

Why Are So Many Pastors 'Coming Out of the Closet' as Atheists?

If you are a pastor doubting your faith, **atheist** Richard Dawkins is willing to foot the bill to get you out of the pulpit and on your way to a brand new career. Dawkins' organization, along with the Freedom From Religion Foundation, are the main sponsors of a secret initiative called the Clergy Project.

The Clergy Project claims to provide a "safe haven for active and former professional clergy/religious leaders who do not hold supernatural beliefs." Its aim is to "help clergy who want to leave the ministry."

Dawkins welcomes these doubting pastors to a "friendly place where you can take your time before deciding how to extricate yourself and when you will feel yourself ready to stand up and face the cool, refreshing wind of truth."

Last year the project announced a 6-month grant to "help formerly-religious clergy find secular employment. These clergy men and women will no longer have to put the priority of feeding their family above their desire to stop preaching what they no longer believe."

Supporters of this project believe they are making an investment "in the next great leaders of the free thought movement because of the incredible skills such as community building, support, and management that these clergy-persons bring with them."

That's right, atheists are going after weak pastors in hopes of getting them out of the closet and turning them into the next poster child for godlessness.

This is exactly what they got with Justin Vollmar. Justin had created a successful online teaching ministry for the deaf called the Virtual Deaf Church that was reaching thousands of deaf individuals each month. This week he proudly announced, "I am coming out of the closet as an atheist." His online announcement has gone viral and his coming out is being widely circulated in the media.

Thankfully Justin's story isn't over. I trust and **pray** that one day he will have a true life-changing encounter with Jesus. It appears he has never had that experience.

The Clergy Project exposes a great need in the body of Christ. A quick read of Justin's story reveals that he never had a strong spiritual father in his life to help mentor him and prepare him for the work of the ministry. He was hurt and offended by leaders he felt used him but didn't equip him. Justin found himself more and more isolated over the years. This fatherless son became easy prey.

I have been fortunate to have great **spiritual fathers** in my life. I have experienced firsthand the incredible benefits and necessity of such a mentor. My heart breaks for those who have not found or been willing to embrace the fathers in their life. It is the lack of godly fathers that is destroying our families, both natural and spiritual.

Just reading this story brings to mind several things my **spiritual fathers** have taught me over the years that would keep any minister or believer from abandoning their faith. I'll share three quickly.

1. I've been taught to Keep a closed mind.

Open-mindedness is celebrated as an enlightened virtue, one that should be embraced at all times towards all things. Yes, there are a multitude of things that I do not know, and I am very much open to learning. I love the art of discovery, as all God's children should.

However, sooner or later, your path of discovery has to lead you to a place of decision.

I have personally tasted and seen that the Lord is good. I have encountered His presence and can now testify of that which I have seen with my eyes and heard with my ears. I have no doubt. My **faith** is set. My mind is made up.

Steve Hill has reminded me several times that Jesus was the most closed-minded individual to ever walk the earth. It's true. There was no persuading Jesus and no debating with Him. His mind was firmly set upon the truth, and He was unwavering.

This resolute determination changed the world. He encouraged the same in His disciples.

2. I've been taught that this is a call, not a career.

I can take you to the square footage of carpet that I first heard His call. It was real, it was powerful, and it was life-changing. This call is not something that I chose; it chose me. He called; I surrendered. Every minister must have this moment.

I've been challenged by my spiritual fathers that if you can imagine yourself doing anything else other than the ministry, chances are you are not called to it. Harsh? Not at all.

It has to become part of your being as much as anything else. For me, I could no more abandon this call than I could abandon the air I breathe. It is not something I do; it is very much who I am.

Dawkins may find success in getting someone to switch careers, but good luck trying to get someone to switch their call. You can choose a career, but a call chooses you.

3. I've been taught to stay in the closet.

This is paramount! The world may be moved by those who come out of the closet, but the kingdom is moved by those who go into the closet.

Someone who has not found the strength of a personal prayer closet will flounder in the world, persuaded by every wind of "truth" that comes blowing in their direction.

I am thankful for spiritual fathers who modeled a godly prayer life before me and taught me to seek the face of God until I could hear His still small voice.

This was the obvious secret to Jesus' powerful earthly ministry. He constantly tucked Himself away to spend time in prayer so that He could hear the Father's voice. You and I are no different. No man is greater than His own prayer life! We have to fight for and maintain that secret place.

Interestingly, Dawkins has helped create a worldly secret place where weak and weary worshippers can go and encourage one another in their doubts. Thankfully, I have my own secret place where this weak and weary warrior can go and be encouraged in God's truth. I'm not coming out!

That's just three truths out of so many I've learned from spiritual fathers over the years. These truths provide unmovable anchors that keep my life secure, no matter what storm may blow my way.

If you are a minister or a believer who is wavering in your faith, I encourage you to seek out the spiritual fathers God has placed in your life. I promise you, they are there, if you are willing to truly be fathered.

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