



Safe Church:

How to Guard Against Sexism and Abuse in Christian Communities
by Dr. Andrew J. Bauman

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Licensed Therapist, Former Pastor Shares Strategies to Guard Against Sexism and Abuse in the Church

"This book will haunt you—and it should. It is the right book at the right time."

—*SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE*, author of *The Great Sex Rescue* and founder of Bare Marriage

If the past few years have taught Christians anything, it's that by and large the church has failed women.

From sexual abuse scandals involving high-profile pastors, to decades-long systemic cover-ups of sexual harassment and mistreatment, to harmful theology that has driven women to leave the church, it's clear that something is broken. If we want to fix it, it's time we start listening.

Drawing on new firsthand research sourced from nearly 3,000 women and in-depth interviews, Dr. Andrew J. Bauman—licensed therapist and founder of the Christian Counseling Center: For Sexual Health and Trauma—sheds light on the factors that contribute to toxic and misogynistic church culture in his new book, ***Safe Church*** (Baker Books, Jan. 2025). Also a former pastor, Bauman offers practical steps churches can take to cultivate safe and equitable environments that honor women.

Safe Church allows women to voice the pain they have suffered at the hands of insecure leaders who were often unaware of how their words, actions, and attitudes were harming their sisters in Christ. With practical advice on how to create more equity and less sexism and abuse in the church, this honest look at how misogyny masquerades as biblical truth is a vital resource for pastors, church leaders, and anyone who wants to make a meaningful difference in their own Christian community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Andrew J. Bauman is the founder and director of the Christian Counseling Center: For Sexual Health & Trauma (CCC) and a licensed mental health counselor. A former pastor, Andrew now works with men and women to bring healing and wholeness to their sexual and spiritual lives. His mission is to use his unique position to elevate women's voices and expose a disease that desperately needs to be removed from the church's body.

PRAISE for *Safe Church*

"Thank you for this book. We desperately need safe churches, but women can't create them on their own. We need men to listen, humble themselves, and change—just like Andrew has done in these pages as he has elevated women's voices. This book will haunt you—and it should. It is the right book at the right time. Don't just read it. Feel it. Grieve it. And then go and do something about it."

SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE, author of *The Great Sex Rescue* and founder of *Bare Marriage*

"Gender is a war zone, today and ever since Adam and Eve passed from Eden into the realm of lust and anger. There is a cost to being a man, but the violence women have endured, emotionally, physically, and sexually, let alone overt and covert misogynistic cultural norms, makes the cost of being a woman vastly more difficult. And nowhere is this truer than in most churches. Andrew Bauman has with immense wisdom and humility addressed the exegetical, theological, cultural, and traumatic bonds that need to be broken to create not only equity and safety but flourishing for both men and women. This book is a tour de force for more honest and holy conversation and transformation."

DAN B. ALLENDER, PhD, professor of counseling psychology and founding president,
The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology

"Andrew Bauman goes beyond the obvious that the church has not been safe for victims of abuse. In this book he gathers together a chorus of women who love Jesus yet sing the same sad song. Striving for purpose and place in God's church, yet finding themselves dismissed, devalued, and at times degraded because they are female. We must do better."

—**ESLIE VERNICK, MSW**, relationship coach, international speaker,
and author of seven books including the bestselling *The Emotionally Destructive Marriage*



PRAISE for *Safe Church*

"Thoroughly researched and exquisitely attentive to women's experiences in history, Scripture, and in churches today, *Safe Church* leaves no stone unturned to expose, challenge, and prevent sexism and abuse in churches. Imagine if every pastor reads this book!"

MIMI HADDAD, PhD, president of CBE International

"In *Safe Church*, Dr. Andrew Bauman serves as both a champion of women and a wise and challenging leader to men. Weaving together theology, his own research, and the voices of women who worked in ministry positions, Bauman exposes the epidemic of abuse in the church. With humility and conviction, he challenges the sexist teachings and practices in the church and then offers suggestions for personal healing and solutions for a more trauma-informed spiritual community for both men and women."

Dr. CAMDEN MORGANTE, licensed psychologist and author of *Recovering from Purity Culture*

"Sexism and misogyny make church an unsafe place for millions of women, but Dr. Andrew Bauman is helping to change that. By exposing the sexist theology, thought processes, and attitudes within the Christian church at large, Dr. Bauman offers insightful validation to female victims of abuse, as well as clear direction for those in positions of influence who want to turn the tide and bring the heart of Christ toward women back into our church communities."

NATALIE HOFFMAN, author of *Is it Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage*

"Incisive and chilling. Challenges the shadow pandemic of abuse in Christian communities without flinching, calling each reader to reassess subconscious biases in favor of living out the true Gospel. *Safe Church* should be required reading for every seminary student, professor, pastor, and lay leader across all denominations."

SARAH MCDUGAL, author of *One Face* and co-founder of Wilderness to WILD

"Thank you, Andrew, for making this topic of a safe church (for women and girls) so important to you that you would expend years, energy, and personal resources to listen to thousands of women reflect on their experiences, grapple with your own story vulnerably, and engage others so honestly that you get hate mail. You call us to painful memories, healing narratives, broken silences, and honoring relationships. Weaving research, stories, and theology together, you guide us to live mind, body, and soul in safer ways that we might practically cocreate safer churches and ministries."

**DR. NANCY MURPHY, executive director emeritus,
Northwest Family Life Learning & Counseling Center**

"*Safe Church* is a shining example of personal and institutional accountability. Dr. Bauman unflinchingly takes on the history of sexism in the church and its perpetuation in many modern-day Christian organizations by giving credence to victims' stories as well as hard data. By breaking down both overt and subtle examples of sexism and misogyny in the church, he holds up a mirror to deeply ingrained behaviors, practices, and beliefs. *Safe Church* should be required reading in every seminary and church leadership program."

TIFFANY YECKE BROOKS, PhD, author of *Gaslighted by God and Holy Ghosted*

PRAISE for *Safe Church*

“Is your church failing the women in it? Is it a safe place to belong? Is everyone able to show up and participate as their full selves? What if your women are compromising their own voices and contributions, making themselves smaller to serve faulty theology and the insecurities of the male leaders? What if you don’t see it? Are you unintentionally harming people in your church? Are you willing to learn how this might be so? Dr. Andrew Bauman resources the voices of women—like the ones you minister to—helping others collaborate in experiencing the fullness of Christ for his people. May more men and women in the church model his humility and bravery!”

AIMEE BYRD, author of *The Hope in Our Scars* and *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*

“Dr. Andrew Bauman has done the difficult and courageous work of researching women’s experiences within the church. The findings are heartbreaking and reveal the extent to which the church is often a context for the significant and subtle harm of women. This is a critical inflection point for the Christian community, and if we are willing to listen, *Safe Church* can lead us into much greater honesty, grief, and renewal. *Safe Church* is sure to offer valuable insights to pastors, church leaders, and members, but it is the way Andrew listens, honors, and elevates the voices of women that we have the most to learn from.”

JAY STRINGER, psychotherapist and author of *Desire and Unwanted*

“Bauman goes to great lengths to address abusive behavior in the church and behind closed doors in *Safe Church*. Weaving his own journey into the work, he unearths weighty issues alongside his readers. He’s never preachy but offers a holy imagination of what could be. With humility, he invites us to reckon with faulty theology and live into safe and grace-filled spaces.”

TIFFANY BLUHM, author of *Prey Tell*



Sample Interview Questions

Safe Church

- What circumstances led you to write about guarding against sexism and abuse in the church?
- You've spent the past three years conducting research and listening to the heartbreaking stories of nearly 3,000 women. What did your research reveal about the state of the church?
- Can you share some of the most surprising findings with us?
- You served as a pastor before you became a therapist. How have you seen your church experience inform your work since then?
- What can spiritual abuse look like? What makes it unique from other forms of abuse?
- Talk to us about Jesus' relationship with women that He modeled for us. How does this differ from what we can see in our churches today?
- What are some of the ways harmful patterns can manifest in church settings?
- How can church leaders identify these harmful patterns in their communities?
- Why do you believe the burden of change falls primarily on *male* church leaders?
- What practical steps can churches take to create safer environments for women?
- How can churches better handle reports of abuse or misconduct?
- What gives you hope for the future of the church regarding these issues?
- What role can men play in advocating for and protecting women in church settings?
- How can churches better support and listen to women in their congregations?
- What resources exist for churches wanting to actively cultivate safe environments for women?
- What do you hope both men and women take away from reading *Safe Church*?

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