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The Righteous

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Isaac Britten

The Righteous

As a child, I was brought up in a Christian family, and growing up this way instilled certain religious beliefs in me. I remember going to church every Sunday morning and being forced to take notes on each and every sentence that the pastor uttered. Then, when I returned home I was asked and would have to express my thoughts on the subject. I would never say exactly what I wanted because, to my parents, my views would have been a disgrace. Explaining to them that I hated church because it woke me up too early would have been simply unacceptable. And their solution would merely have been to force me to go to sleep earlier. Knowing this, I gave them the answer they wanted to hear: "It was a great service because it challenged my beliefs, but in the end I learned something new." I recited the same speech every Sunday afternoon.

Under such religious conditions, I learned to trust and believe in three things: God, The Holy Spirit, and Jesus, the three supernatural beings making up the entity who created all of humanity. But as I grew older, I realized that Christianity is not the only religion. I came to this realization in the sixth grade when I lost one of my best friends over religious differences. Unlike my childhood friends who were all Christian, Jonathan Dorsey was atheist.

Unfortunately, at that time in my life I was less accepting of others. I refused to have a bestfriend who did not believe in the same God that I believed in--I could not accept it. I attempted to get him to abandon his impiety by explaining to him how ignorant it is to assume that no God exists; but he retained in his non-belief. I pleaded with him, begging him to change his mindset because he would eventually end up in Hell. But like all atheists he, of course, did not believe in a Hell. When Jonathan uttered that statement, I was puzzled. I knew that nothing I

said would scare him into believing in God. I immediately ceased the conversation and left him to find a new friend.

Losing a best friend may not seem severe to some others, but Jonathan Dorsey was the only friend I had in the sixth grade. In the seventh grade, I devised a plan that would prevent this issue from occurring again. I would only make friends with people who obtained the same religious beliefs that I was raised with to believe. As you might have figured, I did not have many friends in the seventh grade. Realizing this caused me to become more open-minded to new ideas and concepts. As I continued to mature and meet more people who were from other religions, I came to a couple of life-changing realizations. First was that I believe that God exists, but that is not true for everyone else. Second, I cannot scold or berate others for their beliefs. Finally, there is no clear, concrete evidence that proves God exists, and that my belief's life was based strictly off of faith. Once I came to these realizations, I was able to accept anyone and not feel as if my religious beliefs were under attack.

Looking back on the situation, I realize how outrageously I was acting. This is ironic because all my life, I was taught to accept people for who they were, no matter how different they were from me. But the first time I encountered a person who did not believe in God, I forgot everything I had been taught in church. This lets me know that the values I tried to instill in others were not yet completely instilled in my life.

Now that I am older and I have matured more, I realize that this situation was crucial to my development as a person. Without experiencing this confrontation as a child, I would have likely grown up believing that my views were absolute and that everyone else was simply ignorant. This mindset would have eventually led to my demise, because no one person has all the answers. Collaborations must be made in order to make advancements, and luckily for me, I

was able to face a situation as a child where I was in true disagreement with someone. Although I lost one of my best childhood friends to unaligned beliefs, it was a necessary step in my ultimate development as a mature man. I have learned to accept people for who they are and what they believe. I can honestly look back and say this incident played a crucial part in who I am today.