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Podcast Interview by Neva Talladen

A Writer Seeks Narratives Beyond Christian Culture

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*Trigger warnings for talk of spiritual, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Editor's Note: *Talking Writing's* managing editor, Neva Talladen, speaks with our guest, Nicki Pappas. Nicki is a writer, podcaster, wife, and mom whose self-published memoir, *As Familiar as Family*, delves into the abusive events that led her to leave a church with which she had been intimately involved. Nicki left Remedy Church in Waxahachie, Texas, after experiencing years of spiritual abuse and more.



As Familiar as Family was published in September 2022 and broke into the top 100 on Amazon in the category Abusive Family Relationships. In October 2022, she then published her first

poetry collection *Reflections From a Former Evangelical*, which was the number one new release in the Religious and Inspirational Poetry category on Amazon. She is the creator and host of the *Broadening the Narrative* podcast and talks with people whose ideas lie outside of what she was taught about in White evangelicalism.

In *As Familiar as Family*, Nicki explores and examines the ways in which she was groomed for unhealthy relationships and toxic religion. This book chronicles her journey to find her voice and a way out of the church. It also explores the way in which she began to understand how the spiritual abuse, power dynamics, narcissism, and emotional detachment in the church were as familiar as family. By sharing her story, Nicki hopes to empower others to remove anything toxic from their own lives.

In this interview, Nicki reveals that the book evolved from a fictionalized, bitter revenge story to a memoir written from her point of view about the various abuses she experienced through the church in which she grew up. The memoir's intent is to create conversations around abuse within churches so that those who may be experiencing this abuse can recognize it and find ways to remove themselves from it.



To protect herself from litigation, Nicki removed and changed certain names. However, the contents of the story are so relevant to evangelical culture that many have come forward to tell Nicki their own story leaving their church. They were able to reach out to Nicki through the Kickstarter campaign she used to fund her self-published book.

The decision to self-publish allowed Nicki to have the freedom to write and produce her story on her own terms. She hired readers and editors to help her shape her story and write in a way that was relevant to her goal of helping others. Nicki tells Neva that the flexibility the Internet has given self-published authors has allowed her to connect with her community in ways that traditional publishing may not have.

Self-publishing has also allowed Nicki to explore herself as a writer. She is currently co-authoring, *Becoming Egalitarian: Our Journey from Hierarchy to Mutuality* with contributions from her husband, Stephen Pappas. The book examines the events and situations that eventually led them to rethink their beliefs about marriage and gender roles and shift their theology into egalitarianism. Like her previous books, *Becoming Egalitarian* will be self-published and funded through the Kickstarter contributions of her readers and supporters.

Episode Notes

- [Nicki Pappas's website](#) [9].
- [Existential](#) [10] podcast with David Leak, episode 51 with Kelly and Dan Matlock.
- [Megan Wooding's website](#) [11].

- [Graceful Atheist](#) [12] podcast with David Ames.
- [Speaking of Racism](#) [13] podcast with Tina Strawn.
- [Are We Free Yet? The Black Queer Guide to Divorcing America](#) [14] (Row House Publishing, Jan 17, 2023) by Tina Strawn.
- [Reflections from a Former Evangelical: Poems](#) [15] (Nicki Pappas, 2022) by Nicki Pappas.

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- [9] <https://www.nickipappas.com/>
- [10] <https://coreyleak.podbean.com/e/episode-51-thats-interesting-tell-me-more-with-kelly-and-dan-matlock/>
- [11] <https://www.meganwooding.com/>
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- [15] <https://www.nickipappas.com/product-page/reflections-from-a-former-evangelical>