

Why 'Charisma' Published the Report on Allegations Against John Crist

You've heard the news that Christian comedian John Crist has admitted to sexual misconduct and canceled his remaining tour dates for 2019 to focus on his spiritual healing. In a statement to *Charisma*, Crist confessed that his behavior toward women was "destructive and sinful."

"I've sinned against God, against women and the people who I love the most," he said. "I have violated my own Christian beliefs, convictions and values, and have hurt many people in the process. I am sorry for the hurt and pain I have caused these women and will continue to seek their forgiveness. I have also hurt the name of Jesus and have sought His forgiveness."

As a result of the in-depth report by *Charisma*, Crist's book with WaterBrook and TV special with Netflix were promptly postponed.

Because of the sensitivity of the topic and to give listeners some background on how we went about this investigation, I recorded a podcast with *Charisma* Associate Editor Taylor Berglund, who reported and wrote the story, along with his boss, Dr. Steve Greene, publisher of *Charisma* and executive vice president of the multimedia group.

The article was widely reported, most of it in a straightforward way. Then over the weekend, after we recorded the podcast, the secular online magazine *Slate* highlighted Taylor's journalistic work with this piece. Writer Ruth Graham said that our report on Crist serves as the latest sign that "conservative evangelicals are having serious internal conversations about not just criminal acts of sexual abuse but

subtler acts of manipulation and misconduct.”

Unfortunately, many in the secular world may not see what Crist did as a big deal. After all, many ungodly men in power use their position of authority to get what they want—even if it involves manipulating or abusing women. Before the #MeToo movement became popular, it was as if our culture had the attitude of “anything goes” when it comes to sexual behavior.

But as Christians, we know this is not true. We know there are always consequences to sexual sin, whether we see it as a “big deal” or not.

Slate also notes that our magazine’s critical reporting of a beloved Christian figure like Crist may have surprised some of our readers. Some may have wondered if we reported on Crist simply to get clicks or create controversy.

But that is far from the case. In fact, it was quite the opposite as we discuss on the podcast. The publishing board of *Charisma* took no pleasure in releasing this report. We had no intentions of ruining Crist’s career or “punishing” him. As Taylor told *Slate*, we simply wanted to prevent any more women from being hurt by Crist’s sexually manipulative and hurtful behavior.

And neither was it our goal to foster criticism and shame against the women Crist manipulated in the past. That’s the very reason we used pseudonyms. *Slate* said that, from the outside, our decision “might read as paternalistic, not to mention journalistically questionable.” But I felt we needed to use pseudonyms to protect our sources from harassment or criticism from the parts of the Christian community who would side with Crist. We explained on the podcast and in a note to the reader that we had signed affidavits from four of the women that we could use their names, and we independently verified their stories. Of course, Crist’s admission shows the reporting was valid, although in his statement he said he

wasn't guilty "of everything [he's] been accused of"—without giving any specifics.

Of course, though, we didn't publish the report without going to Crist first to hear his side. This is a crucial part of good journalism, in my opinion—a part that is sadly fading in the last few decades. As believers, we had a responsibility from Matthew 18 to go to Crist, which we did. We reached out to Crist's team over 24 hours before the story went live to give him an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

I'm personally grateful that Crist responded with an apology to the women he hurt and that he said he had sinned and asked to be forgiven, and that he would seek help. He could have denied the allegations and tried to save face, but instead he offered what seemed to be a sincere apology and supposedly is taking time off from his comedy work to focus on his healing.

Dr. Steve Greene received a text message from a friend who had just seen Crist's statement that I read on the podcast. The text reflects much of the response we received. Here is what Dr. Greene's friend wrote:

I just read the John Crist article and I am saddened by the situation. I pray he gets the help and healing—as do the women he abused. Your team did a very good job with the article. It was very fair. As I read it, I didn't feel like it was a hit piece or written in a retaliatory way. It was real news written with an honest and compassionate tone. I read it and my heart ached for a broken man who is still loved by God as well as for the women he hurt. Thank you for great, real reporting, and keep up the good work.

I'm grateful this report is not only blessing people with its sincerity and thoroughness but also prompting them to pray for Crist and the women he's hurt. After all, we didn't go out looking for this story. It came to us. In a sense, the Lord dropped this story into our laps, and we felt it was our

Christian responsibility to follow up with it.

As Christians, our heart is not to expose anyone, but to bring darkness to light so that people can repent and find healing and so that no one else is hurt. And I am so proud of how Taylor handled the investigation. His heart, like ours, was to bring light and healing. That's what good reporting does. We also pray it brings healing not only to the women Crist manipulated but to other women who have been hurt in other situations who can see the redemptive way this was handled.

[Click here](#) to listen to my podcast with Taylor and Dr. Greene about why we decided to run our report on Crist. And be sure to share this with others who would be interested in the behind the scenes story.