Twitter Thread by Jo Luehmann



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TW: suicidal ideation.

At the darkest days of the abuse I was being subjected to I decided to attend a conference for women in Los Angeles. I convinced my mother in law to pay for it because I couldn't afford it. @ChristineCaine was preaching. I was desperate... 1/

> There are many reasons why the unfolding news of Ravi Zacharias\u2019 abuse is enraging. But for me, there\u2019s one other piece. The women he chose to abuse were young, massage therapists, ethnic minorities, likely women who were not in positions of power or education.
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> — Devi Abraham (@devi_writes) February 12, 2021

I wanted to die, I didn't see a way out and I had tried everything. I imagined many ways to die daily. The most recurring one was throwing my car down a bridge I had to drive over every day. I never did it because my kids were in the car and I was afraid one of them would...

2/

survive or I'd kill someone on the way down.

Christine spoke about honoring your pastors even when they weren't great, she spoke of us expecting too much of pastors and how wrong that was. She said God would use our testimony if we submitted to our pastors.

3/

She said "honor your pastors, God will honor you." She said more about having disagreed with her pastors but she submitted and God honored her and now she's blessed. How if they are faithfully serving God, we need to support them and not forfeit what God has for us.

4/

I felt my heart drop into my stomach. I got up and went to the bathroom because I couldn't breath and I felt like I was going to faint if I didn't scream. I now know I was having a panic attack. I sat on the toilet w/my head between my legs, breathed

and wept..
5/

as the room spun around me. She talked about how this was for someone who was thinking about leaving their church. I wanted to leave desperately, but I didn't feel like I could because my pastor hadn't given me his blessing. Why would he? Her words kept me at that church.
6/

It wasn't until later when a pastor of another church we worked closely with saw us, and said "you can leave, you don't have to stay, this isn't healthy for you, if it is permission you need, then take mine, I give you permission" that I felt just enough safety to leave.

7/

Christine wasn't the first person who had said that, neither would she be the last. I attempted to speak with other leaders before and after that conference, and was dismissed with the same narrative. Submit, honor, he knows what's best, this is gossip...
8/

Even after leaving I protected this church and pastor, I share only small pieces of my story here and there, and every time I I get text messages, emails, phone calls. I am evil because I dare tell my story and "malign" my old leaders, even though I've never shared their name
9/

When I say abuse is systemic in the church, I mean it. Leaders are complicit, and nothing will be better for victims until you make an effort to actually listen to those of us who had no power and were abused. Nothing will be better until you consider how your theology is
10/

Predatory and protects abusers while at the same time silencing victims. Nothing will be better until you choose to take a hard look at yourself. Nothing will be better until you give people full agency over themselves and their choices.