

# Have You Fallen for One of These Outrageous News Hoaxes?

Have you heard the one about a gay man suing Zondervan for \$60-\$70 million because he didn't like what the Bible said?

What about a pastor in Vermont who was sentenced to one year in prison because he refused to marry a gay couple?

They have something in common: They're both hoaxes that are gaining wildfire social media traction because Christians are sharing them while crying persecution. While there may be some shreds of truth in them—The Zondervan lawsuit appears to have happened in 2008—by calling them out, we're only taking away our own credibility.

Should we sound the alarm? Certainly. When it's true and when it matters. There are sites out there, such as the *World News Daily*, that take great pleasure in manipulating Christians into thinking satire pieces are truth.

In fact, they're the ones behind the story about an Islamic State member converting to Christianity after Allah refused him entrance to heaven and the priest who died and came back only to say God was a woman.

If those sound too outlandish, what about recent reports of Aaron and Melissa Klein, the couple who was fined \$135,000 for refusing to bake a cake for a lesbian ceremony? Rumor has it they were actually fined for leaking the couple's address. That rumor is absolutely false.

In this day and age, it is vital that we stand as watchdogs for the Christian faith. We cannot remain silent in the face of evil, and with the Internet at our fingertips, we're able to engage in public outcry faster and with minimal effort than ever before. (It's called slacktivism, in case you were

curious.)

It's easy to cry persecution when we don't have to do anything beyond a few clicks on the keyboard. But as we share false stories through social media, we crowd out the truth and the world can play it off as "Hey, those crazy Christians are getting up in a tizzy over nothing again."

Yes, persecution is happening. Yes, religious liberty and freedom are under attack. Look no further than the Kleins themselves, as well as countless others who are suffering the costs for not bowing to the agenda of those with whom they disagree.

But before you go crying wolf and sharing something because it sounds like it could be true, check your sources. Look for credible news outlets. While the mainstream media has a liberal bias, if something atrocious is happening, local outlets will pick it up.

But above all, pray for clarity and discernment as we approach uncertain times. The lines of morality appear to be blurring, and it can be difficult to tell fact from fiction. We see ridiculous stories every single day, but before you pass them along to your friends, look for the Truth, and that will set you free.

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