

How Spirit-Filled Christians Must Respond as Josh Harris Abandons Jesus

The secular media has very little interest in writing about the Christian community—unless a Christian leader messes up. Then suddenly, the story is everywhere. Unfortunately, that's what happened when former purity advocate and pastor Joshua Harris announced he is no longer a Christian.

Harris wrote a book in 1997 called *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. In it, he encouraged Christians to abandon the dating lifestyle to pursue a more serious and family-centered method he later called courtship. So how did he end up in a place where he's denouncing Christ?

My friend Larry Tomczak has known Harris and his parents—who were influential in the Christian homeschooling community—for many years. I knew Josh when he was a high-school student and remember being impressed with how level-headed and smart he was. I watched with interest when his book took off. But I have not seen him since, so I turned to Larry, who of course knows him much better than I did. On my podcast, Larry shared about what's going on and why Harris went from preaching purity to walking away from Jesus.

“When we were part of the Jesus Movement and launched [Covenant Life Church]—as it grew into the thousands, we turned the church over to Josh Harris,” Larry explains. “Josh was very famous as a young man early on in the homeschool movement. ... Josh was laying out a biblical worldview, especially focusing on singles regarding the true meaning of godly love versus just sexual attraction.”

But then in 2015, Harris stepped down as pastor from Covenant Life Church. And last year, Harris officially released a

statement renouncing what he wrote in his books. He says he spent two years talking to people who were very hurt by *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*.

The real shock came, though, when Harris announced on Instagram that he and his wife, Shannon, were separating after almost 20 years of marriage. About a week later, he declared he was no longer a Christian and apologized to the LGBT community for not accepting them before. And recently, he even participated in a gay pride parade.

"We just about fell out of our chairs," Larry says. "I couldn't believe it. So I made this appeal: 'Josh, if you're [apologizing for] some un-Christ-like attitudes toward homosexuals, then that's a good thing. But if you're now wandering into unscriptural acceptance of activity the Bible would call shameful, unnatural, degrading, impure and indecent, then we're on very dangerous ground.'"

Larry says Harris isn't the only Christian leader to accept homosexuality. He tells me of a megachurch pastor who lived near him who began leading his church to be gay-affirming. Larry tried to appeal to this pastor, but to no avail. Not too long after, the pastor's marriage collapsed.

Now, Larry sees Harris making the same mistake. Larry doesn't know what exact circumstances led up to this point in Harris' life, but he says Christians have to pray for Harris and his family before he fully falls into apostasy.

"I pray that Josh would stop and do a turnaround," he says. "Just like we say when football season gets under way, 'Well, it's a turnaround season.' It's not too late. If he'll humble himself and ... say, 'OK, do I need to extend forgiveness in areas? Have I drifted off into error?'"

Whatever happened with Harris, it didn't begin yesterday. It must have been going on for a long time. He fell off the radar when he moved to Canada years ago, which perhaps could have

been a warning sign that something was going on in his life.

But while the media gloats over Harris' fall, the church doesn't have to let it affect their faith. The Christian community has survived fallen leaders before, and it will survive them in the future. What's important is that we stay focused on Jesus, not a list of rules we have to follow.

Larry and I discuss this issue and the degradation of our culture more in depth in the podcast, which you can listen to right here or at the top of this article. If you're praying for Harris to come back to the Lord, be sure to share this article with a friend and get them praying too. Like Larry said, it's not too late.