

On Sun, Jun 21, 2026 at 1:36 PM Trista Huntley <tristahuntley@gmail.com> wrote:

Personal Statement

I graduated from Rhema Bible Training Center in 1997.

The following are my personal observations, experiences, and recollections from my time as a Rhema student, employee, and participant in Rhema-affiliated churches.

I am not sharing these experiences out of bitterness, revenge, or a desire to harm anyone. Rather, I am sharing them because reconciling what I experienced has become an important part of my healing journey.

For many years, I dismissed, excused, or minimized things that troubled me. Only after significant reflection and healing have I been able to honestly examine those experiences and acknowledge the impact they had on my life.

I recognize that others may have had different experiences than mine. These statements reflect my own memories and perspectives to the best of my ability.

My hope is simply to contribute my voice to a larger conversation about spiritual authority, accountability, and the lasting effects that unhealthy church cultures can have on people's lives.

Divorce Double Standard:

Rhema had what was effectively a no-divorce policy for ministers.

A friend of ours was a Rhema graduate who pastored a successful Rhema-affiliated church in California. His wife was unfaithful, and although he wanted to save the marriage, they ultimately divorced.

As a result, Rhema revoked his ministerial credentials. He lost his church, his income, and eventually had to move back to Tulsa. To support himself, he began waiting tables. His name was also removed from the RMAI online directory.

What made this especially difficult to understand was that this occurred during the same general period when Craig Hagin divorced his first wife, Missy. (There were also rumors among students regarding infidelity involving a Rhema secretary, though I have no firsthand knowledge of that and cannot verify it.)

Additionally, Denise Hagin divorced the Rhema student she had been married to.

The contrast was obvious. My friend lost everything because of his divorce, while the Hagins continued in leadership, appeared on stage with new spouses (during church

services the Hagins sat on stage with their families), and no explanation or accountability was ever discussed with the student or church body.

To me, this demonstrated a clear double standard: one set of rules for ordinary ministers and another for the Hagin family.

Sexual Harassment Incident:

When I worked at Rhema, there was a married man named Pat in my department. He was well-liked, had worked there for many years, and was considered by most people to be a kind and respected employee. In recent years, he was even recognized for decades of service to the ministry.

One day, Pat approached a female coworker who was also one of my closest friends and asked her if she wanted to participate in a sexual favor during lunch.

My friend was deeply traumatized by the experience. The best way I can describe it is that part of her innocence was taken from her that day.

She reported the incident.

The outcome was that Pat was transferred to another department. He was not terminated. My friend still had to see him at staff meetings and ministry events.

What made the situation even harder was the culture surrounding it. Employees were told not to discuss the incident because doing so could be labeled as gossip. As a result, many people suffered in silence rather than risk being accused of being divisive or rebellious.

Treatment of Female Students:

The culture at Rhema often placed a disproportionate focus on policing women.

While I was a student, staff members from the Dean's Office would occasionally enter classrooms with rulers and pull female students aside to measure the length of their skirts. Skirts & panty hose were required of all female students

This was done publicly and in front of other students. Whether intended or not, it felt humiliating and objectifying.

In another class, the men and women were separated into different rooms for a discussion specifically directed toward women.

One of the points emphasized was that women needed to keep their husbands happy because otherwise their husbands might stray.

The implication was that a man's unfaithfulness could somehow be connected to a woman's failure to meet his needs. Even at the time, that message felt unhealthy and unfair.

Birthday Collections for the Hagin Family:

As an employee, one practice that bothered me was the annual collection of money for the Hagin family's birthdays.

An interoffice envelope would circulate through every department requesting monetary donations for birthdays of Ken, Lynette, Craig, and Denise Hagin.

At the time, I was making approximately minimum wage and working two jobs to survive—Rhema during the day and waiting tables at night.

Many employees were struggling financially, yet there was pressure to contribute money to ministry leaders who were already living far more comfortably than most staff members.

No one explicitly forced participation, but when a collection envelope is sent through every department, and itemized as an opportunity to give in the weekly staff email, there is an unspoken expectation that employees should contribute.

It created the impression that honor flowed upward while financial realities of lower-level staff were largely ignored.

Break Room Policy:

In the building where I worked, there was only one break room.

The rule was that women were not permitted to be in the break room if a man was present, and men were not permitted to be there if a woman was present.

This building housed departments such as Shipping and Receiving, Tape Duplication, Maintenance and Grounds, and Christmas Lights. The workforce was overwhelmingly male. There were only three women in the entire building.

As a practical matter, this meant I almost never had access to the break room. There was nearly always a man inside.

I couldn't reliably use the microwave, sit down in the break room during lunch, or simply enjoy a change of environment during my break.

Most days, I ate lunch alone in my car.

While this policy may have been intended to prevent inappropriate interactions, the actual result was that women had significantly less access to a shared workplace resource than men did.

Final Thoughts:

What is perhaps most baffling to me is what happened after I left Rhema.

I eventually became part of another church in Tulsa that had strong Rhema ties. My husband and I spent the next 13 years deeply devoted to that church, its pastors, and its mission. We were not casual attendees. My husband served as the head of security, and together we were considered part of the inner circle. We gave our time, energy, trust, loyalty, and a significant portion of our lives to that community.

Over time, however, we experienced what I now recognize as manipulation, unhealthy control, interference in family matters, and mistreatment that we continually excused because we believed we were serving God.

Eventually, we left.

When we did, we lost nearly everyone in our lives. People we considered close friends and family suddenly disappeared. Relationships that had been built over more than a decade ended almost overnight. Whether explicitly instructed or simply following the culture, many people stopped speaking to us altogether.

The years that followed were some of the most painful of our lives. We not only lost a church, we lost our entire community and support system.

Looking back now, I find myself asking difficult questions. I left what I now consider a cult-like environment at Rhema only to spend thirteen years in another church that exhibited many of the same unhealthy patterns.

Today, my husband and I have no desire to join another church. We have not lost our faith in God, but we have lost trust in the systems and power structures that often operate under the banner of church. The spiritual wounds from those experiences run deep, and healing from them has taken years.