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Kieryn:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve:

And I'm Eve. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn:

Where two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the religious right.
Hi, Eve.

Eve:

Hi, Kieryn.

Kieryn:

How was your week?

Eve:

I don't want to talk about it. I hate my book. I don't want to write anything more. I want to quit my job and become a shepherd.

Kieryn:

I mean, that's something you can do. You have a dog, so you just need sheep. And... Yeah.

Eve:

She's useless for that though.

Kieryn:

She just needs to make sheep friends. It's fine.

Eve:

Yeah. I can make friends with sheep. I just want to steal their wool and make stuff out of it. It's cool.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it's fine. It's okay.

Eve:

So what are we doing this week?

Kieryn:

Well, I think we're going to have a friend on to talk about some internet things that happened.

Eve:

Yeah. Chris Stroop.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And also we have a bunch of questions that are starting to pile up in our email that I think we're finally going to get to.

Eve:

So many questions.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I'm excited.

Eve:

Yeah. It's going to be good. Okay. So we have been just answering some questions, some listener questions. And one of the questions that we got is asking about a day in the life of a kid in a homeschool family. Which I think really ties into what we've been talking about on their expose Christian homeschooling thread this week. So we'd like to talk about that, but we can get into answering that question after we talk about the hashtags.

Chris:

So yeah. Well, I ended up coming up with the expose Christian schools hashtag not this last Friday, but the Friday before that. And that's when Mike Pence tweeted about... Well, he said attacks on Christian education in America must stop or something like that, right? He said-

Eve:

Attacks or attacks?

Chris:

... No, attacks.

Eve:

Attacks. Okay.

Chris:

I think he started the tweet... Yeah, no, he did. We could easily find the tweet. But he started the tweet with something like, "Well, we'll let the criticism roll off, but attacks on Christian education in America must stop." So really petulant. And David French was whining in National Review as he does about this horrible attack on Christian education and how Christians are being so persecuted because people are up in arms that Karen Pence is teaching in a Christian school that discriminates against queer people. So I was like, "All right, we need to start telling our stories in order to, well, expose them." So that was the hashtag that just popped into my mind.

Eve:

I mean, Pence said it would roll off. He invited it.

Kieryn:

Right. He literally opened the door for it.

Chris:

Yeah. Well, he said it must stop. And I was like, "Oh, okay, bru. It's on now. It is not stopping. It's just getting started." And anyway, it was another one of the hashtags that I've created that I didn't really talk to anybody about beforehand. It just popped into my head and I just put out a tweet and said, "Hey, let's use this hashtag." And then I passed it around to some people in groups privately. But that's not really enough planning to guarantee that you're going to get a viral hashtag. And yet by that Friday night, it was into the top trends on Twitter. And maybe that's because it was a Friday night. And so it didn't have a lot to compete against. When we launched expose Christian homeschooling that Sunday, everything was about football and yeah.

Eve:

Right. It was the playoffs.

Chris:

So trolls noticed. And I think that then these alt-right trolls kind of kept the hashtag alive overnight actually by complaining about it. And then-

Kieryn:

It's weird how that works.

Chris:

... Yeah. Couple days later it had some 200,000 tweets and I don't know if there's any way to know...

Eve:

Well, and there's also been some delusions and misspellings, so there's probably a lot more that we haven't found. There's one version going around without the R in Christian that has a lot...

Chris:

One going around without the C in schools.

Eve:

Yeah. It's got a lot of responses. So there's been some really good conversation. And we've had you on the show before, but what's your personal relationship with these stories?

Chris:

Yeah, so I went to homeschool, or not homeschool. It's a Christian school. For most of my childhood, I was in a public school in kindergarten. And I guess that's because my sister is almost two years younger than me, but one year behind me in school and my mom was staying home with us until both her kids were in school. And then she had taught in public school for some time before I was born, I guess. And then she decided to teach in Christian school after that. So I went to Heritage Christian School in Indianapolis in first grade and stayed there through half of sixth grade. That's when we ended up moving to Colorado Springs because dad got a random phone call from a sort of like [hip 00:00:05:30] cool

seeker, sensitive pastor who was recruiting him. And so I got to go to public school for half of sixth grade, the second half of sixth grade in Colorado Springs in 1993.

And it was awkward because I'd never really been in that environment. And I was kind of an awkward nerdy kid, but I had some friends by the end of that year and I begged my parents to let me stay in public school. But no. Then my mom was going to teach at Colorado Springs Christian School, so I had to go to that school. That's the school where I actually had a worksheet that basically had the whole curse of Ham theology at least implied in it. Because it showed little arrows from Shem, Ham and Japheth, where they went and who their descendants were and talked about Ham being cursed. You can pretty easily fill in the blanks.

Kieryn:

Oh, my God.

Eve:

Yeah. Blatantly racist curriculum is really common. And we were just talking about... One of our listeners was asking about evolution and you'll hear that later in the episode where we respond to that question. But it's the stuff that they... They were using these creationist textbooks was often kind of old school racism is based on evolution kind of stuff, which is the weirdest piece of older evolutionary theory to bring into your creationist textbooks.

Chris:

Yeah. I guess. I haven't had a look at them in a long time and I don't particularly remember that, but I probably just didn't pick up on it. And it may be that I had in somewhat different textbooks. I do remember the things that that picture of a decomposing whale and a Japanese ship that goes around and it's supposed to be like a [inaudible 00:07:06] or something.

Kieryn:

Oh, yeah.

Eve:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kieryn:

It's proof that dinosaurs existed after the flood or something.

Eve:

Jay Wile and Ken Ham really loved that one.

Kieryn:

Yeah. It's also proof that the Loch Ness Monster is real. I've seen that before, too.

Chris:

Yeah.

Eve:

Yeah, yeah, yes. Yeah. So what are some of the responses that we've been getting? I mean, I've been engaging a lot with homeschool moms who've kind of created accounts to talk about this. It kind of takes... My Twitter interactions have kind of taken the response that I have with a lot of homeschool parents when I go lobby about these issues where it's like, "Well, my son was fine. So obviously this isn't a thing, or I never saw any abuse in the homeschool group I taught in or this, that and the other." And a lot of it is just, you have to get them to calm down and remember you're not attacking them. And you're not saying that they're bad parents because that's where their immediate defensiveness goes. And once you smooth that over and you say, "Hey, no, actually we're just talking about our experiences and what we saw. And that doesn't mean that what you saw and experienced isn't valid, but because you did well, don't you want everybody to have that experience? Don't you want your story to be the universal one?"

And appealing to that, it generally tends to diffuse things a little bit, and we've had some actual good interactions. I've had some people I've had to block because they're just being belligerent and refusing to use any kind of listening skills or empathy. But for the most part, I think most of my negative interactions have flipped and become productive conversations.

Chris:

That's great. That's a really smart tactic. I can't say that I've really had many of these conversations flip in a good way. I don't really expect it either. And I don't think I've been tweeted at by that many actual homeschooling parents or homeschool graduates. I mean, you can't really tell, right? Some of them are trolls using talking points that were literally created on 4chan as I discovered.

Eve:

Either HSLDA or 4chan.

Kieryn:

Oh, my God.

Chris:

Some of them may actually be real people, but they came in swinging and I just blocked them pretty much. Because I've been just trying to hold space for everybody in this conversation who's engaging in good faith. I remember particularly for the people coming from our perspective by retweeting and quote tweeting a lot. Tweeting some of my own experience, but also putting it in more of an abstract framework for people to look at and pushing back against the huge right wing rage machine that responded over the course of the week. And right now, if you could do a Google search for the hashtag, expose Christian schools, I haven't tried expose Christian homeschooling for this, but the first one you get just a bunch of right wing websites pushing a completely false narrative about where the hashtag came from as your top results, which is disappointing. But it also means we really hit a nerve here.

Eve:

Yeah. So what did you see on 4chan and what are these sites saying about the origins of the hashtags?

Chris:

The first thing that I saw on 4chan that actually happened, I think, that same Friday night was they were saying like, "Well, let's push back with expose Islamic schools or expose Jewish schools or expose public schools."

Eve:

Which is just so racist I can't even.

Chris:

Yeah. And so those were some of the talking points that entered the conversation. Well, the conversation [inaudible 00:10:38] close. But when Dan Levin of the New York Times contacted me the other day to say he wanted to do a piece talking about this hashtag, because he said he was really shocked at these stories. He had no idea this whole parallel world existed. And that's great because we've been trying to break through forever to get coastal elite to understand that this world exists.

Eve:

This is such a common response. Anytime I go in Democratic circles, I'm like, "Yeah, actually this is a problem." They're like, "Whoa, I thought this didn't exist anymore."

Kieryn:

Yep.

Chris:

And it's very frustrating because they allow the right to dominate that space. And then they let the New York Times and Washington Post write fluff pieces about evangelicals and normalize extremism. Or they often let evangelicals cover themselves. So this is big that someone at the New York Times wants to pay attention to this hashtag. Now here I made a mistake and I played into the hands of the trolls who then move on through Townhall and Breitbart to Fox News. And the hashtag's been discussed on Fox News at least twice now.

Kieryn:

[inaudible 00:11:38] I guess.

Eve:

Talk about Dan Levin and the response that he had.

Chris:

Yeah, so I wanted to say I made a mistake after I talked to him by saying... Because he wanted me to introduce him to other people. And since he's a youth reporter, he initially suggested I put him in touch with younger graduates. So I said, "I can definitely mention this in some groups and have some people reach out to you, but why don't you just put out a tweet and I can amplify it?" That tweet was quickly bombarded. And then I also saw that on 4chan there was a lot of anti-Semitic slurs involved. They were saying we need to go attack this tweet and they ratioed it crazy.

Eve:

Can you define that term for our listeners in case they're not familiar with it?

Kieryn:

I was going to say wait for the... What's a ratio?

Eve:

For the moms at home.

Chris:

Ratio refers to the ratio of likes and retweets versus replies. So often if there are a lot more replies than likes and retweets, that means that the tweet is getting negative pushback. But anyway, I've got the screenshots, this was a very coordinated effort from 4chan. And then it was picked up by certain verified right wing Twitter users like Ben Shapiro. And so he got hammered. And I think they were trying to get him to quit and not write the story. He's still writing the story. He tried to clarify, "I didn't create this hashtag. It was already a viral hashtag. I want to write about people's responses to it and not just do that in a one-sided way." But yeah, then the whole right wing blogosphere and kind of online media sphere just filled with these stories about, "Oh, look, it's a Jewish reporter who's trying to slam Christian schools. He's fishing for negative stories about Christian schools. It's an attack on Christianity."

Kieryn:

Oh, my God.

Chris:

And that's kind of my fault and I feel terrible for it. Because I was like, "Why don't I just put out a tweet?" I had no idea though that they were ready to mobilize that quickly. The right really hates this hashtag.

Eve:

Well, that's good. I mean, that means we are doing what we should be doing. This is one of those few instances where I think the opposition is a positive thing and obviously we need to be careful. And if you're sharing your stories, give yourself two factor authentication and check and make sure all your passwords are secure. But I think this is really healthy and really good that this conversation started and that people are interested in covering it.

Chris:

Yeah, I think so too. Right now what bothers me though is that if you just Google it, you're going to get all the stuff from Townhall and Breitbart and wherever else, all these trash sites and fake news sites. But I think once the New York Times story does come out and there will be some more blog posts and perhaps some other comments maybe in Op-Ed or something. It'll start to even out again, and people will be able to get the real story of the hashtag and why we're having these conversations about expose Christian schools and expose Christian homeschooling in an easier way. Of all their right wing, fake news approaches to this out there, well, I haven't actually clicked on and looked at all of them, but as far as I'm aware, only one of them, the first one that was on The Daily Caller refers to me and says, "I claimed to create the hashtag."

Because what they want to do is plant the idea that this is a conspiracy of a leftist mob attacking Christianity. And some people on Twitter have been running with that and saying that the whole thing was a setup to get the MAGA boys because, yeah, I have a time machine or whoever is paying me. George Soros has a time machine.

Eve:

Yeah. We definitely planned it around, what's the name of the school? Covington Catholic?

Chris:

Yeah.

Eve:

Yeah. We totally didn't coordinate it with that. It was a really, really bizarre universe coincidence, but...

Chris:

Yeah, and that was, I didn't mention earlier, but that is what kind of kept the hashtag going and made it more viral. And some things tend to get kind of muddled and confused because there are serious differences between, say evangelical schools, which is what I designed the hashtag for as a protest against this petulant defense of Karen Pence teaching at a discriminatory school in which capacity she obviously cannot represent all Americans is a big fuck you to queer Americans and women and marginalized groups. But yeah. Then there's big difference between that kind of school and some Catholic schools and Episcopal schools. That all got lost when suddenly a bunch of people assumed Covington started the hashtag or the hashtag was started about Covington.

Eve:

Well, good journalism is going to look at these things a little bit more slowly and use nuance. And that's why all the coverage of it so far is just terrible.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah.

Chris:

Yeah. Well, except for The Daily Dot and Paper Magazine, but those sources, they don't have the visibility of the New York Times. And right now their right wing narrative is overwhelming them in the search results. You can find them if you go down a little bit further, but yeah. These right wing sources are obviously not interested in due diligence. They're just interested in pushing a narrative that deflects from the criticism that the hashtag actually represents.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Well, anything to shine the light away from themselves really.

Chris:

Yeah. They don't want to engage with me as the person who created the hashtag because I was traumatized in Christian school environments, or with any of us who are actually telling our real story.

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So they don't want to present us as real people. They wanted to present us as a leftist mob attacking Christianity and probably being paid by George Soros. Full disclosure, I gave a lunch time talk at Open Society Foundations in New York once. I got a flight to New York, a nice hotel near Broadway and a lunch, a free lunch. That's all I've ever gotten from George Soros.

Eve:

You're a paid protestor.

Kieryn:

Yeah. God, you're rolling in it. How can they trust you?

Eve:

That's just lucrative. Well, thank you so much for the work you've been doing and for joining us here to talk about it and hopefully we can get a little bit more traction on this in the next week or so.

Chris:

Yeah, I hope so. We'll maybe see another upsurge with the New York Times article and I hope we'll get more attention for expose Christian home schooling as well. And thanks for everything that you're doing with kind of talking down to some of these angry moms.

Eve:

It's what I'm good at.

Chris:

All right. Take care.

Kieryn:

Bye.

Eve:

Bye. So we were just joined by Chris Stroop and we'll put his Twitter information at the end of this episode that you can find. And Kieryn, we had one question that we wanted to answer from one of our listeners.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

That connects with this.

Kieryn:

Yeah. What is the daily life of a homeschool kid like? What was your day to day?

Eve:

Episode 26 #ExposeChristianHomeschool and Listen... (Completed 03/08/22)

Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

My day to day was very simple. We had to be up and dressed and fed and breakfast was done by 8:30 and in the living room for Bible time, which my mom led and that usually lasted 45 minutes to an hour. And that would involve some worship songs, reading some Bible stories, having a discussion, having some prayer requests and prayer time. And then we'd get going on school like 9:00/9:30. And mom would usually work with the little kid, whoever was the youngest who was in school, on homework while we would scatter to the [inaudible 00:19:35] to try to find a quiet spot to work. For a number of years, my mom tried to keep us all at the kitchen table, but by the time I was 13, I was so stressed out by hearing whoever was the six year old having a meltdown about not wanting to read that she finally had mercy on me to let me go do math in my room.

So we'd go and do work. And then 11:30 to 13:00, "the kitchen would be open" and we could come in and make ourselves lunch, which was usually leftovers or quesadillas or something. And then we'd go back to do school work. And usually we got done with school around 15:00/15:30. And between finishing school and 17:00 or 17:30 when my dad would come home would be our time to do chores around the house, errands like grocery shopping. Or if there was socializing that was happening, we'd do it then. But it was kind of ostensibly free time. But it wouldn't ever really be. So I'd get myself comfortable with a book and think like, "Oh, I finally arrived. I did my chores." My zone. We had an area of the house that was our personal responsibility. My zone was clean. My room is clean, my work's done, I can read or do something fun. And then it would be like, "Why are you lying around? Get up and help me. Do this, do that. Your father's coming home. He's going basically lose his shit if he sees the house like this. Clean up."

So I had to do everything else. So it would often turn into like, "Don't even think about using that free time, just make yourself available and be around and help." So helping with dinner prep or chores or watching siblings while mom went grocery shopping, to the doctors. And then my dad would get home and he would pretty much always have a hissy fit about how messy the house was and be just completely overwhelmed of going from a quiet, sane office environment to chaos with nine kids. And everybody's creative and loud and hungry and yelling and irritated at each other and cooped up and stressed because we've just been doing an emergency clean to make him happy. And obviously, it's not good enough, so he's not happy.

So that would be chaos and then we'd have dinner. And my dad didn't allow us to talk until we were done eating. And if he wasn't done monologuing about his day at that point, he would often just excuse you from the table so that he could keep talking and you wouldn't interrupt him. He really preferred to eat in silence other than him and mom talking. And after that, it would be dinner chores and bedtime routines and help with everything and help with everything and help with everything. And then I would have a little bit of time on my own if I'd done all my work. And if I didn't, I would have to do my homework then.

And I sometimes started to get time with my mom when I was in high school after the little kids were in bed and before she finished winding down. So I'd help her fold laundry and we'd have a conversation or whatever. But like clockwork every night, my dad would come downstairs at 22:00 and be like, "I need your mom. Go to bed." So that would be when he'd call it for the house. And I was almost never tired at that point. So I would just go to bed and take a flashlight and read for a couple hours because that was the only time I could get both alone time and fun reading.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah. Mine was really similar. I had to be awake and dressed and my bed made and making breakfast for everyone at 8:00 and everyone would eat breakfast at 8:00. And then at 8:39, we would have devotions. That would be about a half hour or so. Yeah. So I think we did that at 8:30. And then at

9:00, we would start school and we would do school until 11:00. And usually it was my mom working with the little kids and then I would go do whatever my school was or wind up helping with the other kids' school. And then at 11:00, I would stop whatever I was doing and make lunch for everyone. And then at 13:00, we would have lunch and then clean up and start on chores. And then from 13:30 to 15:00 was free time for basically everyone except me. So they all got to go play and whatever. And in theory, I would also get to go play, but really I was doing whatever chores needed to be done. So at that point I would start on the infinite laundry.

Eve:

And it was almost this thing of in theory, they would help with things, but it's too much work to wrestle young kids to do that work. So then it just became like, "Let's just slap it on the oldest kid and it's fine."

Kieryn:

Yeah. And it's easier than trying to teach four kids how to load a laundry machine. Yeah. And so, yeah, I wound up just doing the inside chores and then I would, if I was lucky, have an hour at 15:00 that-

Eve:

Girls have to do inside chores.

Kieryn:

... Right. Exactly. I was never allowed to take out the trash or mow the lawn or any of that. But everything inside I did.

Eve:

I loved mowing the lawn. And then my little brother was like, "No, I'm going to be the man of the house if dad dies. So I have to do it. Let me have it." Because he wanted to push the powerful machine. And I was like, "This is my alone time. This is not fair."

Kieryn:

Yep. Yeah. And then at 16:00 is when I would put PBS on for the kids and start making dinner. That way when dad got home at 17:00/17:30, dinner was ready.

Eve:

Oh, yeah. That was the other thing. Putting on PBS while you're-

Kieryn:

Dinner has to be ready.

Eve:

... We had to put on PBS to keep the little kids occupied so they wouldn't make more messes. Yep. We did that too.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Because you also have to clean. So I would be making dinner after cleaning from 15:00 to 16:00 to make sure everything was ready for dad to get home. So then I had to quarantine the kids because otherwise they'd make more messes and yeah. And so then I would cook dinner from 16:00 to 17:00 and then dad would get home and we'd eat dinner and I would serve everyone. I would serve myself last. And sometimes we kind of tried to wait-ish for everyone to sit and eat, but that's just not how that works out.

Eve:

Oh, my God. My dad was so strict about that. We couldn't take a bite until mom had taken her first bite.

Kieryn:

Yeah. My parents kind of tried that, but at some point, my mom's pregnancies were so bad that half the time we didn't all eat dinner together. So I would make mom whatever it was that she wanted to eat and make something else entirely for everyone else. And we just like... It became more chaotic than together. So I would just wind up serving people. And then at the end of it-

Eve:

It sounds pragmatic though. It makes sense.

Kieryn:

... Yeah. It was like everyone needs to eat and it's too chaotic to try and rally everyone right now. So we'll just do this.

Eve:

For years, I used to have, we never really diagnosed it, but it would be this reflexive muscle thing that I wouldn't be able to swallow properly when I was stressed and eating dinner at home. So food would go up into my sinus cavities. Sorry, this is gross. But I would choke on food getting stuck up in my nose because I wouldn't be able to eat. It was basically, I was having an anxiety attack while eating dinner and I didn't realize I was. And so when I went to college was when I really first started noticing this because it stopped happening as often. So when I went to the cafeteria during rush hour, I would have that happen. And I thought it was odd. And then when I would eat breakfast alone during chapel and everything was quiet, on mornings I wasn't supposed to be in chapel, nothing would happen. It would be fine.

And so I was like, "This is really weird. I wonder what this is." And then I went home for fall break and then for Thanksgiving break and Christmas break and it always happened at home. And then I remembered like, "Oh, this has been happening for years during high school. I just didn't think about it because it was so normal until it stopped happening." And then as soon as I stopped eating dinner in chaotic environments, it doesn't happen. But very rarely will it happen if I'm out at a crowded bar and I'm trying to eat or I'm really hungry and I'm in a loud space. So if a restaurant is too loud, I will not be able to finish my food because I'll start having that happen again. But for years I would just avoid eating rice in the cafeteria because it would just all get stuck in my nose.

Kieryn:

Yeah. That's fair, yeah, that makes sense.

Eve:

But yeah, these environments are super, super stressful. And you wouldn't be able to have needs or ask for anything because-

Kieryn:

No. And all my siblings had to eat all of the food because they were the ones who were growing and somehow I wasn't. So that laid all of the foundation for this awesome eating disorder that I have. That's great.

Eve:

... Would your parents hit the kids if they didn't finish eating all the food on their plate?

Kieryn:

No. No. My parents-

Eve:

Or send them to bed without food if they were being picky?

Kieryn:

No. My parents knew better than to force their kids to finish eating because I used to get really car sick. And so we would go out to eat on Sunday and then I would just get sick. And so they realized that if they stopped telling me to eat everything, I would stop when I was full or before I was even full and then not get sick. So they learned with me to listen to their kids when they're like, "I can't eat anymore" and not make them finish.

Eve:

Yeah.

Kieryn:

Which is good and really rare because everyone I know, their parents were like, "No, you have to finish it." And my parents were like, "No, we don't want to deal with vomit. So don't bother trying to finish it."

Eve:

Yeah. No, it was like, "We're going to serve you this for breakfast if you don't finish it."

Kieryn:

Oh, my God.

Eve:

And if you won't eat it, you can go to bed now and go to bed hungry and you'll eat it tomorrow.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah. My parents didn't have much empathy for just not wanting to eat a thing, but they also wouldn't make you finish it. So if you didn't want to eat all your green beans, they'd make you eat some of your green beans because you have to eat some green beans, but they wouldn't make you eat all of them. They'd just be like, "Okay, have three bites. And if you can do three bites, then it's fine."

Eve:

Well that's like quasi-reasonable.

Kieryn:

Yeah, exactly. So it's like, "You still have to get your green vegetable because it's important, but you don't have to eat all of it." So they were okay with that. But yeah. And then when I got into high school and it took me longer than two hours to do my school, my mom got really angry with me. And I would like wind up spending more time doing school and then being behind on the chores and behind on lunch and behind on dinner. And I would have to do it after everyone went to bed, which was the only time that I had to myself. And then at some point I was getting four or five hours of sleep at night because I worked so long all day and still had to do homework and then still wanted to have friends and unwind.

Eve:

I would start pulling studies up for my mom. I'd be like, "Look, no. Teenagers actually need more sleep than your elementary school kids do because we're going through all these hormonal changes and your brain is growing and all this stuff. I actually do need 9 to 10 hours of sleep at night and you're not letting me have it. And here look all my friends in church, here's the hours that they're spending on schoolwork and this isn't fair. You have to let me." This is when I was arguing to be allowed to study in my room.

Kieryn:

Ah.

Eve:

So it was just like, "I have to get stuff done otherwise I can't help you because then it's going to cut into my sleep time and I'm going to be a mess." So I pull together this scientific thing as a way to negotiate for any amount of space that I could get. And it sort of worked. It didn't really, but I definitely had a bit of an easier time in high school because I did do that.

Kieryn:

That makes sense.

Eve:

Yeah.

Kieryn:

So hopefully that answers that question.

Eve:

So we have so many questions right now just piled up in our inbox. Everybody want to know something.

Kieryn:

Yes. Which is great and good because then we know what to talk about. So what's the one that we should tackle first?

Eve:

I think the easiest one to answer maybe would be the personal experience about creationism versus evolution.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

This is a question from our listener Jenny.

Kieryn:

Yeah. So what was your experience?

Eve:

So we had a TV for about half of my childhood and once we got a TV, we only watched PBS, we never had Cable. And we would watch Magic School Bus and Bill Nye the Science Guy as, I don't know, I think mom counted them for school as academic shows. I mean, obviously, not obviously, some people, it would not be obvious for, but we didn't have that as our only scientific education thankfully. But it was supplemental material that mom was encouraging us to watch. And if either of those shows or any of the characters in the shows would start talking about evolution, mom would kind of do what she would do with censoring kissing in movies where she'd put a pillow up over the TV and be like, "la, la, la, la, la." And even if she wasn't around, we would just do it for her because we were taught that that was something that we just shouldn't even consider taking seriously at all or listen to.

Kieryn:

Yep. I was the same way. And yeah, I also loved Bill Nye the Science Guy, and the Magic School Bus. But as soon as the episode about evolution came on, we had to turn it off. We weren't allowed to watch it and we always had this lecture that followed it about how evolution is wrong and it's a lie by the devil to make you not believe in God. And we all know that God created the earth in seven literal days and all of those things.

Eve:

And then I got to college and at my school we had science professors who were teaching literal seven day creationism. And then we had a couple of professors who were teaching divine intervention and evolution. So saying that like, "Well the seven days is a piece of poetry in Genesis and it's not actually reflective of real time. And it's just a way of remembering certain attributes of God or whatever. And so you can't take it seriously because it's literature, it's a literary expression of a narrative." And they would say that they believed in Old Earth Creationism. So evolution and the theory of evolution were valid. But that the Big Bang was when God said, "Let there be light." That was the way they saw it.

And then my roommate in college actually that year, I hope she doesn't mind me telling this story, but she was engaged to someone. It was our senior year. So we were both engaged and her engagement actually ended while we were in school that year. And it wasn't totally because of this, but where kind of the conflict started on some levels was her dad was really upset that her fiance did not believe in literal seven day creationism. And he kept bringing this up as an issue and being like, "Yeah, but this fiance is just like... I don't know that he's really a Christian because of this."

Kieryn:

Yep. Yeah. I remember my parents talking about the people who believed in Old Earth Creationism and how wrong they were because the Bible is literal. And I remember even when we went to any science museum, we would always self censor and my mom would read the thing about evolution and then be like, "And remember, that's not true."

Eve:

Well, it would kind of pair the aggressiveness that they struck out evolution as an idea kind of compared to how I think a lot of people saw divorce. I remember one of my dad's college friends got divorced and he got off the phone with him and he hung up and he's like, "He's deluded himself. I don't know that he's a believer anymore. I don't think we can be friends with him anymore." And I was like, why? And he's like, "Well, he says that he believes it's God's will for him to divorce. Which means he's clearly not hearing from God because God hates divorce and the Bible says so." And it was that kind of absolutist stance about creationism. Darwin was as bad Hillary Clinton who was the-

Kieryn:

Obviously she was evil.

Eve:

Obviously, you couldn't believe in that and be a Christian.

Kieryn:

Right. Yeah. Did you come across the argument about macro evolution versus micro evolution and how the one kind of evolution is okay and the other isn't?

Eve:

Right, right. So this is, I think, Jay Wile talks about this in his science books which were used as a textbooks for me. The Apologia Science curriculum, which provides creationist propaganda. Biology, Chemistry and Physics for homeschool high schoolers. And he talked about, yeah, so things like bone structure changing or breeds changing, you look at like dogs, how they shift or the finch's beaks that Darwin observed in the Galapagos, saying that those were legitimate. Micro evolution is real, we see this in real time, it's measurable, but we've never seen any species jumps. So clearly that's not real.

Kieryn:

Right. Obviously.

Eve:

Because we have to see it originally.

Kieryn:

Right. That's how science works.

Eve:

And they also, along those lines, threw a lot of shade on carbon dating and were like, "Yeah, the Grand Canyon was caused by the flood and, and, and, and, and, and, and."

Kieryn:

Yeah. And it all happened so fast that it smushed the dinosaurs and that's why we have petroleum. I think I saw Ken Ham at a vacation Bible school thing one year.

Eve:

So did I.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And it was like-

Eve:

He's so condescending. That man is so unbearable to listen to, even if you're sold on his ideas.

Kieryn:

... Yeah. Yeah. All I remember was that he said we could ride dinosaurs. So-

Eve:

I mean, that's a fantasy I want to believe in. I'm going to keep that in the Tumblr fanfick world.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

Okay. So good question. Thank you, Jenny.

Kieryn:

Did you ever have any experience with multi-level marketing things in your churches and whatnot?

Eve:

I have a lot of rage about this. I don't know if I should talk about it. Okay. So I have to be really careful to talk about this because, as I said, I have a lot of rage. But multi-level marketing is a thing that is largely aimed at poor people. It's a class oppression tool. It's a trick to make people hustle and think that they're improving themselves and steal all their money and their time. And it's a really shitty capitalist trick. And so I still know a lot of people who are lower income class level who don't have access to other kinds of labor that might provide for them better. And so they still keep doing these things.

So it's not specifically Christian. It happens to be more common in low income communities. It happens to be more common in communities that have lower levels of education per capita. And a lot of this has to do with health and wealth gospel teaching, prosperity gospel stuff. And I think there's a lot that can be looked into in terms of how racism and white supremacy play into who is targeted with these things just like with red lining and lending predatory lending practices. So I think a lot of this is just systemic America, shitty at race and class stuff.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I saw a lot of that. It was really prevalent in some of the churches that I was in when I moved to Metro Atlanta actually. That was a huge thing, which makes sense because where I lived was a very rural and poor community. And a lot of these homeschool families are very large and very poor. And so the way that... It became a thing where all of the girls I knew were part of Mary Kay or whatever makeup selling market was.

Eve:

So I saw Mary Kay, Arbonne, Norwex, Bread Beckers, Tupperware was around in San Francisco when my parents were living there. I didn't particularly see it. But my mom went to parties when she was a newlywed there. So I don't know what else you saw, but these are the things that I saw. But I think a lot of the... If you look at a lot of the homeschool curriculum distribution models, a lot of them are kind of based off of that. I think Sonlight curriculum is based off of that. We have to put in bulk orders and go through a representative. There's a couple others that do it like that too.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah. It was a weird... It was the only way that the women could have a job or any income in the way I experienced it.

Eve:

It's the 20th and 21st century version of selling your eggs so you can have pocket change to get cute lace things for your hat or whatever backend pioneer times.

Kieryn:

Yeah, exactly. And so it turned into that, but it's just this terrible trap. I was never a part of that. I always thought it was weird and sketchy and why do you have to spend so much money to sell these things? It's ridiculous. But it was a huge part of the community that I was in.

Eve:

Yeah. And I think one of the things that's interesting about this is my family never, my parents to clarify. I have siblings who have done multilevel marketing things. My ex-husband sold Cutco for a minute, which is a whole other story. But my parents didn't participate in this and they always looked askance at this stuff. My mom hated Mary Kay and Arbonne parties. So much to hear her talk about... She's terrified of makeup and it's not because she's scared of the concept of makeup, she's terrified of the sales people because of bad experiences with Arbonne and Mary Kay people.

I think the reason that they distrusted it is because my father came from an upper middle class family where both of his parents had gone to graduate programs. His dad had a PhD and his mom had a masters. They like didn't need it so they could see through it because they had had some financial

education and had access to better resources. And then my mom's dad was a union worker for his entire life. So he worked in factories in San Francisco in the bay area and he was always part of a union. And I think that too knowing your rights and knowing how your labor benefits your superiors in those kinds of systems and taking advantage of that and getting representation and having power at the negotiating table, those things were passed on to my mom.

And so we just kind of... I mean, I got this education. I don't think a lot of my younger siblings did. I've had a couple siblings who've done, multi-level marketing jobs here and there, but they're just trying to hustle because a lot of them didn't finish college and a lot of them didn't go to college and they're they trying to put food on the table and don't have to live off a Taco Bell.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah. And I feel like it kind of does work really well in the church because it kind of mirrors that too where you're trying to get people to give money to God. A lot of the things that happened were all church people and done in Bible studies.

Eve:

And the guilt tripping for tithing. That gets really heavy in these places. And it's like, "Okay, where does that money actually go? And what is the return on investment?" There's no accountability. These institutions are tax exempt. It's so corrupt. It's always so corrupt.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And you're conditioned to just accept that like that's normal and hope that eventually you'll be good enough that you'll be stable because God will bless you. [crosstalk 00:46:51] And that's the other thing.

Eve:

Yeah. The prosperity gospel stuff is that if you are faithful and you claim your blessings from God because you are an heir to this kingdom, then you will succeed. And if you're not succeeding, you're clearly not in obedience and you have a sin issue in your life and you're ignoring it. That's another way to keep people super trapped, super anxious and super guilty. And a multi-level marketing place on all of those things. So it's a very natural bedfellow. It's not necessarily something that organically grows out of evangelicalism, but it does kind of work with it particularly in America because of the capitalist society we live in.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah. They're not necessarily related, but they can be hand in hand a lot of the time. Yeah. There are some pastors who do the... They'll pray over your cloth that you send them or whatever. And that's just an entire, you send them so much money scheme. John Oliver did a sort of exposé bit on that.

Eve:

You're talking about the television preachers?

Kieryn:

Yeah. The television pastors. Yeah, yeah. And he went through this process and gave several hundred or thousand dollars to this one church for nothing. It's not part of the religion or Christianity or any of that, but it sure goes along really well with it.

Eve:

Yeah. And I'll say something too. There's a movement in the '80s that came out of the Jesus Movement called the Shepherding Movement. And if you look into the Shepherding Movement, there's another element of how these sorts of marketing schemes can take root and how pastors can have that kind of control over the congregations. The Shepherding Movement kind of reinstated kind of a Catholic style hierarchy honestly. No shade [inaudible 00:48:51] on Catholics. They've gone through a lot and have evolved a lot. But there have been times where whoever the leader was claiming to hear from God and was really pushing their authority and their direct access and you were having to go through them.

And the Shepherding Movement is kind of based on that where it's like, "Okay, whoever God has called to lead this congregation, they're the ones who God has blessed and wants to communicate through. So because this person can hear from God and can take your concerns to God, you have to go to them for advice on all these things." And so once you distrust your ability to discern for yourself about your spiritual wellbeing and about big life decisions and you have to go through your pastor, they can use that to do control creep and start being like, "Well, but buying a car is a really big decision so don't make that decision without consulting your pastor. And sending your child to college is a really big decision and go through the pastor and the pastor should sign off on it because the pastor's hearing from God and they're put over you to protect you from stepping outside of God's will and God's circle of blessing." And then it can get down to little things like do you pay off your credit card bill or tithe to the church?

And the pastor can just rake it in. And so these sorts of situations, it's gaslighting, it's manipulative, it's shady. And they're just not held accountable in any circumstance.

Kieryn:

Yep. It's just so exploitive the whole thing.

Eve:

And I will say if anyone's interested in looking up in the Shepherding Movement stuff, there's a pretty good Wikipedia article on it that's got a lot of links out. But the Sovereign Grace Ministries stuff came out of the Shepherding Movement. C.J. Mahaney, his wife came from Florida and her dad had been involved in the Shepherding Movement and her dad kind of mentored him. So he stole some of that material, took it to Sovereign Grace and reinvented it to create this organization that was covering up repeat sexual offenders, pedophiles, other criminals. And just using his God-given authority to make everybody shut up and forgive the offenders.

Kieryn:

It's so gross.

Eve:

So gross. So yeah. Trust your gut, listen to yourself and don't let the pastors tell you that God is speaking to them and not you.

Kieryn:

Yeah, no.

Eve:

Actually this... Sorry, I can't stop talking about this. This came into my relationship with my father at one point, because I had all these guys interested in me first year of college, because I was the nice girl who'd listened and all the nerdy boys were really excited about that. And I was kind of, am kind of a domestic goddess because I got trained so well. And so I was just like, "Hey, I'm making cookies. Everybody come hang out." Obviously all the tiny nerd boys are going to be excited about that. I had one of them tell me we had to date because he had prayed about it and God told him I was the one and I [inaudible 00:52:24] it on him. And I was like, "Yeah, well, I've been praying about it and God didn't tell me you that either. So go back and talk to him and tell him to tell me, and then we'll talk about it."

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

But that's it. And then my father let me change churches out of the Sovereign Grace Ministries denomination to go to a Presbyterian church in town. And I prayed about it and was like, "Yeah, I don't think there is any checks in my spirit about it." I felt like it was something God was going to bless I guess. I don't even know how to talk this way anymore. And then a month or two months later, my ex and I decided that kissing was on the table and our whole courtship... We didn't need to get my father's permission to kiss and that we were set up accountability partners and boundaries and da, da, da, da, da. We did this whole thing. And when my dad found out later, he was like, "You have deliberately rejected my authority over you." And I was like, "But, honey, you said I could go to the church. And the church is just as big of a deal. And so now I suddenly can't hear from God for myself about kissing?" Oh, okay.

Kieryn:

Yeah. My parents also tried to do that when I was courting. They were like, "You can totally hear from God. You're an adult. You are accountable to God on your own. You can hear from God on your own. It's fine." Because they really wanted me to get married when I was 16. And I was like, cool. So they spent the entire year that I was 16 telling me that I was an adult in the eyes of God. I could hear from God for myself and interpret His will on my own and not have to go through anyone else. And then when I wasn't engaged, when I was 17 and a half, they suddenly were like, "No, you can't actually hear from God." And they were like, "Well, we think you should break up." And I was like, "I don't think so." They were like, "Well, you should pray about it." And I was like, okay. So I prayed about it. And I was like, "God didn't tell me to break up." And they were like, "Well-"

Eve:

I put out a fleece.

Kieryn:

... Right. They were like, "Well, obviously you're not listening to God. And you clearly cannot discern God's voice." And I'm like, "That's not how that works."

Eve:

Okay. So after this, the next thing that happened. I'm just giving away all these stories. This is bad. I know we were talking around this time because this is around the time when you got out. And so you thought this was particularly funny around that time. I remember we had the... My father and I in our conversation about the kissing stuff, we used that like I'm an adult and that question of like, "Was I an adult? Could I hear from God on my own?" And before he had said like, "You're an adult. I've raised you well. I trust your judgment." And that was with the church. And then suddenly I wasn't an adult, I was under his authority and he didn't trust my judgment. And I was like, "Which is it?"

And he was like, "Well, why don't you do a concordant search and come back to me and tell me what the Biblical definition of an adult is." Because obviously super libertarian, the government doesn't count unless it's in the Bible. So you're not married in the eyes of God if you get married at a courthouse wedding. You have to get married by a pastor and that kind of stuff. So we had to go with like, "What is the Bible saying in terms of being legal and adult." And so I did all this Old Testament law research and I wrote a fucking 5-page paper about it and I sent it to him. And I was like, "The census took place when you were 17 and you got counted as a man at that point. So as a woman, you could technically own property if your father died at that point in your life. So 17 is the biblical age of adulthood. And here's all these resources to back up my point and all these passages to back up what I'm saying. And theologians agree with me and da, da, da, da, da."

And I sent it to him and he responded with, "We are going to have to agree to disagree." I beat him at his own game. But that's what this kind of Shepherding Movement, multi-level marketing stuff, this top down hierarchy in the church. It teaches you to not do that. It teaches you to distrust your gut, distrust your own ability to reason. And it puts you in the position of anytime you have questions, you have to lay them aside and roll belly up and just submit. And I wasn't willing to do that, which is why I'm where I am today.

Kieryn:

Yep. Same. It's a good club.

Eve:

It's a good club.

Kieryn:

So hopefully that answered your question about if we had any experience with that. Turns out we have feelings about it.

Eve:

We have a lot to say. Okay. One other question that we had that's interesting, vaccinations, doctor visits, home births. We've talked a lot about this in various different formats. You and I have very different experiences on this. What do you got?

Kieryn:

So my parents looked up in the concordance what the Greek word for medicine was and found out it was pharmakeia, which then they somehow discovered meant witchcraft. So-

Eve:

Wait, what? I never heard that.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I don't think that's how that works at all. In fact, I'm pretty sure that the Greek for, I will just hold on, I'm going to Google this now.

Eve:

I mean, historically, witches have always been healers. That's the problem is they actually have power to influence life and death because they hate no stuff.

Kieryn:

Yeah. According to the Blue Letter Bible, which is what my parents used, pharmakeia means the use or administering of drugs, poisoning, sorcery or the depictions and seductions of idolatry. So because the word for medicine in the Greek, according to the Blue Letter Bible online says that the Greek word pharmakeia-

Eve:

Medicine is witchcraft.

Kieryn:

... Yeah. Means it's witchcraft. Doctors are literally of the devil and therefore we cannot go to doctors. And this is why when I was 16, I had an infection on my legs for a year and a half that was never treated with anything other than fucken oregano oil.

Eve:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kieryn:

So yeah, my parents were like, "No. Doctors are evil." They discovered that when they were in this cult that I've talked about before called Cleansing Stream, which is this faith healing cult, you can look it up, that basically says that doctors are evil. Although I don't think they publicize as loudly in that way. But-

Eve:

Because they talk about it internally.

Kieryn:

... Right. Yeah. But they believe that only God can heal you. And I think my parents even took it further than the cult intended. Because I think the cult was still like, "I mean obviously if you're dying, see a doctor." But I could just be being a reasonable human being and thinking there's no way that anyone else could think that. But my parents either way from the cult directly or from their own extrapolation, when I was seven or eight, decided to stop seeing doctors, including dentists. And from then on, we lived by James 5:14, which is if there's any sick among you, call upon the elders of the church, confess sins, whatever. God will heal you if you're good.

Eve:

Well, yeah. Right.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And so anytime that we were sick, it was obviously because we were sinful in some way or God was using it like he used Job in the torturing of-

Eve:

Or you were being tested.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

Yeah. I know a lot of people who kind of have seen... Because they romanticize this concept, they have no interest in going to get help for it because if they are faithful to God, God has the power to heal them. And so if they're not, then obviously they've offended God in some way. And so it just becomes this death trap spiral. So my experience with this is very different and kind of unique actually. I think this is one of the luckiest pieces of my upbringing is that my mom's a nurse. And so my mother, bless her, would respond to anti-vaxxers in our community being like, "Yeah, no, it's very simple science. And I think we all should be vaccinated." And I got chicken pox the day the chicken pox vaccine came out and she was so upset. She was like, "I was waiting." She had been quarantining us from all these other kids in our community who had chicken pox because she was hoping that we would be able to get the vaccine. And my breakout was the day it was released.

Kieryn:

No.

Eve:

So she was very, very faithful about boosters and immunizations. And she took care to delay things and space them out enough so that you wouldn't have a very strong immune system response. So she definitely did things her own way, but she understood the science and she took it seriously. And my mom was a big natural birth advocate and California's healthcare system treats birth in a much more progressive way than they do here on the East Coast. And so when we moved from California to Virginia, she was shocked. She was like, "Everything about how they let women labor is 30 years behind, 20 years behind." She was appalled. The whole strap you to the bed stuff and they imposed C-sections just because we're trying to clear beds and move people through. When it's like completely unnecessary and you just need to labor for another six to eight hours.

So she decided to strong arm the system and she would have her, not an elaborate birth plan, but a very simple birth plan signed off by her pediatrician, her OB-GYN and her primary physician. And they would be the exact same letter. And it would be a letter from each of those people to the hospital saying, "If you mess up with this, there's going to be a lawsuit basically." And so she would be able to control it. So she would be like, "Get my baby sugar water. We do skin to skin contact. You don't take the baby away from me. We do this, we do that. I have to be able to walk around while I labor, unless there's an emergency and the baby's heart rates going wild."

So she had all these things that she did to basically give herself a home birth in a hospital. And it's because she was very aware of rest practices and also very aware of what could go wrong. And so because of that, I got this really, really healthy education about all this stuff. And I would run into all these people in our community who were having home births and babies were dying. And my mom would get so angry. I remember one time, one of her friends, they were pregnant at the same time as her. Due within two days of each other. And her friend took castor oil to induce labor, which is really, really risky because it spikes the baby's heart rate and puts the baby into distress. And yes, it can induce labor really fast, but it also just causes the entire system to freak out. And it can cause massive trauma in birth. Now the woman was really lucky and was fine, but my mom was so angry. She couldn't speak about it for months. She just was livid.

Kieryn:

Oh, my God.

Eve:

Because that child could have died.

Kieryn:

Yep. Yeah.

Eve:

And it didn't need to, but the mom was impatient. So bless her. My mother is so sane in some ways. And my father just kind of took her seriously and never tried to challenge her on it. So he's totally terrified of everything medicals. He's so squeamish. We used to put molasses on our hands when we were doing after dinner clean up. We'd pretend to break something and put molasses on our hands and go be like, "Dad, look, it's bleeding." He'd pass out. He was so scared of blood and we thought it was so funny. We're kind of dirty kids. It's fine. But this is the luckiest thing in terms of growing up in that community.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah. Most of the people that I knew were kind of at the halfway point between your experience and mine, I think, where home birthing was a huge part of the community I was in. But everyone was also like, "If there's an emergency, we're going to the doctor." And people were kind of mixed on vaccinations. There were some people who vaccinated and some people who didn't. But for the most part, no one was to the doctors are evil incarnate extent that my parents were. Regardless of whether or not they home birthed, they were still like, "No, if someone breaks a leg or is dying, obviously the hospital." My parents were like, "We'll anoint you with oil and pray." And I'm like, thanks.

Eve:

I had a friend who lost hearing in one ear because her parents, I don't know, put oregano or basal oil or something or garlic in her ear when she had a ear infection as an infant and nothing happened.

Kieryn:

You're not supposed to do that.

Eve:

This transcript was exported on Mar 20, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Thanks for joining us this week on Kitchen Table Cult. I hope we answered some of your questions. You can send us more at kitchentablecult@gmail.com.

Kieryn:

Yep. And if you want to learn where to find us on Twitter, how to support us on Patreon or just listen to all the episodes, you can do that at kitchentablecult.com.

Eve:

Yay.

Kieryn:

Yay.

Eve:

Bye

Kieryn:

Bye.