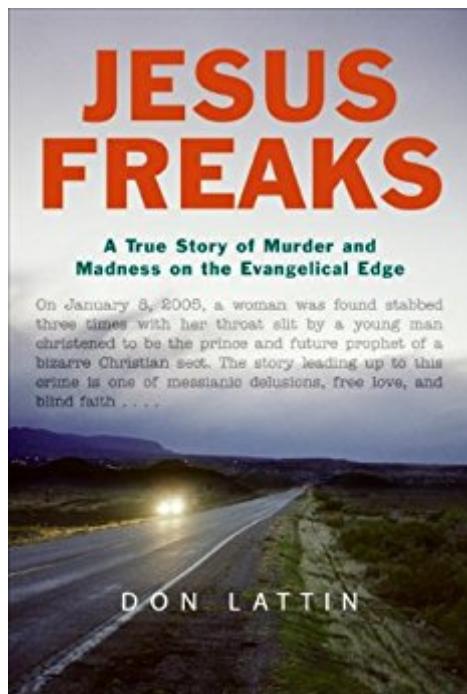


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# Jesus Freaks: A True Story Of Murder And Madness On The Evangelical Edge



## **Synopsis**

In the tradition of Jon Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Don Lattin's *Jesus Freaks* is the story of a shocking pilgrimage of revenge that left two people dead and shed new light on The Family International, one of the most controversial religious movements to emerge from the spiritual turmoil of the sixties and seventies. Some say The Family International—previously known as the Children of God—began with the best intentions. But their sexual and spiritual excesses soon forced them to go underground and follow a dark and dangerous path. Their charismatic leader, David "Moses" Berg, preached a radical critique of the piety and hypocrisy of mainstream Christianity. But Berg's message quickly devolved into its own web of lies. He lusted for power and unlimited access to female members of his flock—including young girls and teenagers—and became a drunken tyrant, setting up re indoctrination camps around the world for rebellious teenagers under his control. Thousands of children raised in The Family would defect and try to live normal lives, but the prophet's heir apparent, Ricky "Davidito" Rodriguez, was unable to either bear the excesses of the cult or fit into normal society. Sexually and emotionally abused as a child, Ricky left the fold and began a crusade to destroy the only family he ever knew, including a plot to kill his own mother. Veteran journalist Don Lattin has written a powerful, engrossing book about this uniquely American tragedy. *Jesus Freaks* is a cautionary tale for those who fail to question the prophesies and proclamations of anyone who claims to speak for God.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book tells the story of the Family, a sect that has been in existence since the 60s. I didn't really enjoy reading it; the tale was too grim. I was appalled by the abuse of children and even adults who were members.

Very interesting overview of a sick, evil Christian cult

Excellent condition and timing. A great read. Have read books before on children of god following and fascinated to learn much more.

The potential for this book to be really excellent was there. I had hope. I kept reading thinking it would get better. It didn't get better. First, it's a true story and it is a fascinating true story. It is the writing that was the challenge. Possibly the editing as well. Reading it was difficult when you end one page and when you turn to the next it is mid-paragraph and the paragraph has absolutely nothing to do with what you read on the previous pages. I tried re-booting my kindle but that didn't resolve the issue. There are a lot of characters in the book. Many go by more than one name and some names overlap. Hence it is very hard to keep track of who is who and what the various relationships are to one another. The author could have just, for consistency sake, mentioned the aliases and then just stuck with one name for each person as opposed to using them interchangeably. The author also apparently has something against using quotation marks and/ or mentioning who is actually speaking. I would be reading along and then realize that the language sort of change and I would go back and re-read and realize that he was quoting a character. Which character? No idea. Where did the quote begin and end? Your guess is as good as mine. All of the above mentioned issues makes for a book that is really difficult and frustrating to read. As I said, it could have been so good. It wasn't though. There were some bits and pieces that were really educational. The author did take time to sort of define "Jesus Freak" from the perspective of the time period. He also made it clear that a lot of the behaviour and decisions that many of the

secondary characters displayed needed to be considered from where that person was in his or her life and also where our society and culture were at that time. It is easy to forget that in the 60s it wasn't unusual to talk to a stranger in the park about music, that hitchhiking wasn't viewed as we view it today and that the whole counter culture of the hippy lifestyle was different than anything before or since and that the ideas and ideals of that sub culture opened these well meaning people up to being victims. The book does do an excellent job of keeping the reader focused on where the characters were coming from when these decisions were made. If only the writing flowed and the punctuation was good. In retrospect, I blame the editor.

I was hoping this book was more like *Under The Banner Of Heaven* but the writing (maybe it's the Kindle version) was all over the place. You pretty much get the entire story in the introduction. I could have just gotten all the info in one article online.

Don Lattin may be a prize-winning author, but this is a book I could not seem to pick up. After struggling for several weeks to get through the first 38 pages, I finally came to the conclusion that this was a book that I was going to have to leave behind. I found the prose to be stale and unimaginative, so unexpected for a true crime story.

Quite similar to reading a text book and the story was difficult to follow with so many name changes, locations, family members moving in and out, etc. If David Berg's intent was to keep his flock confused with all the continual changes in rules and living situations, he most certainly succeeded. From a personal stand point, I don't see how people can accept being in a group and following a person claiming to be of God, beating them up with the scripture and then creating a sick sexual fantasy world by totally twisting scripture. Worse yet are the mothers that allowed their children to be used for David Berg's fantasy. Sad, sick people looking for a way to belong at any cost.

The Story of the Children Of God. The David Berg Cult who sanctioned such awful concepts as Flirty Fishing among female members and adult child sex plunging a generation of children into suicide and drug addiction. Very well researched

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