



Children of God: My life born into a religious sex cult and my struggle for survival on the outside

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From Reader Review Children of God: My life born into a religious sex cult and my struggle for survival on the outside for online ebook

Ameera says

This was really a sad read. I don't understand how people can be so brainwashed to the level of losing individuality and perspective. Or maybe I do !!

Brandy says

How terrible. I can't believe this group is still active today.

LAURA JONES says

a great read about a girl raised by parents who were members of children of God an extremist style religious following the girl hardly saw her parents being raised by members of the group they did not know half of the awful things she went through and not suprisingly as she got older she left the group and led her own life but it did not mean a happy ever ending a fascinating glimpse into another way of life

Amy says

I'm glad I read this book but I'm not sure I'll be able to use the right words to express how it made me feel. It's difficult to think about how these atrocious acts were being committed against children on the other side of the world, but in the same world where I was growing up. I felt the author was able to clearly convey her and siblings'/friends' emotions, having to deal with selfish, perhaps brain-washed adults, and being totally at their mercy. She painted a real picture of what it was like, for her, growing up in a "religious" cult. I'm glad that she and most of her family were able to escape the cult's clutches eventually, but sorry that they have not been able to truly realize full and happy, carefree lives. I didn't get the sense that Natacha has had any true redemption from her past. It still seems to have her in its clutches to some extent. She only referred to counseling in the last pages of the book, and didn't go into any details about how extensive it has been. She expressed that counselors couldn't really help a lot because they could not truly empathize with her background. I know the cult's name was originally "Children of God" but I hope that the victims in her family have been able to sort out the differences between this false god worshiped by the cult from The One True God and know that He is loving and does care for them. I think in these types of cases (speaking from some personal experience) it is only God who can truly empathize and heal someone completely from an abusive past. I hope she will continue to heal and am glad she was able to write this book so that we can learn from her experiences.

Nahchey Storer says

I'm giving this 3 stars because because the writing could have been better and more cohesive. But I finished

it in one sitting so 4 stars based on the subject matter. I too was raised in this very same, vile, evil, religious cult so it was very interesting to me on a personal level. I was able to escape at age 17, in 1988 before a good portion of the events of this book took place. I will say it was even worse for me than the events described here as many of the doctrines that were supposed to be purged/banned during the authors' time were still in full effect during my childhood and teenage years. Props for writing this Natacha. I have considered writing my story too but fear the pain of remembering would be too great.

Julia Graf says

A fascinating look inside a 2nd generation child born into the weird cult The Family. Scary, engrossing, shocking and even uplifting!

Sandy Conley says

This is an eye opening book for me as I don't recall the media attention that this cult received. It is not an easy read due to the psychological abuse the children were forced to grow up with. The adults seem to me as if they are still childish in their thinking. As I ended my childhood at 17 as a father husband and provider and not being a believer I had a low opinion of Natacha's parents. Since I was interested in the book to better understand the cult mindset I put aside my negative thinking and read with an open mind. Having read several books concerning how people escaped a cult and went on trying to overcome the brain washing this story should be read by parents of preteen and teen children so they can hopefully guide their children away from the many cults in our nation.

Faith Spinks says

Not an easy read at all. This book was a horriyfyng account of life growing up inside the cult 'The Children of God', later called 'The Family'. It is truly unthinkable that one man could brainwash so many around the world with his sick and depraved ideas and yet he somehow did. Whilst this was not a comfortable read it is an important account to remind us that this is a danger which sadly stil remains possible.

Donna says

A horrible life experience from which Natacha and some of her family members had the courage to escape.

A life experience that sadly is repeated among many groups and cultures, not only the Children of God.

Whether it is a story of escape from a Mormon polygamist clan, an Old Order Mennonite community, a Moroccan harem, a Catholic misogynistic culture, psychologically ill parents, extreme homeschooling environments, drug addicted or alchoholic parents, witchcraft covens, Satanic Ritual Abusers or simply the ordinary-appearing family living next door, each story involves the same trauma and the same road to recovery.

A way of escape is made almost impossible because the victims are so socially naive that they cannot handle money, set up bank accounts, obtain employment, shop, order food in a restaurant, use public transportation, deal with bureaucracy or authority, think for themselves, form trusting relationships with outsiders, understand and obtain necessary medical care, etc. etc.

Very few victims have the courage and the opportunity to escape successfully without outside mentors. For some, it is groups that have made it their mission to rescue these youngsters; for some, it is keeping in contact with those who have successfully fled and will give them initial help; for very few, it is opportunity provided by compassionate strangers.

Even after the physical escape and the exhaustion involved in unlearning a lifestyle and replacing it with a new one (often a process that takes one year of outside living for each year inside the clan), there is the continual problem of triggers that pop up unexpectedly and make the victim unsure if she will ever be healed and whole and able to function in a marriage and family.

I have read books of each of the situations listed above (see my other reviews for titles). I gave this book a 3 because, when I compare it to other books, I find that it does not as intensely and thoroughly describe what she endured to succeed. She would often talk about a new situation that she encountered but leave out details that would be necessary if someone else in her situation wanted help in a similar situation.

People escaping from these situations cannot talk with most people about them... who could possibly understand the agony and trauma... so they need good resources. I understand the difficulty in being transparent, but I feel that more details would have helped a reader to know the steps to take, not just to be told that this was the problem and this is what I did... but recounting the process, the alternatives, the difficulty in making choices, the consequences of each choice, the fear in making a decision and the fear after it is made of unknown consequences because of never being in such a situation before.

This rating does not minimize the trauma of what Natacha endured. It is a comment on how there are possibly other books that are more beneficial in understanding her experience.

However, this book did a very good job of recounting the propaganda process by which a person is deceived into misinterpreting the Bible and God. Thankfully, throughout her experience, even though at first she hated and blamed God, she turned to God for help in getting out of her circumstances. It is important to realize that she was able to recognize how the Bible was misinterpreted and that it does not teach what the Children of God said.

I also learned how worldwide these cults can be. I never realized how easy it was for them to be established.

I would like to state that members of any group, culture, religion, or individual can form a dangerous cult. That does not mean that everyone within this group will behave in that way. So the comments above regarding Mormons, Catholics, Mennonite, the mentally ill, etc. do NOT apply to every member of these groups. Please do not misinterpret these comments to be all inclusive of every member. And I have not included every group that treats its members or children this way... it would be impossible. Most homeschooling is good; some can serve as means of insulating children from the real world without even providing them with birth certificates, even in the US. I am not suggesting that an Old Order Mennonite community needs to be escaped from. Etc. There seem to be bad apples in every barrel.

There are much more thorough reviews of this book on Amazon.

It is worth reading, but if you have time to read only one book on this topic, perhaps choose a different one.

Susan says

I had to keep reminding myself that this was a true story and it is from recent times.

Γι?ργος Λιαδ?ς says

Συγκλονιστικ? επειδ? ε?ναι αληθιν? ιστορ?α. Δεν ?χει καμια λογοτεχνικ? αξια και ο μ?νος λ?γος για να το διαβ?σει κ?ποιος ε?ναι αν τον ενδιαφ?ρουν οι cults ? αν κ?νει ?ρευνα για την ψυχολογ?α αυτ?ν των ανθρ?πων. Πρ?κειται για ?να κοριτσ?κι που βι?ζεται στα 6 του, επομ?νως δεν θα το αντ?ξουν ?λα τα στομ?για...

sally betz says

This was a good read

This was a good read, it truly opens your eyes to what innocent children suffer through when their parents are apart of such groups. My heart goes out to all these children in this book, the abuse they suffered was just horrible.

Kelly says

Full on! Definitely captivating in the most horrific way possible.

The writing style seemed to vary across the course of the book, but I suspect that is a consequence of the reflective nature of the re-telling.

Towards the end of the book, Tormey seemed to shy away from being too introspective, which is understandable, but I think a more personal insight into her state of mind at each stage would have helped engage the reader in the more dramatic events in the last chapters.

Janet Doolaage says

As I read this book, I became more and more enraged. Natacha Tormey was not a naïve person who joined this pernicious cult, as were her parents. She was born into it. She had no choice in the matter. She relates how the so-called Children of God, nowadays sanitized (following scandal) and renamed The Family International, routinely separated children from their parents, abused them physically, cut them off from the outside world and filled their impressionable heads with dangerous and frightening nonsense. People outside the cult were Antichrists; Armageddon was near; members would be required to fight a tremendous battle in the End Times and would then go to a glorious heaven. Members of the cult were obliged to live in penury and to collect money, nearly all of which went straight to the man at the top, the nebulous Grandpa or King David, while children survived in hunger and poverty and without proper medical care in military-style

closed communities. Moreover, the cult practised nothing short of prostitution, so-called “flirty fishing”, whereby women would extract money from unsuspecting men, lure them into the cult and produce still more babies to swell their numbers. We learn how couples engaged in sex in the presence of children and children were sexually abused by adults. Tormey describes the psychological damage that these appalling practices did to her, and also to her siblings. Her extraordinarily irresponsible parents had twelve children (if I have not miscounted), not all of whom survived and not all of whom escaped. And all this was done in God’s name.

Tormey has forgiven her parents. She is a brave woman. What can have possessed them to join such a sect, or, having joined, to remain in it? And how is it that cults like this can grow and take root internationally? The power of brainwashing on lonely, naïve, unthinking individuals searching for a direction in life should never be underestimated, and there will always be cynical “leaders” who will exploit them. But to be born into such circumstances leaves scars for life on those who would never, given the choice, have wished to live in such a hell on earth. It is a relief to learn that Natacha Tormey did finally escape and is living a different life as best she can. But how many others are still physically or mentally imprisoned? Many have already committed suicide.

With the help of Nadene Ghouri, this book has been written in a vivid and lively style that carries the reader forward quickly with growing horror. While it shocked me, it did not come as a complete surprise, as I had done some research into the cult a number of years ago when its members were very active in Paris, presenting themselves to the public as smiling young Christians, brimming with love and sincerity.

It needed to be written. I hope it will have the success that it deserves.

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

Born into the Children of God by Natacha Tormey is a highly recommended account of growing up in a cult and, even more importantly, surviving her childhood.

While her parents were young hippies when they joined the cult in France, Natacha Tormey misfortune was that she had no choice or say. She was born into the Children of God cult, also known as The Family. During her childhood, she lived in a variety of communes across South East Asia, East Africa and Europe. All of the situations she found herself in and the abuse she experienced were inflicted upon her in the name of the cult. Her childhood was stolen from her. The beliefs espoused by The Family and their leader known as King David or Grandpa are nonsensical and downright horrific.

The women in the cult were told they had to go out and practice “flirty fishing” (or FF’ing), where female followers were told to go to bars and pick men up for sex with the intent of either converting them to the cause or bringing in a financial donation. FF’ers were told they were ‘God’s whores’. Posters with instructions on how to be a ‘good flirty little fishy’ were distributed.” If that isn’t misogynistic enough, Tormey continues later, “Grandpa also decreed that more Jesus babies should be born, and this is why he invented flirty fishing – so that God could bless us all with lots of babies. She said that within our family there were at least 300 other Jesus babies who had come to us through FF’ing.”

We learn that “Grandpa David tells us there is no such thing as rape if we follow the true laws of nature. A woman of the Bible should submit willingly to a man and satisfy him. God created sex and he created a man’s need for sex. He created woman to serve a man’s need. Heaven’s Girl [a comic book showing a gang rape scene] is using this God-given opportunity to share the love of Jesus with these soldiers. She is going to

love them so much that she will turn them back to the path of Jesus. She shares her love with a big smile and a song in her heart like all good girls should. Isn't that a beautiful thing?"

So in an environment where women are slaves and sexual objects to be used, naturally it follows suit that not only were the children hit or beaten daily, with fists, fly-swats, poles and planks, they were also sexually abused. If this abuse was ever mentioned it would all fall back on the child who would be blamed for lying about the adults in question. It is sickening that many of the adults seemed to actually enjoy beating the children, let alone abusing them.

She escapes from the cult, but like many survivors of childhood abuse, that is the first of many small steps that must be taken toward recovery. She may have left the cult, but she finds herself trying to survive in a world that she knows little about and has no experience navigating.

Tormey's story is presented in a chronological manner, taking us through her childhood into adulthood. This is one of those books that is hard to read. You will find yourself getting angry that this abuse was allowed to take place and her parents, who should have been protecting her, were seemingly incapable of doing so. Ultimately it is worthwhile to know that The Family still exists and they are still abusing children. It certainly took bravery and fortitude for her to stand up and say publicly what happened to her and others at the hands of adults.

Disclosure: My Kindle edition was courtesy of HarperCollins for review purposes.
