized in the church as god's word and god's way, the most perfect Christians will be the most harmful and abusive. Not because we expected them to be perfect and they failed, instead because they were indeed perfect in the eyes of their theology.

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Lastly, this comment minimizes our choice to leave our religion as just an inability to forgive, or an unwillingness to extend grace. Neither is true. Not only do we not owe forgiveness to our abusers, but most all of us have actually forgiven, forgiveness simply doesn't

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equate with reconciliation. I can forgive people and still set strict boundaries and not want a relationship with them or their theology. And grace cannot override accountability, and consequences. That accountability is not just for the people but also the theology.

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Consequences are grace, impunity doesn’t help anybody, silence to maintain a faux sense of harmony ensures more people are harmed. It is gracious and kind to hold a mirror and explain how something is harmful and abusive. Shrugging your shoulders is apathy, not grace.