

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to an old guy who knows shit. this is

**Episode 4**  
**Origin Story PART II**  
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Stluhdog here. This week we are continuing with Part 2, the conclusion of the Origin story of my quest to figure it all out. If you recall, Monsignor Strathmore has sleepily informed us that if we touch ourselves there, for any reason other than to scratch or wash, it was a mortal sin and we would burn in hell for all eternity.

And, the fact is, that really was the moment that began my quest to figure it all out. Because there was something about that rule that was wrong and I knew that from the very first moment. Now this is probably four years after the bathtub discovery, only now my doctor has told me that a really clean penis is totally harmless and is in fact a good thing. I had been making a nighttime jaunt into the woods a coupla times a summer for at least a few years. And I had begun to feel genuine interest in girls, and that was fascinating and wonderful. And now, all of a sudden it was ALL BAD. Not bad in the sense that my mom would be upset to know I was sneaking out at night, but bad in the sense that my eternal soul would burn in hell forever. For EVER.

And so began one of the most miserable periods of my life. I think you can see why. I mean. I'm twelve, hormones are raging, the bath ritual has been going on for years, but any relief NOW meant BURN IN HELL FOREVER. You could always go to confession, but what about those days between? What agony! It became a HUGE emotional trauma.

But underneath all of this, there was the feeling that, you know, there's just something that ain't right about this. I mean. God gave us a penis, and he made it feel really good to touch it. But he made it a mortal sin to do that, so that we ... would be better people? Or something? . . . Really? God, almighty God. All loving. All merciful. All just. And he gives you a penis that feels REALLY good to touch, and then in his loving and just mercy he sends you to hell for all eternity if you do. You know. It just didn't work. And there was a priest who was sort of cool (if a priest can ever be "cool"), whom I could sort of "express my doubts" to, during those years, and I remember asking him that very question: If God is all loving and all merciful and all just why does he send you to hell if you commit sins of impurity?" We didn't say "touch yourself," that was too literal, we called it the "sin of impurity." And then I would get the speech about faith. You got to have faith. There it is. You just have to have faith and trust the teaching of the Church. Well, that just didn't seem right to me. Because what were the teachings of the Church? Some stuff some guy went to the trouble to write down. Ah, but we have FAITH that he was divinely inspired. Divinely inspired. How do they know? And then I learned that there was this counsel that read all this stuff and decided what had been divinely inspired and what had not. But that's still just a bunch of guys

getting together and writing something down and deciding well we'll go with *this*. So how did THOSE guys know? Well, we must have FAITH that God told them what He had inspired. But – what about the protestants? the lutherans? The Muslims? The freakin' Mormons? Who was talking to THEIR councils of guys deciding what god had inspired and what he had not? and how do you KNOW that your guy is RIGHT and ALL of their guys are WRONG?

So, at any rate, the point is, let's just say my faith lagged. It just didn't seem right. But I didn't know if it REALLY didn't seem right, or if that was just the devil tempting me so he could get me in hell forever. So while I had these feelings that this just didn't seem right, I didn't trust those feelings – I mean, what if they were WRONG? Then I was certainly condemning myself to hell forever.

So my carefree and fun life of play and imagination suddenly became a tortured hell. It was utter agony. And I'll never forgive the Catholic Church for depriving me of those critical couple of years. I was a really happy kid, until they came along.

It was finally, mercifully ended quite accidentally by a priest who was having a bad day. I have to think that was it, because if it wasn't, then he was a pervert and that makes it even worse. We went to confession weekly. Yeah . . . well. We NEEDED to. So I spent the night at my friend's house one weekend, and we go to confession at his church. To a priest I don't know. Now if any of you are catholics you know about the ritual of confession, and how important it can be to get a priest who is cool about it, and goes easy on you. And I had been confessing "sins of impurity" to that "cool" priest at my parish for years, and he would always ask if they were alone or with someone else and I would say alone and he would say try harder and say six our fathers and six hail marys see ya next week. Well I go into this new church, and it's much more crowded than ours is. There are a lot of people sitting in pews, queued up for three confessionals around the church. And we get our place in line, and finally after about an hour I go in and I make my standard confession and say two or three sins of impurity and when I get done he says "these sins of impurity . . ." and I'm expecting "were they alone or with someone else?" but instead I get: "what, exactly, did you do?" In that soft and cooing but all powerful tone of voice all Catholic priests have . . . And my first thought was it's none of your goddam business what I did. . . . And you know that wasn't a good place to start. So I said "they were sins of impurity" and he said "I know they were sins of impurity you already told me that. What I want you to tell me now is what you did." . . . "What I did?" "Yes. What did you do?" And by now running naked in the woods has given way to much more explicitly sexual experimentation. Experimentation he did not need to know the specifics of and I certainly was not about to tell him. All he needed to know was that I committed sins of impurity, and I knew that from father cool. But I couldn't say that, of course, I think I said "They were by myself – " and for the first time ever I heard that soft, commanding priest-voice start to crack and suddenly get surprisingly loud: "WHAT did you DO?" And you know, when he raised his voice there was something in his tone that was just wrong, not to mention the fact that

he violated the "sanctity" of confession by speaking loudly enough to be heard in the church. Well I was damned if I was going to tell him anything after that. And that is, of course, exactly what he told me I would be. When he finally got that I was not going to tell him what I had actually done he flew into a rage and started screaming – literally – that I was making a bad confession and condemning myself to hell and if I did not tell him what I had done I was excommunicated and could never come back to church or ever take any of the sacraments and was condemning myself to HELL forEVER, to BURN in HELL forEVER! And when I still wouldn't tell him, he finally actually shouted "GET OUT OF MY CHURCH" and I didn't have to be told twice. I got up and opened the door and stepped out – and there was a sea of faces, all with the same open-mouthed, wide-eyed look of shock on them, all fixed on me – and they froze me for a moment – the moment of realizing that they had heard every word and would tell their families that night that they saw a kid get excommunicated and thrown out of church today – and then I turned and walked out. I had to tell myself not to run, but I did not run. I walked.

And as I walked down the steps of that church I felt exhilarated. My heart was pounding. My mind was racing. I was panting. But I was smiling. I had prevailed. My secret sin was still secret but I was not going to burn in hell for it because He was wrong. And I *knew* it. God doesn't care if or where I touch myself, he has WAY bigger fish to fry! like this priest! I was walking down those steps and out into a new world. It was utterly liberating. I realized in that moment that all they had been telling me about faith was actually keeping me from living my own, real life. It was all about them wanting to have power over me. It went all the way back to the Inquisition, when way more innocents were tortured than there ever were martyrs. *Those* guys actually tortured people in the name of God to control their behavior. This was all about them trying to control my life by telling me what to think and what not to think and by humiliating me into feeling what they wanted me to feel. Somebody wanting to have power over me. That was wrong. I *knew* that wasn't what God – whoever He was – wanted. That was for damn sure.

And so my quest to figure it all out began.

Till next time, this is an old guy who knows shit signing off.