

Teacher Accused of Sexual Assault Says God Told Him to Tell Girl She Was Beautiful

A former student says her high school teacher used God and Christian teaching to sexually harass and assault her.

“He kind of coached me in Christianity and talked to me a lot about that and would ask me to sit behind his desk and it really just grew from there really quickly and it turned into something before I really knew it was going down that path,” the victim told an Alabama ABC affiliate.

The teacher, Joe Brad Petrey, allegedly says God told him to tell the victim she was beautiful, reports.

Petrey frequently wore Christian T-shirts and led Bible studies in class, according to some reports.

The alleged abuse occurred before 2015, when pictures of the victim and the teacher were leaked online.

According to the lawsuit, Petrey “used God and Christianity to lure a student into a sexual relationship. ... His Christianity teachings ... manipulated [the victim’s] trust and faithfulness to him so that she would not betray him or prosecute him. ... Religion in the hands of a sexual predator who is allowed to teach impressionable children at school is dangerously detrimental and should not be allowed.”

The victim is now 21 years old and filed a Title IX suit.

reports:

The suit claims A.W’s Title IX rights were violated because school leaders did not act in stopping the abuse she faced from former teacher and coach Joe Bradley Petrey. In addition

to Petrey, the lawsuit names the Tuscaloosa County School System, former Superintendent Elizabeth Swinford, seven school board members, former Principal Laura McBride, Vice Principal Thad Fitzpatrick and former Vice Principal Marcy Burroughs as defendants.

The complaint in the Title IX suit states the law prohibits discrimination based on sex, including but not limited to rape and harassment against women in public schools—but that school leaders did not do anything to stop the sexual abuse A.W. was facing from Petrey.

According to the lawsuit, Petrey taught A.W. when she was a freshman and again when she was a junior. In 2013, Petrey told A.W. he had a dream about her, and God told him to tell her that she was beautiful. Peter told A.W. she could talk to him about anything, and she eventually told him she was sexually abused as a child.