



Podcast: Churches and Modern-Day Lepers

It's The Outspoken Offender Podcast.

My hope is to encourage registered citizens, former inmates, and anyone facing stereotypes and social ostracism to move beyond society's labels.

Welcome to the show.

Thanks for listening to the podcast today. I am [The Outspoken Offender](#). Thanks for joining me today. I'm talking about church and modern-day lepers. Well, uh, in other words, the church and people forced to register. This topic is extremely upsetting to me because I feel that anyone, as long as they are a responsible person and aren't going to cause harm to anyone within a church setting deserves to go to church. They should not be banished from attending a church, but unfortunately that is what's happening in some places in the country over the last ten, fifteen or twenty years. A lot of churches have created almost like a handbook on how to handle people that want to be part of the community that are on the sex offender registry - how the volunteer staff should handle it and how the other church members should handle it.

But why are we so focused on people that are on the registry? Why are churches and it goes beyond churches - schools and communities and neighborhoods and places of employment. And it goes on. But why are we concerned so much about people on the registry attending church?

[88% of sexual abuse is never reported to authorities](#). Yes. 88%. So what does this mean? Well, this means that nine out of 10 people who have sexually abused children will not have a criminal background. They will not be on the sex offender registry, and they will not have a criminal background. So my point is we're so concerned about the people that are already on the registry. We actually need to be worried about the people that are not on the registry or that don't have a criminal background. So in my mind, it is absolutely unfair to banish and treat people on the registry like they are modern-day lepers. And if someone has done something in the past and has realized they've done something wrong and take full accountability and they

want to go to their church and worship, they should be allowed to do that. But unfortunately, there's quite a few churches around the United States that say "no," if you're on the sex offender registry, you're not welcome here. And I know I said I wasn't gonna throw a lot of statistics, but maybe I lied because I want to tell you about this.

So in this 2018 study, it's called [Child Sexual Abuse in Protestant Christian Congregations](#). I'm looking at some details here. Some statistics - out of the 328 male offenders that were in this study, 34.9% had the title of pastor that sexually abused a child. 31.4% were youth ministers. With associate and worship pastors, church volunteers, deacons, Bible study leaders, and church members making up the rest. So the highest percentage was someone with a title within the church. Again, the banishment of registrants from churches is once again, the myth of stranger danger. We've been stuck in this [stranger danger myth](#) for a very long time. I don't know...since the eighties? We need to understand that a person on the registry coming in wanting to worship and feel accepted within a community is going to be the best thing for that person, to rehabilitate himself and to feel included rather than feeling ostracized or banished.

Why don't churches worry about other crimes? We're not worried about a drug dealer coming in? We don't ask them about their past. We don't worry about a husband or wife that has been convicted of spousal abuse. No, we don't worry about that. We don't worry about somebody that has a robbery or an assault charge on their criminal record. No, we don't worry about that. And I don't understand.

I'm not liking the trend that I'm seeing in some of these churches. They say they're taking steps to manage the risk. Well, folks there's risk all the time. There's risk when you're not on the registry or when you don't have a criminal record. In addition, some churches are saying, well, we need to obtain a record of the sex offender's prior criminal convictions by conducting a national criminal records check, and the church must be fully informed regarding the sex offender's criminal background. Before that person becomes part of the church community?! No. Absolutely not. Only in cases if that person wants to become a volunteer, not just because that person wants to be a member of the church community. What are you going to do? Background checks on every person that comes to the church's doors?

I am going to repeat this. I've already talked about this several times in some of my podcasts, but just because you're on the registry does not mean you're a danger to children. Okay, I'm not gonna lie. There are some people of course, on the registry that need to be watched. Of course there are people that can't function in society, of course, but the majority are people that have messed up, made a mistake and want to move on with their lives. This nonsense of we need to do background checks before you walk in the door and full bans because you're on the registry needs to stop. Don't be a part of our congregation. We don't want you. I'm so sick of hearing this. Look, I'm not even a church goer. I don't go to church, but this is one area that should be our first amendment. You should be able to practice your religion in a community, no matter.

You could be at church next weekend and you could be sitting there and a new guy comes in. He could have been convicted of second degree murder. You don't know, you don't know that

because there's not a murder registry. I understand that we want to keep children safe, especially in church. It's supposed to be a safe place, but we're doing it wrong. We're doing it wrong.

I'm going to take this opportunity to say shame on the churches that are completely banning people on the registry. Shame on you. You are not a Christian Church. You do not meet the definition of a Christian Church by not accepting certain people. On the other hand, I want to praise churches that accept everyone. This church in Hillsboro, Oregon is doing just that. It's sunrise. It's spelled [Sonrise Church](#). And it's actually come known as the church that accepts ex-convicts, people on the registry, families that have gone through legal issues, the people on the outskirts of society. According to this article here that I'm reading, nobody there feels like an outcast, even though they're on the register or they have a felony record. They are ministering to the members as they reintegrate into society.

Church and modern day lepers. If you know of a church out there or a spiritual center that is open to all people I'd love to know about them. You can email me at: hello@theoutspokenoffender.com or go to my website, www.theoutspokenoffender.com. And I want to mention these churches or these spiritual centers that are working to minister all people and not banning certain groups of people with criminal records.

I'd love for you to share the podcast. Let's get this out to as many people as possible. I will be having interviews coming up on my podcast as well. So if you'd like to be on the podcast, you can contact me on my website. Have a great day. And thanks for listening.

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