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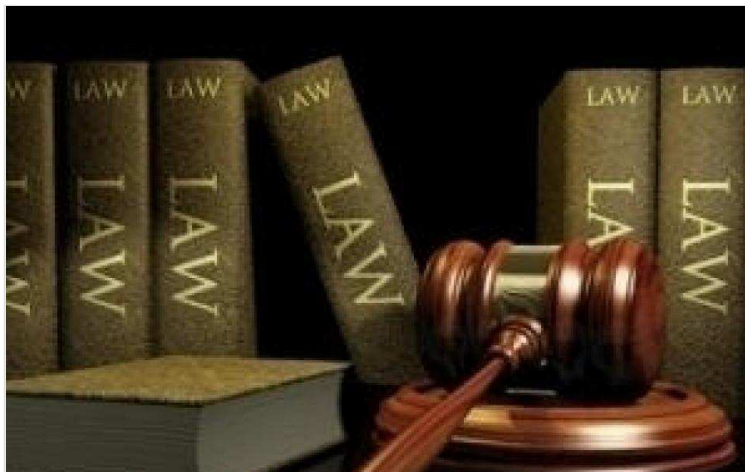


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Jehovah's Witness jailed for sexual activity with a child



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A JEHOVAH'S Witness from Stratford who took part in sexual activity with a 15-year-old girl has been 'struggling with those demons' for the last seven or eight years, a judge has heard.

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Jehovah's Witness jailed for sexual

But pleas for Craig Allen, who was said to have support from the Jehovah's Witness congregation, not to be jailed cut no ice with a judge at Warwick Crown Court.

The 43 year-old of Evesham Road, Dodwell, was jailed for two years and eight months and ordered to register as a sex offender for life after he pleaded guilty to two charges of sexual activity with a child.

Prosecutor Andrew Wallace said Allen had met the girl in the mid-2000s through the church.

The girl, now a young woman in her 20s, said she began to fancy Allen, who had started to pay her compliments.

Then on one occasion when he gave her a lift, despite being fully aware she was only 15, Allen sexually touched her.

She did not object or tell anyone what had happened, and there were further consensual incidents between them, including various types of sexual activity but not full intercourse.

Someone who suspected what was going on between Allen, a family man in his 30s, and the girl said something to her mother.

But when she challenged both her daughter and Allen about what she had heard, they both denied it.

Things stopped after the girl began to feel guilty about what was happening, and she eventually decided to come forward last year and contacted the police.

She said she had been dramatically affected by what had gone on, and that what happened with Allen caused her to suffer a breakdown and still haunted her.

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When Allen was questioned by the police he accepted the incidents had taken place, but claimed it was the girl who had taken the lead.

Elizabeth Power, defending, said Allen, who has a son and a daughter who were now both in their 20s, had attended for a voluntary interview with the police and made admissions.

"He did not force himself on her – but he was the adult and she was a child. He says he was weak and was attracted to her. He has had the last seven or eight years struggling with those demons.

Miss Power said Allen, who had a number of debts, runs his own building business and was the main provider for his family.

Jailing Allen, Judge Sylvia de Bertodano told him: "I quite accept that whatever happened, she was a willing participant in it; but you took advantage of the fact that she was 20 years younger than you, and a child.

"This has effectively ruined your reputation. You are lucky your wife is standing by you, and you are a member of a church which is supportive of you as well.

"But the message has to go out that if men in their mid-30s repeatedly engage in sexual activity with under-age children, they will go to prison."

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