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[Woman suing church of deceased pastor Matthew Jarrell over alleged rape](#)



Is a fundamentalist church responsible for the actions of the pastors they hire if they have not bothered to perform a background check on him? This is the question being raised by the alleged victim of Matthew Jarrell, the apparent serial rapist who committed suicide while being held in a West Virginia jail.

As Zac Taylor of the [West Virginia Gazette-Mail](#) reports

A woman is suing a Texas church, claiming that its leaders should have known that their head pastor had a history of sexual assault before allowing him to travel to West Virginia, where he allegedly raped her in his car before committing suicide in prison days later.

The woman, whom the lawsuit identifies only by her initials, is also suing the Open Door Baptist Church in Mesquite, Texas, for hiring Matthew Jarrell as its head pastor and apparently failing to perform an adequate background check that would have uncovered a history of criminal activity.

...

The lawsuit states that Jarrell inflicted serious emotional and physical damages on the woman as a result of the assault, which could have been prevented had church officials properly screened Jarrell before his employment.

The woman is suing the church for compensatory and punitive damages, as well as attorney fees and court costs.

It will be interesting to see if the courts think this case has merit.

Posted by Darrell

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26 Comments.

1.  [Don](#) [October 17, 2011 at 10:53 am](#)

Expecting them to act responsibly?

Wow, what a concept.

/sarcasm

[Reply](#)

2. [Christopher](#) [October 17, 2011 at 10:58 am](#)

It will be interesting to see how far this case goes. I can see a long string of appeals in the future.

[Reply](#)

3. [Renee](#) [October 17, 2011 at 5:23 pm](#)

There is no way an IFB church, especially this one, will claim any sort of responsibility. In fact, I know non-IFB churches that are slipshod in their hiring practices. It will be interesting to see what the outcome of this suit is.

[Reply](#)

4. [Elijah Craig](#) [October 17, 2011 at 6:21 pm](#)

It's actually the [i]Charleston Gazette[/i] but who notices stuff like that.

[Reply](#)

5. [MKXcomm](#) [October 17, 2011 at 6:53 pm](#)

YES! Hold these willingly-blind people responsible! Set a precedent for this! This could scare people into doing due-diligence when they hire their Mog.

[Reply](#)

6. [notswallowingthekoolaidbutstillin](#) [October 17, 2011 at 7:12 pm](#)

I think what he did was awful, I remember how horrified I was when I read the account of the crime yet, I don't know that he victim met him in the context of being a pastor but rather as just some guy at a bar? He could have worked for anyone else and still done the crime. I just don't see how she can blame the church when their meeting (to my knowledge) had nothing to do with the church? Am I missing something here?

[Reply](#)



- o [pastor's wife](#) [October 18, 2011 at 9:25 am](#)

I'm inclined to agree with you. while I think the church was egregiously lax in hiring this man, he was not in the bar as a representative of the church. If the woman had been raped in the parking lot at the church conference or in a back room there, that would be a different story.

What he did is still wrong, still criminal, and the church was foolish, but I don't think they are criminally liable. She was not a member of the church looking to this man for spiritual guidance.

[Reply](#)

7. [Used-to-be-Fundy](#) [October 17, 2011 at 7:45 pm](#)

Churches should be more careful who they bestow the title "pastor" upon. IIRC, a fellow church member bailed him out of jail in San Antonio...So why was he not placed on administrative leave until the case was determined by the court?

They chose to have him represent them at this out of state conference. Bad choice – and it is going to cost them, regardless of how the court rules. (Defense ain't cheap.)

[Reply](#)

8. [Big Gary](#) [October 18, 2011 at 4:27 pm](#)

This suit strikes me as a long shot.

To win, the plaintiff would have to show not just that the church didn't investigate Jarrell's background, but that the church was somehow responsible for him being there in West Virginia. I don't think he was even traveling on church business at the time.

He presumably could have traveled and assaulted women even if the church had not hired him.

If Jarrell were still around, it would be easy to win a lawsuit against him for whatever assets he might have (probably not much), but he's dead, so she's suing the church. She could also presumably sue Jarrell's estate, but there's probably not much there to seize.

[Reply](#)

- o [Used-to-be-Fundy](#) [October 18, 2011 at 6:54 pm](#)

Jarrell was on his way to a Baptist conference, so the trip was church business.

As for what others in church leadership knew about the San Antonio incident – I think his asst. pastor has some 'splainin' to do.

[Reply](#)

- *Big Gary* [October 18, 2011 at 9:11 pm](#)

I believe the conference he was supposed to be attending was in Pennsylvania.

It would be much easier to hold the church liable if the rape(s) took place in the church, or at church-sponsored events, or if the victim was a member or employee of the church or was seeing him on some kind of business with the church.

Again, Jarrell (or his estate) is clearly liable, but it's not so clear that the church that hired him is liable for what he did while he was out of town.

[Reply](#)

9.  *Fundystan* [October 19, 2011 at 11:23 am](#)

A business is not responsible for the actions of its employees unless the employees actions are at behest of the company. This will go nowhere in court.

That being said, how the hell does a guy like this get hired by a church anyway?

[Reply](#)

- *notswallowingthekoolaidbutstillin* [October 19, 2011 at 11:06 pm](#)

He certainly looks crazed and diabolical in that photo for sure. 😬

[Reply](#)



- *Fundystan* [October 20, 2011 at 11:05 pm](#)

The scariest rapists are the polite, neatly groomed, smiling and upstanding citizens whom you never suspect. But in this guy's case, he had a history. Even a secular business can get that right...but a church where he is supposed to shepherd people? Very disturbing. One wonders what their criteria for "calling" a pastor is?

[Reply](#)

- *Used-to-be-Fundy* [October 22, 2011 at 3:41 pm](#)

Fundystan-

Since Matt Jarrell was probably an officer or director of this corporation (these churches are typically incorporated) there is a chance the court will not view Jarrell as just another employee.

[Reply](#)

10. *Mercadies* [November 13, 2011 at 3:26 pm](#)

Thats my church that i go to and im so glad 😊 i was not there when it happened. But if i were him i would just have lived in jail my whole life not commite suicide on myself. Would you think? 🙏

[Reply](#)

- *deistfemale* [January 31, 2012 at 10:20 pm](#)

You only say that, because you apparently don't think the same way that a rapist and a coward does. 😬

[Reply](#)

11. *MB* [December 12, 2011 at 1:32 am](#)

Who are we to judge what should and should not happen in this case? He will give an account. All we need to do is pray for his dear wife, his cute little girls, his boys, and Open Door. God will do justice. as for the lady, we all get hurt in this world by different people regardless what title they have. Why is suing the answer? Money won't ever solve anything. But forgiveness will.

[Reply](#)

- *deistfemale* [January 31, 2012 at 10:22 pm](#)

It's not a matter of just money. If this guy did actually have a prior criminal record of sexual assault or some similar offense, this incident could have been easily avoided if the church had acted responsibly and performed a background check! 🙏

[Reply](#)

- *Michael* [February 7, 2012 at 1:37 pm](#)

I just read this. You, MB, are absolutely un flippin believable. Essentially, you said pray for the poor family and the poor church, and as for the girl that was sodomized by this false teacher...well, suck it up and move on. We all get hurt.

How would you feel about someone telling you to move on and forgive after getting raped by an alleged "man of gawd?"

Where are your prayer requests for the girl that will most likely never trust a pastor ever again? You listed everyone but her. Your junk is exactly what is wrong with the IFB.

IFB's always say the rest of the world takes "judge not" out of context, but it appears that you are the one that is taking that text out of context.

The court may find she has no legal standing, but she is making a valid statement here regardless- that these little red neck churches should watch out before they vote in a wolf. I bet they'll check references next time.

[Reply](#)

o [Susan January 15, 2013 at 9:02 pm](#)

Thank you MB... We all have things inside of us to take care of. Before you cast that stone get that beam out of your eye. God will take care of all of us.

[Reply](#)

12. [Bweezy July 13, 2012 at 12:18 pm](#)

Suing the church for what!!!! HAHA...ok!!! she should not have left with him in the first place...They both knew what they were doin at that time...If she was willing to leave with a complete stranger from a bar...which prob wasnt the first time.. hunny suing the church isnt gonna make u feel any better bout ur self...ya'll are both at fault!!!

[Reply](#)

13. [Denise July 15, 2012 at 12:35 pm](#)

I am a member of ODB and I agree an extensive background should have been performed. I feel bad for the victim however she did place herself in a bad situation by leaving with a stranger. I would never trust a pastor in a bar anyway. We as members and parents didn't have a choice. How about the emotional anguish of knowing you trusted this man with your children hundreds of miles away at camp with no communication. Or trying to think did he ever say or do anything to them while they were at his house or what was he thinking of you during counseling. These are things that replay in my head daily. Am I going to sue, of course not. Do I hold the church responsible not at all. I will not subject my kids again.

[Reply](#)

o [Grier July 22, 2012 at 12:52 pm](#)

What a terrible thing to say. Please look up the psychological term "victim blaming." It's when people blame the victim as being responsible for what happens to them – and it's disgusting, especially in rape situations. You claim sympathy for the woman who was sodomized in an entire half a sentence, and then blame her for putting herself in a bad situation. Are you kidding me? To top it off you self-righteously proclaim that YOU would never trust a pastor in a bar. Good for you. Thanks for that two cents; however, I am curious as to how that is germane to this women being sodomized by your ex-pastor in ANY way.

In addition, you try to downplay her suffering by telling us all about your own "emotional anguish." If I had no heart like you, I'd rest the blame squarely on your shoulders for putting your own kids in a bad situation, because I personally would never allow my son to be alone with pastor.

Seriously, show some respect and actual sympathy towards this woman.

[Reply](#)

14. [FM July 30, 2012 at 12:15 am](#)

I hope this woman wins, being an ex member I seriously hope she makes them pay. I miss some of the members, but why would I ever want to take my children back to a place where these people will allow a person to be in the church, knowing what happened in the past. I think anyone who did know, and I KNOW there were quite a few that knew about the situation in 07, should all be ousted. WHY WOULD YOU COVER THIS UP! How can you respect a man who would do this to a woman, no matter who she is. I was so angry at all the people who basically worshipped him and were crying over him killing himself. I cried, but I cried because I was able to feel free over things he had once said to me in counseling. I could no longer let what I thought this man thought of me hold me down any longer. My family noticed a big difference in me after all of this came out. I have been looking for more information but does anyone know anything about the case?

[Reply](#)

15. [Daniel D August 17, 2012 at 1:16 pm](#)

Is a fundamentalist church responsible for the actions of the pastors they hire if they have not bothered to perform a background check on him?

HA! I SURE Hope so.

That will put the Catholic church out of business

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