

HOLY DISRUPTOR



HOLY DISRUPTOR

Shattering the Shiny Facade by
Getting Louder with the Truth

AMY DUGGAR KING

WITH SUSY FLORY

 ZONDERVAN
BOOKS

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

Holy Disruptor

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To the ones who've walked through trauma—
the kind that lingers in body, mind, and memory—
to those who were hurt by people
you were supposed to trust,
to those from complicated families
where love came with conditions
and where you were expected
to absorb the damage and never speak of it.



To the ones who've carried weight that was never yours,
to the ones who learned how to survive before
they ever learned how to rest,
to those unfairly labeled
too much, too sensitive, too different, too loud—
you were never the problem.



You are not your trauma.
You are not too broken to heal.
You are worthy of love
and of a life that feels honest, peaceful, and whole.



This book is for you.
And I pray God uses these words
to lead you there—
one truth, one step, one breakthrough at a time.



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The Rules

Institute in Basic Life Principles

At the core of the IBLP system—the system my uncle Jim Bob and aunt Michelle followed religiously—is the idea that you can achieve godliness by following a specific set of rules—rules that are artificial and twisted to seem like biblical truths when in reality they are not. In this system, the rules are clearly spelled out, the consequences are severe, and utter submission is expected.

IBLP MASTER LIFE PLAN

The wife must submit to the husband and refrain from challenging him. There is a lot of talk about the importance of authority in the home, but it's as though God's idea of authority got lost in translation. Take the concept of submission. Yes, the Bible talks about wives submitting to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22), but IBLP turns that into something unrecognizable, pushing women into a corner where their voices are silenced, their needs ignored, and their existence reduced to inferior status. It's one thing to honor your husband; it's another

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to be treated like a robot who must follow orders without question. IBLP's interpretation completely distorts biblical marriage, creating a dynamic where men are in charge—and no one can challenge them. In fact, if a man decides his family needs to follow “the principles” (which are often his own), there's no accountability. Whatever he says goes—end of story.

But what happens when these men abuse their power? Who holds them accountable? No one. There's a huge gap in responsibility, and it's this vacuum that often leads to manipulation and abuse.

Women may not pursue independence or self-reliance. IBLP's control over women goes beyond marriage, discouraging them from seeking independence or help without their husband's permission. A wife is expected never to take matters into her own hands, financially or otherwise. Seeking counseling or guidance from anyone outside IBLP is viewed as an act of rebellion unless her husband permits it. A woman's autonomy is essentially erased, while her husband is granted absolute control.

Women must be seen and not heard—and definitely not be in charge. There are not only issues with how IBLP treats children, but also there are severe problems with how IBLP treats women. The teachings promote the idea that women are there to be *seen* but not *heard*. They're meant to be submissive to their husbands, take care of the house, and raise as many children as possible. IBLP members are raised to believe that if a woman uses birth control, she is not being totally dedicated to the Lord, which could lead to miscarriages. No form of birth control whatsoever is allowed.

Yes, children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3), but the pressure to constantly have babies and multiply can feel more like an assembly line than a gift. Women's voices are silenced under the guise of being godly. But guess what? God gave women voices too (Proverbs 31:26)! He didn't give them a voice only to have them sit quietly in the corner

while the men made all the decisions. Women are not cookie-cutter molds designed to fit one narrow purpose. We are individuals, each with our own callings and gifts. Trying to force every woman into the same box is not only harmful, but it goes against what God intended all along.

A husband has full access to his wife's body, no questions asked. Wives may not resist or be indifferent. In other words, a wife's body is her husband's property, and her needs or boundaries are considered secondary or irrelevant. This view of marriage strips away the concept of mutual respect and love, turning it into a one-sided relationship where the husband's desires take priority. This is in direct contrast to the Bible's teaching that husbands and wives should love and honor each other sacrificially (Ephesians 5:25–33). The idea of a wife as property is dehumanizing, yet IBLP clings to it as part of their definition of godly submission.

Higher education for women is strongly discouraged—“Ladies, keep it at home.” The philosophy here is that a woman's primary role is to be a wife, mother, and homemaker, and anything beyond that is seen as unnecessary, even harmful. Why study to become a doctor, engineer, or even a teacher when your true calling is already mapped out for you—cleaning, cooking, and child-rearing? IBLP often pushes the idea that a woman's mind should stay focused on God's design for her, defined as serving her family. They even imply that education might corrupt her by exposing her to worldly ideas, as if knowledge itself is dangerous. The result? Many IBLP women are left feeling unprepared and limited, unable to pursue personal dreams, passions, or talents that fall outside IBLP's interpretation of biblical womanhood.

The Bible, in fact, praises wisdom and knowledge (Proverbs 1:7; 4:5–7) and even highlights women in active, valuable roles—like Deborah the judge (Judges 4–5) or Lydia the businesswoman (Acts 16:14–15).

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Nothing in Scripture says women shouldn't be educated. In fact, being wise, resourceful, and knowledgeable helps them serve others better!

Women are expected to nurture a “gentle and quiet spirit,” based on a narrow reading of 1 Peter 3:4. This IBLP belief implies that a woman should always be soft-spoken, gentle, and submissive, with little room for boldness or individuality. But here's the twist: While being meek and quiet on the inside, wives are simultaneously expected to strive for physical beauty to keep their husbands' attention. This creates a contradictory standard. Women are supposed to be silent and invisible in personality, yet stunning and always present. It creates constant pressure to be perfect on the outside while staying silent and compliant on the inside.

This approach contradicts Proverbs 31, which celebrates a wife's independence, business skills, and resourcefulness. God never intended for a woman's identity to be smothered by her husband's authority; instead, he created her to be a partner, not a possession. The Bible teaches that a husband should love his wife as Christ loves the church—selflessly (Ephesians 5:25). But IBLP makes it clear that a husband can be as selfish as he wants.

Women must not show bare shoulders, knees, or collarbones, for to do so is scandalous. Let's talk about modesty standards. They're intense. The Bible does encourage modesty (1 Timothy 2:9), but IBLP takes it up a thousand notches. Shoulders, collarbones, and knees are seen as so scandalous that they must always remain hidden. Think of it as the modesty Olympics—long skirts (don't even think about a slit; those must be sewn up immediately), blouses up to your neck, sleeves to cover your shoulders, and don't even dream of wearing pants if you're a female. Wearing blue jeans blurs the line of femininity, and no woman should ever want to get close to that line.

And while modesty can be beautiful, in IBLP it becomes an impossible game where individuality gets stamped out entirely.

There's no room for personal expression, no freedom to wear what feels good to you. Instead, you must blend in with other IBLP families in a sea of denim skirts and long-sleeved blouses. Being modest shouldn't mean becoming a carbon copy of everyone else, yet that's exactly what happens.

Women (and men) must not wear black clothing because it's sinful. Here's the part that will make you want to roll your eyes so hard they might get stuck. In IBLP, you're not allowed to wear black clothing—because it's “too worldly” and “too rebellious.” I mean, really? Black? The color that represents mourning and humility? A color that is classy and timeless? But nope, apparently it's sinful if you wear it. You may as well be wearing a neon sign that reads “I'm a rebellious sinner” if you dare to sport anything black. This is where the absurdity of IBLP hits a new high. They take small, insignificant things—like the color of your clothes—and turn them into tests of your holiness. What the Bible actually teaches is that we're defined not by what we wear but by the love of Christ that shines through us (1 Samuel 16:7). But IBLP creates a culture where people are judged by these ridiculous standards, making them feel guilty over things that have nothing to do with salvation. It teaches that if we ever want to express ourselves in a way that doesn't perfectly align with their rules, it means we have a “heart issue,” like we're all supposed to be cut from the same cloth. But that's not how God designed us to live. He created us uniquely, with different gifts, personalities, and callings—not to be silenced or squeezed into someone else's mold.

Women (and men) must avoid tattoos and piercings. Tattoos are viewed as sinful, based on Scriptures that emphasize honoring the body as God's temple. Leviticus 19:28 warns against marking the body, which IBLP interprets as maintaining purity and avoiding worldly customs. First Corinthians 6:19–20 urges believers to honor God with their bodies, and Romans 12:1–2 advises against conforming

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to worldly practices. Tattoos, viewed as part of secular culture, are seen as disrespectful to God's creation and a violation of biblical principles on purity and reverence.

For women in IBLP, piercing their ears is seen as a mark of bondage to the world. Apparently, it symbolizes slavery. But isn't it strange that this idea has no biblical backing? In fact, Exodus 21:6 references ear piercing as a mark of devotion. While we don't live under the Old Testament law anymore (Romans 6:14), it's funny to think that something like ear piercing, which is a simple and personal choice for many, would be twisted into a mark of disobedience. If anything, the New Testament reminds us that our freedom is found in Christ, not in outward rules or appearances (Galatians 5:1).

Women must keep their hair long—no cutting allowed. For women, it's all about the length; you need to keep it long. It's seen as a covering and a mark of femininity, and there's an emphasis on never cutting it. Now, long hair can be beautiful, sure, but it's hardly a biblical requirement. First Corinthians 11 does mention that a woman's hair is given to her for covering, but that's more about cultural respect than a hard-and-fast rule. And let's remember, we're not bound by every Old Testament or cultural standard. God doesn't judge us by the length of our hair but by the sincerity of our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7).

Children are the father's property—like goods to be owned and controlled. This mentality is woven into everything and factors into the way children are raised. The husband and father is the absolute authority, with the power to impose any rule or command, no questions asked.

IBLP's extreme standards for modesty, abstinence, and submission create a superficial "holiness" that is more about control than faith. It's a system that values obedience to man-made rules over a personal, genuine relationship with God. In Jesus' time, the Pharisees were rebuked for focusing on outward appearances while ignoring

inner transformation (Matthew 23:27–28). Yet IBLP mirrors that same approach—emphasizing rules that ultimately limit rather than liberate God’s people.

This ownership mentality has zero biblical basis. In fact, the Bible teaches that we are all created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). When you strip away the individuality, enforce fear-based obedience, and treat wives and children as property, you end up with a framework that promotes legalism, not love. This system doesn’t cultivate true spiritual growth; it cultivates conformity and compliance. And it opens up avenues for abuse.

Children must obey out of fear (the “or else . . .” threat). One of the most manipulative aspects of IBLP is its use of fear to control behavior. Parents are told to warn their children that if they don’t obey IBLP’s principles, something terrible might happen to them—maybe a car accident, a disease, or other punishments from God. This fear-based approach is not only harmful but directly contradicts the message of grace and freedom we find in the Bible. Scripture says that God’s kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4), not fear of punishment. Yet IBLP twists this truth, making God out to be a harsh judge waiting to smite anyone who steps out of line. It’s spiritual manipulation, plain and simple.

In what seems to be an odd paradox, children are left unsupervised to figure things out on their own. IBLP teaches that God will watch over and protect children, and yet I’ve witnessed firsthand how this belief can lead to neglectful practices. There is a surprising lack of hands-on parenting. I’ve seen toddlers wandering alone in wide-open fields, almost like cattle. There seems to be the mindset that Jesus will protect their children, so there’s little emphasis on being watchful or present as a parent. I’ve seen kids in IBLP environments jump on car hoods like monkeys, wander acres away without anyone noticing, and even get dangerously close to sticking their little hands into the blades of

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an air conditioner. There's poison ivy and snakes—so many risks—and yet the kids are just left to roam free.

While it's great to let children explore and have adventures, there has to be a balance. You still have to protect them. But from what I've seen, the belief that Jesus will watch over them leads to parents failing to guard and defend them. It's not just a laid-back parenting style; it's a hands-off approach that overlooks basic safety.

Another serious concern has to do with what happens when a child has experienced abuse or trauma that has never been addressed or healed. The pain doesn't just disappear; it often gets acted out, sometimes upon other innocent children. There is a real danger in letting kids run wild without guidance or supervision. When no one is watching, they are denied protection—not just from wild animals but from kids who may be carrying deep, unhealed wounds of their own. And that kind of harm is just as real, if not more so.

Children must instantly obey and are not allowed to think for themselves. One of the most troubling rules IBLP teaches is the emphasis on instant obedience. Children should be programmed to obey. This concept teaches that children must obey their parents immediately—no questions, no delays, no thought. Just do it the second you're told. It's not just about obedience; it's about control.

That's all well and good, right? Except for the fact that this doesn't give children any space to think for themselves, process their emotions, or even question their parents' decisions. If you can't think for yourself, how can you truly learn to obey wisely? This isn't the way God designed children to learn, especially when it comes to issues like discipline and respect. God doesn't want us to be robots who simply carry out orders. He wants us to understand right from wrong, grow in wisdom, and develop a personal relationship with him. Instant obedience doesn't allow any of that. Yet every one of my nineteen cousins were pros at it.

Children are to follow the programmed life—homeschooled, isolated, and uninformed. Kids, don't even think about having worldly interactions. IBLP encourages strict homeschooling, and while that type of education in itself isn't bad, the problem is that the curriculum is created by IBLP and is designed to program a child, not educate them. The curriculum is severely limited and lacks any real education on body safety, boundaries, or understanding what abuse or sexual assault is. In IBLP's view, teaching children about these topics could corrupt them, so they're left completely unprepared. This lack of information creates a dangerous vulnerability, as children have no tools to recognize abuse or speak out if something wrong happens. The Bible encourages protecting the innocent (Matthew 18:6), but this curriculum leaves children unaware and unprotected.

The IBLP system isolates kids from real-world experiences and teaches them to reject outside perspectives. If you question anything, you're either seen as a troublemaker or you're just "not getting it." Children are raised in this bubble, completely unaware of the world around them. They grow up thinking that anything outside of the IBLP-approved world is dangerous and sinful. And when they finally step out into the world, they're powerless to live with confidence in today's society.

Children must undergo physical discipline—in a misinterpretation of "spare the rod, spoil the child." IBLP teaches that physical discipline isn't just allowed; it's encouraged. Corporal punishment, often with a rod, is seen as the best way to ensure "instant obedience" and mold children into compliant, submissive adults. The Bible does mention discipline (Proverbs 13:24), but IBLP's interpretation of it is harsh and unwavering. They treat physical punishment as a godly method to bend a child to the parents' will, often without regard for the child's mental or emotional well-being. This approach not only breaks a child's spirit but also damages the parent-child

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bond, replacing trust with fear. Discipline should be about teaching and guiding, not instilling terror. You can parent successfully in a way that never involves physical harm.

Children learn obedience best through blanket training—punishment by physical force. One of the most heartbreaking parts of IBLP’s teaching is something called blanket training. Now, this isn’t just about training a child to sit on a blanket (as some may think); it’s about using physical force to control a baby or toddler. Parents place their child on a blanket, and whenever the child tries to move off it, they’re spanked. The idea is that the child must learn obedience by being punished for their natural behavior—like, you know, crawling away.

This is messed up on so many levels. First, it teaches children to fear their parents, not love and trust them. Second, it breaks the child’s ability to trust their own instincts, creating confusion and emotional damage. It’s abuse. And yet, because it’s wrapped in the guise of “training,” IBLP insists that it’s the right way to raise children. But anyone who has ever worked with children or understands child development knows this approach doesn’t foster obedience, but rather breaks their spirit and creates deep emotional scars. And let’s not forget the parents who think they’re doing the right thing but are in reality following a script that doesn’t line up with biblical love.

Daughters are expected to have their courtship overseen by both sets of parents in “godly” matchmaking. Daughters are discouraged from dreaming about falling in love or meeting someone organically. In this world, the idea of love is replaced with duty, and marriage becomes a family-arranged transaction rather than a genuine partnership built on mutual affection.

A typical IBLP courtship involves no hand-holding, no private conversations, and absolutely no flirting. After all, flirting is seen as ungodly, as though showing a hint of attraction to someone is akin to

moral failure. Even smiling too long at someone or winking could be seen as a red flag. Courting couples are kept under the watchful eyes of parents or an appointed chaperone, and any sign of genuine chemistry or emotional connection gets quashed as temptation.

By stripping courtship of romance, IBLP ensures that young people go into marriage with minimal emotional intimacy, which can lead to a marriage that feels more like a partnership in a business arrangement than a loving bond. But doesn't the Bible say love is a gift (1 Corinthians 13:13)? Somehow, the romantic parts of the Bible are entirely skipped over in IBLP.

It's all very proper and, well, stifling. Where's the chance for these young people to actually get to *know* each other? It's ironic, too, because IBLP emphasizes self-control, yet they never let their young people practice it. How can you build self-control when you're always shielded from situations that would actually help you develop it? This approach breeds obedience and submission, leaving no room for choice. In the end, the daughter's dad transfers his authority to the new husband under what is called the umbrella of authority. As long as the wife has protection from her spouse or father, she will thrive in life.

Interracial relationships are seriously frowned upon. One of the most painful teachings in IBLP is the discouragement—sometimes outright ban—on interracial relationships. People are told to stay with their own kind. But God makes it clear that he looks at the heart, not at skin color (1 Samuel 16:7). Jesus showed us how to cross cultural and social boundaries to share God's love with everyone. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), a powerful story of Jesus breaking down racial and cultural barriers. Galatians 3:28 reminds us that, in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." There's simply no biblical basis for restricting relationships by race. God's kingdom is diverse, filled with people from every tribe, language,

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and nation (Revelation 7:9). So where is the love in saying that people can't be together because of the color of their skin? It's about as un-Christlike as you can get.

If there is ever a need for counseling, it must be provided by an IBLP elder member. Professional counselors are considered unsafe and could ruin a person's potential to serve the Lord such that their relationship with him can never be the same. All outside counseling, especially anything resembling therapy from licensed professionals, isn't just discouraged; it's deemed dangerous and disobedient. The IBLP system teaches that the "worldly" wisdom of psychologists or trauma specialists is rooted in rebellion against God.

In IBLP, counseling becomes a form of correction that points at faults and acknowledges pain. People are told to search their hearts for hidden sin. *What did I do to make a man or my brother stumble?* To be as godly as possible, they must submit more and forgive faster. So victims must smile, offer mercy, and pardon the sin. Yes, the Bible tells us to forgive seventy times seven, but forgiveness doesn't eliminate justice. Incest isn't just a sin; it's a criminal act. Unfortunately, many sufferers within IBLP keep living with abusers in the same household.

In this environment, image is everything. The goal isn't really about healing, but rather about silence. *Keep the family intact. Avoid shame. Don't let the truth spread beyond the walls of home, church, or family camp.* Who knows, however, what kind of counseling advice will be given if the person being counseled isn't reporting emotional or physical abuse?

WHEN THE SPOTLIGHT HIDES THE CRACKS

My cousins had so many rules to follow, and those rules were strictly enforced. Physical punishment happened for infractions, but it all took

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place behind closed doors. I never saw anyone get spanked, although my uncle spanked me once when I was a little girl during an innocent game of hide-and-seek for telling a white lie about my hiding place. (In my defense, it was a *game*.)

My aunt carried a big stick or rod in the car with her children. It sat up on the dashboard, and the name of the stick was *Encouragement*. There were at least half a dozen rubber rods around the house kept on display and ready for use by my aunt and uncle. They never spanked my cousins in front of me, but I saw the kids' eyes widen when Aunt Michelle said, head tilted, in her quiet, sweet voice, "Do we need some encouragement?"

The Duggars went on to become role models for millions of families—girls, boys, men, and women. They were showcased as the gold standard of Christian living, praised for their faith, honored for their family structure, and admired as the ideal example of godliness. They weren't just a well-known family; they provided the blueprint for how others were told to live, worship, and raise their children.

Yet they knew about the horrifying events that had taken place before the television show *19 Kids and Counting* ever got started. And the show was filmed anyway. The network was left completely in the dark.

IBLP taught everyone to closely follow the rules and to fear the consequences. My aunt and uncle preached godliness and modeled it on television for the world to see. But behind the scenes, certain issues were never dealt with. Instead of facing situations honestly, they hid, minimized, or ignored some things. As a result, people were hurt, some very deeply. The refusal to confront the truth didn't just impact my family; it left many others carrying the weight of that silence. And the fallout is still being felt.



Introduction

Getting Louder

For years, my story has been told for me. I'm *that* Amy—“Crazy Cousin Amy”—the happy, spunky niece of one of the most famous families in America, the Duggars.

For ten seasons and 109 episodes as a featured member of the smash-hit cable television show *19 Kids and Counting*, I felt like I had no control over how I was presented to the public. My uncle Jim Bob Duggar wouldn't listen to me, and the network took orders directly from him. I wanted to scream from the rooftops, “I'm not crazy or wild!”

Imagine a world where normal activities like wearing a bathing suit or going to the movies is considered a sin. This is what the patriarch of my family, my uncle, called “ungodly behavior.” Wearing anything bright yellow or black is wrong. No one goes to college. Kissing is absolutely forbidden. Wearing shorts, even on the hottest days? Forget it.

I've never done drugs in my life, don't like to party, and don't have a police record, but because I was different from all my cousins, I was considered the black sheep. I wasn't allowed to be myself and had to

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hide who I was if I had any hope of being accepted in my aunt and uncle's home. I loved going to the mall with my friends, having full-blown concerts in my car, going to dances, and being adventurous, but at Uncle Jim Bob's home, I was made to feel ashamed for being who I was—a normal teenage girl.

Not only was I singled out and shamed, but I was lied to as well. I'm still trying to untangle the lies—some of them televised across the country and even the world—from the truth.

Now it's finally time to tell my own story.

It's not all black-and-white. My childhood was fun in a lot of ways, and I spent almost every single day with my cousins, from my oldest cousin Josh pushing us girls in the Radio Flyer wagon down a huge hill as we laughed and screamed with joy to being surrounded by television crews under bright lights and traveling the world together. Doors were flung open to us because of the Duggar name.

I have been told stories about my family by many different people, including my mom, family friends, and people in my community. My own memories are twisted and tangled threads of good and bad, fun and fear, order and chaos, love and pain, truth and lies, godliness and evil. There were painful, complicated moments where I felt uninvited, rejected, and too much or not enough, as well as moments that were loving, good, warm, and comforting.

In a way, I miss the closeness of our Duggar family, but I do not miss the legalism or the judgment.

This is the story of a little girl born into what would become a very famous family, but who had a deep heartache and trauma of her own that no one outside her house knew much about. My uncle and aunt seemed to have the perfect family; mine was anything but.

This is also a story of escaping control, manipulation, and abuse from almost everyone close to me as I fought to find out who I truly was. Getting to know myself and finding my voice took some time,

but I finally discovered it, and I am no longer afraid to stand up for what is right. What I experienced through the years with my uncle and aunt and their nineteen kids, along with my own grandparents and parents, has helped me grow into a truth seeker, a truth teller, and a holy disruptor.

My faith has been my anchor, guiding me through even the hardest moments. But that doesn't mean this journey has been easy. In fact, it's been deeply painful—because I've seen and experienced things that I know must grieve the heart of God. Watching people twist faith for their own gain, witnessing deception where there should have been truth, and feeling the weight of betrayal from those who claim to love God—it's heartbreaking. Yet through it all, I've held on to the certainty that God sees, knows, and cares. Even when my heart aches, I find comfort in knowing that his love remains constant.

As I navigate the wild seas of my life, the beautiful story of Jesus calming the wind and the rough waters resonates deep within me, offering a powerful symbol of the peace he desires for every corner of our lives (Mark 4:35–41). Being a holy disruptor is all about standing up for the truth in order to break the trauma and toxic cycles in a family. It's about saying, "This has gone on long enough and it stops with me!" Though it can be costly to be a holy disruptor, I have learned to be filled with an inner calm that comes only from knowing Jesus. As I continue to face the wind and waves, I am at peace, and I willingly stand against anything or anyone who breaks the heart of God.

As you read on, you'll see that I'm not hiding anything under the rug—in fact, the rug has been completely pulled away. Settle in for a story that reveals a world of unrealistic expectations and manipulation—a world where I had to untangle a web of carefully crafted lies while fighting to protect my own mental health. It's a journey of breaking free from toxic cycles, confronting painful truths, and finding the faith to keep going. Consider this my unfiltered testimony.

Introduction

And if your story is anything like mine, I want you to hear this loud and clear: No matter what chaos or trauma you're experiencing, if you're willing to become a holy disruptor, sweet freedom is waiting to embrace you on the other side.

I was always told, "You are too loud, Amy." Well, folks, if you ask me, I haven't been loud enough. And I'm about to get even louder.