

Thank You for allowing me to speak today. My name is Willie Hughes. I was born in Boise. I was raised in the Followers of Christ Church in Meridian.

My parents were both multi-generational members of the Followers of Christ.

Growing up, I was NEVER allowed to see a doctor, take any medication, herbal supplements or vitamins. When I was about 3 years old I came down with what my mother thought was whooping cough. The only thing my parents did was pray over me and rub olive oil on my head. From what family members told me, I almost died.

My little brother Steven was born at home August 21, 1979. He was delivered by the church midwives. He was born with spina bifida. Our parents NEVER took Steven to a doctor. In late May of 1982 Steven got very sick. On June 1st, 1982, my parents called "The Elders". There were about 10 or 15 members of the church that showed up. They all stood around Steven and prayed and rubbed olive oil on him. Steven passed away later that night from bronchial pneumonia. That day is the only memory that I have of my little brother.

When I was only about 5 or 6 I was hit by a girl riding a bicycle. I don't remember it happened other than I woke up sometime later suffering from a concussion. I was given nothing for the pain.

I was around 16 yrs. old when I stopped attending the Followers of Christ Church.

After graduation, I became a long haul truck driver. In 2009, I was injured at work and had to have surgery. My family members, who are members of The Followers of Christ shunned me. They told me I had lost my faith. They did not visit me when I was in the hospital or help me after I returned home to recuperate.

In December of 2011, my father had a massive heart attack. My mother called "The Elders" to come pray with her at their home. After "The Elders" left, my dad was still in a lot of pain. A few days later, my father told my mother to take him to the E.R. We were told he had a hole in his heart. The doctors said he would have died within two hours had he not received medical care. They flew in a specialist from Seattle to perform an experimental surgery. My father did not have medical insurance since he did not believe in doctors. Idaho taxpayers ended up paying well over 100 thousand dollars for my father's medical care.

My mother had a mild stroke in Sept. 2012. She went into the E.R. sometime in October 2012. She ended up receiving weeks of therapy at the Elks Rehab Center.

When my father was asked why he went to the doctor but wouldn't let his own children go, his reply was "It is up to each person whether they want to go in and how much pain each person can take." This is the way I will always remember all people of this CULT. My father died April 1st 2013. My mother is still alive and from what I understand, is still receiving medical care.

Both of my parents received the medical care they denied all of their children.

Idaho's religious exemption laws protect people like my parents. Adults who are willing to sacrifice the lives of their children, but when faced with their own illness and pain, make a much different choice for themselves. It is time for the Idaho Legislature to repeal the unjust laws that deny a child's right to live.

Thank you.



Willie Hughes