



Struggles Survivors of the Independent Fundamental Baptists (IFB) Have Shared Upon Leaving the Movement

- 1) What is it like for someone who leaves a group like IFB to enter and assimilate into modern day American society?

Incredibly terrifying.

Terrible.

Very, very rocky.

You don't know where to even begin.

You don't know how to do life, how to adult.

It's traumatizing for many.

- 2) What are some of the biggest difficulties in this transition?

Struggling to be Self Sufficient and Reliant:

Getting a job, having no references that aren't IFB.

Getting real education.

Some struggle obtaining their birth certificates, social security cards or school records because those that hold them won't hand them over as punishment.

Not knowing how to utilize state assistance such as Medicaid, food assistance, lodging, etc. Most were taught these things were wrong and shameful.

Making decisions.

Feeling all alone in the world.

Social Struggles:

Not knowing how to talk to people. Certain words in the IFB don't mean the same thing in the real world.

Struggling to know how to read people and being unable to connect and relate to them.

Not knowing pop culture and the utter culture shock because you grew up so strict about everyday things.

Feeling like an outsider, inadequate or stupid.

Feeling the need to hide your past and not come off as a cult kid.

Not being able to fit in, make friends.

Feeling judged from people on the outside.

Some people on the outside are offended by why you would leave your faith. But, you didn't leave a faith; you left IFB.

Feeling like you are Constantly Sinning for normal things:

Things like wearing pants, going to movies, having a beer, listening to secular music, dating, not going to church feels like sin.

Just feeling like you are doing something wrong, even if you don't know what it is.

Fearful God will judge you, curse you, kill you.

On the outside, you no longer have what they refer to as a Hedge of Protection around you to keep you safe from the Devil or even something like a car accident.

Struggling with Self Identity:

Trying to find who you are as a person after the IFB. If someone joined the group, they have a memory of who they were before. But, if they born and raised in it, they have no clue and know nothing else. You have to learn your likes and dislikes, how to dress your own style, how to find interests, opinions, beliefs, politics, without just mirroring others. You have to learn how to be your authentic self and speak up for yourself.

Questioning Everything:

Trying to figure out what was truth from the lies we were taught.

Trying to retrain your brain and not go back to old rules.

Questioning others' motives and judging them based on IFB teachings.

Always feeling like someone has a hidden agenda.

Trust Issues:

Struggling to trust others and yourself.

Relationships and friendships and even complete strangers.

Struggling to connect. Intimacy difficulties.

Fear you will be pulled into another cult, because they are at higher risk.

Vulnerability.

Trying to avoid toxic relationships, because those that leave a group like IFB are at higher risk to be abused or held hostage to an abusive relationship, like domestic violence.

Guilt:

Feeling guilty for having human emotions like fear, anger, sadness, hurt and betrayal.

You can feel guilty just for having fun and feeling happy.

Feeling guilty for leaving your family and friends in IFB while you gain freedom.

Feeling like you will never be good enough, unworthy, don't deserve good things.

Deserve hell.

Mental Health Struggles:

Stress, trauma, PTSD, anxiety and depression, along with other undiagnosed mental health disorders.

Addiction to drugs, alcohol, and unsafe sex.

Feeling like you're living in an alternate reality, often disassociating.

There are many with learning disabilities made worse by inadequate schooling curriculum.

You have also many who are ADHD and autistic and don't know.

Extreme Sadness:

Grieving what you lost by leaving IFB.

Grieving what they took from you. Many feel that their entire childhoods were stolen from them and grieve the fact they don't have normal high school and college experiences.

Grieving that it wasn't true.

Grieving that they will never love you unconditionally.

Processing the betrayal that people who said they were your friends in IFB believe the lies the pastor will tell on why you left.

Knowing you gave them your all, but they will never help you just because you left their church.

Mostly, people grieve the loss of family and friends, some who they will never speak to or see again.

Grieve the loss of years that were spent in the movement surviving, instead of thriving.

**This is a collection of responses from several individuals who self-identified as survivors of the Independent Fundamental Baptist Movement. These responses were gathered independently by Lydia and Laura Lauderdale. You can follow Lydia's Blog at lydiajoyl.blogspot.com*