

Spin Cycle - So, a Jew Walks Into Sunday School

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

christian, hanukkah, hear, deana, church, kids, christian values, people, rhys, happened, children, parenting, experience, friends, holiday, societal norm, raising, kira, listeners, conversations

SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Future Focused Parenting, Kira Dorrian

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- K** Kira Dorrian 00:04
What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting?
 - D** Deana Thayer 00:10
I'm Deana Thayer,
 - K** Kira Dorrian 00:11
and I'm Kira Dorrian.
 - D** Deana Thayer 00:13
Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast about Future Focused Parenting. Hello and welcome again to Raising Adults. Kira and Deana here with a spin cycle. We have this time not a response to a listener question or feedback, but our own experience or our own.... I am speaking for Kira here,. I shouldn't be. But Kira had an experience that we wanted to just take a minute to talk about, because not only are we hopeful that it will spark some emotion, the right kind, but also, I'll be honest, we're pretty hopeful that you're

going to hear maybe a perspective you didn't think you would hear from... I'm not even gonna say who. So why don't you tell us a little bit about what happened? Give us the scenario. And then we can just share our responses to that.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:04

Yeah. So this was back before Christmas, and we just haven't had a chance to sit down and chat about it. And so...

D

Deana Thayer 01:14

Although we've chatted, ya know, offline.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:16

Yeah, offline. Well, and Deana was the first person I called after this happened, which I think is quite telling and quite interesting.

D

Deana Thayer 01:22

It will say a lot once you hear what it was.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:24

Yeah, so and it was before Christmas, it was actually the very first night of Hanukkah. And some friends of ours, who are a Christian family, had invited us to come to church with them. And Dave and I have been for a long time now seeking a place where he can go to worship, that is going to be welcoming of me, that fits his norm for a church experience, because a lot of American churches are just so different. So we've gone with Deana and Scott to church, and really, I like their church a lot, I would go there regularly. But it's just not as traditional as what Dave's used to. And so we've been kind of just like searching for a place where he can belong, where he can impart his values to the kids, and where I would be welcome without pressure to convert. And so we had said to our friends, you know, well, these are, this is what we need, is that gonna happen? Is that going to be okay for your church? And they said, oh, yeah, our church is super welcoming. And there's lots of different, you know, variations of faith in blah, blah, blah. So we said, sure. And like I said, it was the first night of Hanukkah. And I should preface this story by saying that the week before, my children, my assertive children, as we have discussed in the assertiveness episode, had gone up to their awesome music teacher at their school and said, hey, how come we only sing Christmas songs? There's Jewish kids in this class, we should sing

Hanukkah songs. And the teacher amazingly said, you're right. and planned a week long lesson over Hanukkah. My kids came in and they had a poster and they were asked to give a presentation about the holiday. And the kids played dreidel. I mean, she went to town, so credit to the music teacher at my kids' school. But they had just had this experience. And so in some ways, this was, this was my fault in the small amount that any of this could be my fault, I would take responsibility for my slice of it. And that was that I didn't prep the kids. I said, we're going to church. But I didn't really explain that church is a place where Christian people go, and there won't be other Jews there who are going to be celebrating the first night of Hanukkah. And I should have done that. And I didn't, so I will take responsibility for that. I did not set them up well for this experience. So we dropped them off at the kids' ministry. We went to the church service, which was very nice. And then we came to pick them up. And when I picked them up, Rhys was visibly upset. And I said, what happened? And he said, well, I brought up Hanukkah and the kids were mean to me. And I said, well, what do you mean? And he said, well, I asked if we were going to talk about Hanukkah today, too, because they were talking about Christmas. And I said, oh, well, what did they say? And he said, well, a lot of the kids didn't know what it was. And so I explained it to them. And then the kids said lots of different things. One kid said, well, that's not a real holiday. Another kid said, well, your holiday doesn't matter. And other kids said, well, you can't be Christian and Jewish. And then the worst part was apparently he went over to a little like train track area to play with the tracks. And one of the kids said to him, oh, only the Christian kids can play with this. And so it was really, it was horrible. I mean, it was horrible on a bazillion different levels. First and foremost, it was horrible because I felt responsible for not at the very least prepping them to prevent that. It was horrible because Rhys was so upset and he as we left said, please don't ever make me go back to church. There were so many, it was such a, it was such a perfect storm because we were with the family we were with, the the kiddo that they're friendly with is a year younger than them so we put them in the class that was a year younger. So we have younger kids, some of whom are only just coming into maybe a public school scenario where they maybe haven't heard of Hanukkah. So there's some innocence here of like, little kids who have just never heard of Hanukkah. And I tried to explain to them well, you know, if someone told you they celebrated kerfluffle, fluffle, you would think that was a made up holiday, right? But it was certainly his first exposure to being othered. And it brought up some really serious conversations in our house. And one of which was I said to him, do you want the good news or the bad news? And he said, the bad news. And I said, okay, the bad news is, that's the first time that's ever happened to you. And it's not going to be the last, you are going to deal with that throughout your entire life. And I shared stories from my own childhood, of being told it was a made up holiday, or being told I was going to hell, of being told I couldn't, you know, I had someone who wouldn't date me in high school because I was Jewish. And so it just led us down this really nasty road that we were inevitably going to go down. It's not like I was under some misconception that we

weren't going to head down this road at some point. I mean, Pittsburgh just happened. Like we've had to have some hard conversations already. But it was awful. And so the first thing I did when I got home was called Deana because I knew and here's the thing, I knew what Deana was going to say, I knew she was going to be livid. And I, and I also, just for those of you that are more aligned with Deana and Deana's listeners, for lack of a better word, we also immediately spent some time with the kids, talking about the fact that the way that those children behave are not in line with Christian values. And we talked about the Christians in our life that we know, like Auntie Deana and Uncle Scott, like the friends that we were with, who were also equally horrified by what happened, like their father, and their, you know, their grandmother and grandfather, that these are all people who truly live Christian values, who really mean it. And who would not think that this is in line with Christian beliefs or Christian values. So we did jump to that right away. But the bottom line is, it was just a nasty, horrible experience. And it brought up a ton of stuff for me. I mean, I was, I bet I cried the whole way home. And even there was a moment in the car that was really interesting between Dave and I, where Dave was sort of trying to shut it down. Like, we'll talk about this when we get home, because we were on our way to Santa photos. And, you know, he's like, we'll talk about this when we get home and, and I just went ballistic, I was like, no, he can talk about it right now, as much as he wants, you don't shut this down. And he, Dave kind of pushed back a little bit. And I was like, you don't get it. You don't get a voice here. Because you don't understand it, this has never happened to you, you have no idea what this experience is like. And it's something that every Jewish child, and every probably Muslim child and every gay child, and I mean, you could just like take this as far as you want to go. But it's something that every Jewish child experiences. And it's so unfortunate, because one of the things I said to you on the phone is that all these years of knowing Deana and knowing Scott, knowing Dave, and knowing his family, and growing in safety with Christianity, meeting people who are Christian, that have made me feel safe to be who I am, who have made me feel safe in their world to ask questions, and be curious and interested. It was like it zapped that in a second, all of that went away. And I had this like fight or flight of just wanting to run as far away from Christianity as possible. That was how it felt was like, well, everything I was taught as a kid, everything I was made to believe about, you know, you're not safe, and people are going to other you and blah, blah, blah. Oh, look, it's true. That was how that was how it felt. So that's, that's what happened on my end.

D

Deana Thayer 08:37

I have a question. Or maybe you said it and just didn't identify it. But what was the good news?

K

Kira Dorrian 08:44

Oh, the good news was that, that the kid was wrong to say that, that Rhys didn't do anything wrong, that it had nothing to do with him, even though it probably felt that way. And then the other part of that was and the other good news is that that is not in line with those Christian values. And the people that we choose to surround ourselves with who are Christian will not treat you that way.

D

Deana Thayer 09:03

Okay, which you did say part of that, but not all of it. So that's really important for him to know, he didn't do anything wrong. So I just have to say only a couple things because I actually think Kira, you articulated really well not only what happened but the response to it. And you said some of the things I would have said anyway, but I was angry. I also got teary talking to you; it very much upset me. I've literally known Rhys since he was born because I was your doula. So this is, we're talking about a child who's been in my life his whole life, in some even in peripheral ways, but has been in my life. But even if it were not. Here's what gets me, is to me, church should have been the last place that happened. And unfortunately, it was, Rhys's first experience with being made to feel marginalized came in a Christian setting. That frustrates me to no end. And I would completely agree with you it does not match with Christian values at all. And here is why. I have said this before, but it bears repeating. No one is going to be interested in one scintilla of what you have to say about your faith, if you don't first, make sure that you've built a foundation of safety, and that there's a relationship there. You haven't earned the right to speak to somebody to have them even be curious or want to ask questions, if you start off like that. So that makes me, it really does make me livid. I'll use your word, I like it. But I also was really sad. And just sad that happened to you. And I hope, I think I did say that just I'm sorry this happened. Because look what it did to Rhys, for those of you who didn't catch it, the bottom line, end game was Mommy, please don't ever make me go to church again, period, end of sentence. So what did that do? It made him say, these people, this place, automatically circle with a red line through it, not safe for me. And that is really, I'm sad to say but unfortunately, that is what the church has done historically, for hundreds of years. But I think we can of course see it in modernity, but even in the past with things like the crusades, and whatever. And there's an unfortunate, well, it's really hard to call it a stereotype because unfortunately, it's true a lot of the times and so what what gets really hard for me is to align myself with that.

K

Kira Dorrian 11:57

Yeah, I get that. How brave you are really to call yourself a Christian when this is, this is what the, what the face of it looks like sometimes.

D

Deana Thayer 12:05

It's pretty uncomfortable to even wear that label, because I know what it can be associated with. And that unfortunately, sometimes that is true. Now, certainly not always, I hope to be an exception to that, certainly. But it can make it a little bit, it can create some discord, to say, well, I identify this way, but I don't identify with making other people feel terrible at all. So I think you even asked me that in our conversation, you know, how, how is that? How can you even feel comfortable? And I'll admit, I don't always I mean, that's I, I don't know if that that term, Christian, has come to be kind of a dirty word for a lot of people. And so not always a comfortable label to wear, if I can use that analogy. And I, and I don't even, and I'm really careful also, I mean, I know you've heard this, I'm very careful that I don't identify myself as religious, I don't consider myself religious. I think religion is a bunch of rules and paradigms that are manmade and set up to actually cause people to just feel terrible and realize, oh, I don't measure up, I don't measure up. I can't follow all the rules. And I'm I am pretty careful about terminology. I am a word person, I care about language. And language is how we make meaning. This is why we had such a lively discussion on the swearing episode. Words and language are how we create meaning as humans. And so that word has unfortunately come to mean some yucky things. And so we had a long talk around that. But I definitely want our listeners to know, do not for one second think that this particular co host would condone that behavior at all.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:56

Well, and that was one of the coolest things for me was I knew how mad you would be. So at least, at least I've been exposed enough to how it ought to be to recognize, because I wouldn't say as a child, I would have felt that way. Because my exposure was all like this. And this is the thing, and this is what I would really want Christian listeners to hear. If you've never necessarily been exposed to someone like me who's maybe had an experience like this. Here's the thing. The reason someone thinks it's a made up holiday is because it's not the social norm. My kids, I mean, they have a Christian dad. So that's about example. When I was seven, I knew all about Christmas, I knew the Christmas story. I knew some of the prayers that you say, you know, Christmas Eve, I knew songs and traditions. I knew all of that even though we didn't celebrate it because that was the social norm. But no one knew anything about my holiday. So I heard things like your holiday doesn't matter, and it's made up, and you're going to hell and all these things. And so I think it's just so important that the situation at least just put a light bulb on to that, that children who are non Christian, who are something else, who are being raised in some other tradition or culture, are always experiencing the otherness, of knowing everything about the Christian holidays, or at least the basics, and not, not being returned. And that's no one's fault. That's not like, you're bad people. It's not that at all. That's just what's the

societal norm is, but to be raising your adults to be talking to your children about cultural sensitivity to hey, we're Christians. This is what we believe, this is what we celebrate. And this is actually our societal norm. But there are all these other holidays out there that I want you to be at least aware and sensitive to, we don't have to agree with them. We don't have to celebrate them. But please be sensitive to the fact that you're going to meet other people who do things differently. And I know that you've done that in your family.

D

Deana Thayer 15:58

Oh, for sure. I mean, we've mentioned that my children spent some of their early years in a Montessori. So we were around that particular school culture, there were quite a large population of Hindus. And so we learned about the Festival of light. And I really encourage, not let, it's not like I allowed them to learn about it. I encouraged Cienna and Marc, ask, ask your friends questions about what they're wearing. And what does Diwali mean, and even ask how to pronounce it correctly, because I probably just butchered it. But those kinds of things are really important. Two other things, I don't want to miss the opportunity to say thank you for calling me, I think that says a lot about where we've gotten as friends. And not to be too personal with our listeners, but the reason we talk about this is because again, we are really hoping to be on Raising Adults, a microcosm of conversations that should be happening that aren't. And so the fact that my Jewish friend, agnostic Jewish friend, we'll be really specific, chose after that experience to have me be one of the first people she called... pretty huge, and it wasn't lost on me. So thank you. And I would just encourage all of our listeners, have those hard conversations, please, please, please, and have nice conversations with people who believe differently than you and ask them, what do you think about this thing that happened? That is, most people are honored to be invited into that, I know that I was. And the second thing I want to speak to our parents who are listening. As Kira mentioned, at the time of this recording, her children are first graders and they were in the kids' ministry a year below. So we're probably looking at kindergarteners, five year olds, somewhere in that area. So I feel pretty confident in saying that a phrase like only Christians can play this game was not made up on the spot by a five year old. Somewhere that was parroted because of something he heard, he or she heard an adult say. So please, again, just that reminder to be careful about what we're modeling. Because little kids generally are pretty blind to this stuff and are not going to be stinkers unless they've heard it somewhere. Those things are learned by and large. So that's just a word of encouragement. It's not meant to be, oh, we got to do it this way. But an encouragement and a little bit of a caution, because we do have eyes and ears on us all the time. And children will repeat things they hear. Well, thank you for letting Kira just kind of share; this was a more vulnerable episode, because it was an experience that not only was pretty recent, but was painful, because it hurt your child and caused a lot of feelings to come up for you, too. But I'm thankful for the opportunity to

share my response to that. And for our listeners to hear about, again, just a conversation that needs to be going on, things that we need to be aware of as we're, as we're parenting as you're out there raising your adults. Be thinking about these things.



Kira Dorrian 18:54

Yeah, it was one of the things that I think I said when we were on the phone that day was, we have to, we have to podcast about this. Because for people who may be avoided Christians, they're never gonna then be exposed to what you just said, and how supportive you were and how angry you were, they would just make a different assumption. And on the flip side, for people that maybe exist primarily in a Christian community, they may never know the true experience, right? To just hear a vulnerable real experience of someone other. Yes, um, is really important to kind of keep that in the back of your mind as you're modeling and raising those adults for sure.



Deana Thayer 19:30

And that's why we thought it was so important. There was literally something for both sides. I don't really like the term sides, but you know what I mean... really important things for both paradigms to hear, and it was worth talking about.



Kira Dorrian 19:42

Absolutely. So if you have any questions or an idea for a spin cycle, you can email us info@futurefocusedparenting.com. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded in my laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 19:56

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