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As a former hopeless mental case who recovered miraculously when he stopped believing in Jesus Christ, I feel I have a unique story to tell.

The story really begins in the fourth grade, when my family moved to the Village of Indian Hill in Cincinnati, Ohio. Socially, I went over like a lead balloon. Ostracism lasted throughout high school. During the summer before Yale began, I did some soul searching and came to believe in Christianity.

I had only been at Yale about a month when I was contacted by the God Squad (remember them?). At last, I had friends! Surely this must be the work of the Lord. Or so I thought until I spent the summer of’66 with them in New York City. These people didn’t want me to eat. I kept asking for more, they kept refusing it, and by September my weight had dropped from 150 to 130. Back at Yale, I took full advantage of the dining halls and gained back the lost weight to 160. (I’m six feet tall.) Well, this was grounds for excommunication. In the spring of’67, the God Squad and I went our separate ways.

Changes came to my religious thinking. At first I was just disgusted with these Christians and their odd beliefs. Later, though, I turned to God again in earnest. And, of course, the first religious thought that came to mind was, “You must fast.” I decided to follow their advice when they had told me to “eat and drink as unto the Lord.” To make a long story short, I went on a starvation diet three times. Each time, in 1968, 1970, and 1974, I was admitted to a mental institution. This is why I did not graduate with our class.

In the third hospital there seemed to be no hope. My diagnosis was paranoid schizophrenia, the most serious mental illness there is, and three psychiatrists predicted that I would be in and out of the hospital the rest of my life. But something important happened in that hospital. I lost my faith in Christ. Thinking on my own, I realized that the most straightforward explanation for a lot of human suffering is that Jesus is dead. If the Bible isn’t true, why should I share my faith with others? Why should 1 fear the devil? Why should I fast?

As I ceased the stressful religious behaviors, started believing in the medicine, and rejected Christ as lord of my life, I got in control of my illness. It became clear that the illness had been using Christian dogma to get in control of me. The words of Christ, actually, are so useful to paranoid schizophrenia that I really think he had it, too.

Things have quieted down a lot since I lost my faith. I’ve lived nineteen years since then and have never been back to the hospital. If you count the eighteen years before I became a Christian, I’ve lived thirty-seven years as a nonbeliever and have never been in the mental hospital. The nine years I was a Christian I was in three times. It reminds me of the words of Kingman Brewster as he addressed us in Woolsey Hall: “Never lose your ability to doubt!”

I went back to graduate school at the University of Cincinnati and got an M.S. in biology. A tight job market forced me to attend technical school (Cincinnati Technical College) to get an A.A.S. in medical laboratory technology. I am now a registered medical technologist with seven years of experience, and I have been a research assistant at Children’s Hospital here in Cincinnati since 1986. I’d like to get married, but have no one in particular in mind at the moment. All in all, though, I’m certainly coping much better without Jesus than with him. Although I still believe in God, my feelings toward Christianity can be summed up by the words I shouted when a would-be exorcist tried to make a believer of me again: “Jesus is dead!”