



# Escape From Cult Control

BY CASSIE LITTON

I was gloriously born again on August 16, 1992, at the age of 26. Birthed into a new life of love, acceptance and grace by meeting Jesus as a real, living Savior and friend. I understood my need, his forgiveness and the reality of the price that had been paid for me. What a revelation! Later that year, I was walking in Sears when I heard my first Christmas carol. I'd heard the song all my life, but now I stopped in the middle of the store, tears pouring down my face, as a new wave of understanding penetrated my soul. "Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Oh, what beautiful words! Every day was a joy, a new day to love and be loved, unconditionally.

I began attending two nondenominational churches. One

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on Sunday morning, because I loved the casual atmosphere and the heartfelt praise and worship service; the other (a smaller, more intimate setting) on Wednesday and Sunday nights, because the lady that had led me to the Lord was a minister there, and the woman pastor was a "prophet" and would give me "words from God" that I found flattering and encouraging. The first time I went there I was called to the front and given a "word" about a powerful ministry I would someday lead and about the many works for God I would accomplish.

I had no previous knowledge of the Bible—I was even shocked when I read the New Testament and discovered that the first four books are the same story retold over and over. I eagerly soaked up

the teachings of the lady who'd led me to the Lord. After all, she knew so much, and I was just a "baby in the Lord."

The woman pastor would inform the lady I knew to "gently encourage me" to go the right way. Very slowly, and very subtly, I began to get the messages:

- I should only attend one church, otherwise my discipleship would be divided and weakened.
- My tithe should go to my "local storehouse" (the smaller church was closer to where I lived).
- If I didn't tithe, I allowed Satan access to my children, health and finances.
- If I missed any service or Bible study, I was "back sliding."
- If I wore "suggestive clothing," I caused men to sin by looking at me, and the list goes on and on.

I attended this church for five years, sinking into the downward spiral of legalism. During that

period of time I became an ordained minister, remarried my ex-husband, and had two more children (I already had two sons with him).

Fortunately, God really did restore my marriage, and I'm so thankful for the patience of my husband. He attended this church with me until he realized how wrong things were. He stopped going and was continually on the church prayer list for being "backslidden." I continued, never missing a service or church event, which were now up to five days a week—even after the births of our children.

I even went so far as to threaten divorce if my husband didn't allow me to tithe his salary plus an extra five percent for "over and above" blessings. It is an extraordinary example of God's grace working through my husband that he stayed with me through those terrible years.

**Fear Religion**

The pastor had all of us under an all-encompassing net of fear. Her control over the congregation had been gradual, but complete. I now understand how people in abusive situations find it nearly impossible to break free. My bid for freedom began when the lady that had originally led me to the Lord was kicked out—banished—because she failed to hand over her entire paycheck to the church. She was part of the "inner core" of ministers—specially anointed

leaders who lived on the grounds and were required to give their entire paychecks to the church.

This was just a chink in the armor however, because the pastor determined that this lady had been "...in rebellion, which is as witchcraft," so we all shunned her. Soon after, I became despondent in my attempts to please the Lord. I kept having nagging doubts about what was happening in the church. If this lady had been in rebellion, where did that put me?

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Money was always an issue in the church, even though we were all giving absolutely to our hurt. I ran up credit card debt and began bouncing checks. I was yelling at my kids because we would get in trouble if we

were late for church. My house was a disaster. I was so certain that I was a constant disappointment to God that I even considered suicide.

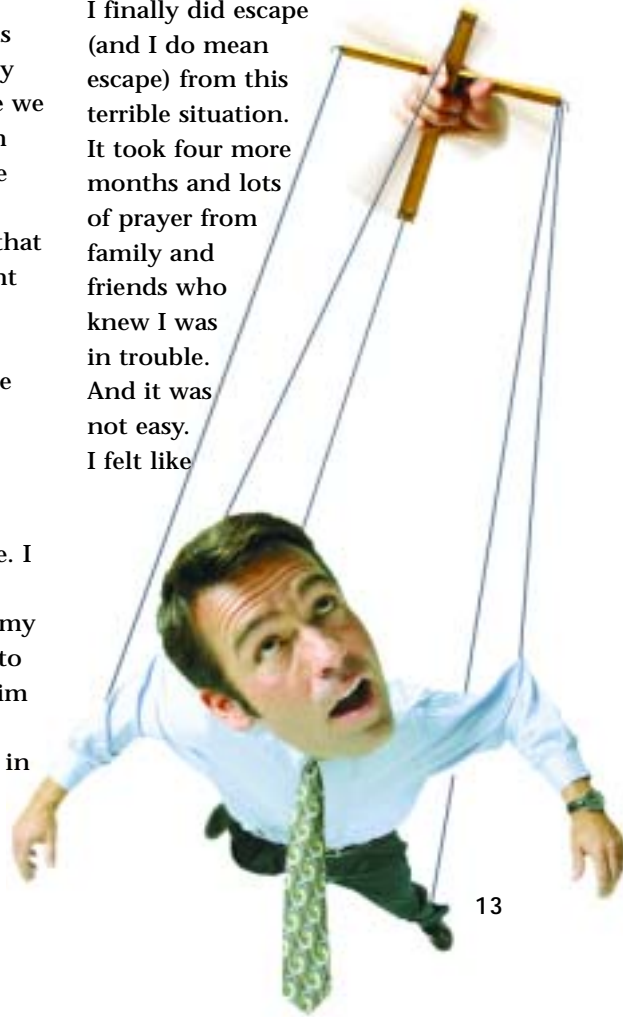
The final breaking point came when my baby son was nearly hospitalized for malnutrition. Exclusively breastfed, he only gained one ounce between his second and third months of life. I had been so eager to show my faithfulness, and to prove that my new baby would not cause me to backslide, that I would nurse him just enough to keep him from crying and then stick a pacifier in his mouth. He became nipple confused and was starving to

death. The doctor told me I had one week for the baby to start gaining weight. I had to take away the pacifier. He cried for three days and refused both breast and bottle. I prayed, desperately calling out for God's help.

On the third day, the pastor called, and, hearing the baby crying over the phone, ordered me to give him back the pacifier. This would be the first time I defied her. I didn't say a word. I simply hung up the phone and went back to trying to nurse my son. He began to respond and gained four ounces in one week. I began to realize the pastor did not always know what was best, and there were times when God would not require me to put the church first.

**Escape from Cultic Teaching and Practice**

I finally did escape (and I do mean escape) from this terrible situation. It took four more months and lots of prayer from family and friends who knew I was in trouble. And it was not easy. I felt like



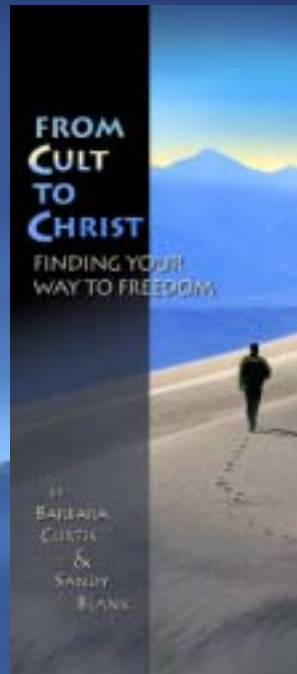
a prisoner escaping a Nazi death camp—terrified. Once I began to admit things were wrong, I knew I had to get away. But it seemed impossible. Even so, the pastor's hold on me was slipping.

I finally broke down and called my friend who had been banished. She prayed with me, and God gave me the courage to never go back. Through a ministry that helps deliver people from cults, I was able to contact most of the congregation and share with them the scriptures (primarily in the book of Galatians) that helped deliver me, and soon the church closed.

I have since moved to a new town, and my husband and I are very happy. I have attended a few church services but do not go regularly, and my husband does not go at all. We both love Jesus and pray together, but the pain and embarrassment of being involved with something so wrong, while thinking it was so right, has left deep scars.

Finding Plain Truth Ministries (PTM) and receiving the spiritual nourishment from the resources it offers has been a great relief to me. I'm so glad PTM is spreading light and truth about the horrible effects of legalism. God bless PTM and may it keep up the good work! □

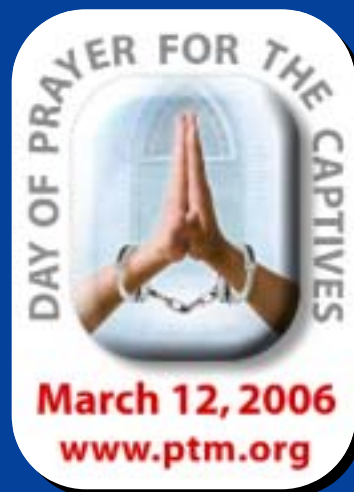
*Cassie Litton resides in Texas with her husband and five children.*



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*see page 8*

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FINDING YOUR WAY TO FREEDOM

### Two Personal Experiences

**B**arbara Curtis and Sandy Blank share three important things:

1) they are both authors, 2) they are both committed Christians, 3) they were both imprisoned for a time in "Christian" cults—groups that claim to be Christian but teach heretical doctrine and are often legalistic, authoritarian and abusive. While Barbara and Sandy were involved with different cult groups, their experiences are similar. In this booklet, Barbara tells the compelling story of how she and her husband were taken in by a charismatic preacher whose teachings sounded good but proved toxic. Sandy provides point by point, vital information about how to identify and escape from harmful groups. Request your FREE copy today (item K193).

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