



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 20, 2013

Woman Sues Christian College Over Termination for Pre-Marital Sex

A California woman is suing a Christian college for wrongful termination after she was fired for having a sexual relationship outside of marriage. Teri James had worked for two years as a financial aid specialist for [San Diego Christian College](#), but when the 29-year-old unmarried woman admitted that she was pregnant, the school's human resources director gave her an ultimatum: either quit or be fired.

James was ultimately fired because she had "engaged in activity outside the scope of the handbook and community covenant," read her termination notice. Among other things, that covenant, which James signed and agreed to honor, states the conviction that "marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman, and that God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage," according to the school's handbook.

James has hired famed women's rights attorney Gloria Allred to represent her in a lawsuit against the school, which Allred argues violated California law prohibiting an employer from discriminating against an employee on the basis of such issues as age, race, gender identity — and marital status. "We are alleging discrimination against Teri, on account of gender, pregnancy, and marital status," Allred said at a news conference announcing the suit. She insisted that her client's termination not only constituted such discrimination, but was also a violation of the state's Fair Employment and Housing Act.

"They can call themselves a Christian college," Allred told reporters, "but they have to comply with the laws of the state of California, which prohibit discrimination on account of gender, marital status and pregnancy, and with the California constitution, which guarantees the right of privacy."

James has since married the father of her child, and in an emotional statement during the conference accused the officials who fired her of "un-Christlike" behavior. "I was an unmarried pregnant woman, and they took away my livelihood," she complained, adding that "San Diego Christian College did not show any mercy or grace towards me, and acted completely un-Christlike. They made more of a business decision than showing God's love."

Allred emphasized the issue of gender discrimination, asking reporters, "How would they know if a man was having pre-marital sex unless he was able to show that he was pregnant?" But for a woman, she said, it eventually becomes obvious if she is pregnant.

"In a strange turn of events," reported the [Christian Post](#), "James' boyfriend, now husband, was offered a position at the college with a human resource personnel knowing that he was James' boyfriend and a father-to-be."





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Teri James is not the first woman to sue a Christian school over being fired for premarital sex. In 2012 Cathy Samford, a science teacher and volleyball coach at a Christian middle school in suburban Dallas, was fired after she admitted that she was pregnant by her fiancé. While the school said that she had breached her contract by engaging in behavior that was not becoming of a role model for the children she taught, Samford insisted that her behavior was okay because she was planning on marrying her boyfriend. "I'm not just some teacher that went out to a bar and got pregnant, [then] went back to school saying it's okay," Samford told ABC News. "I was in a committed relationship the whole time, and probably would have been married if things had gone differently and this would be a non-situation." Christian schools may find their employees increasingly balking at having to toe the line on biblically based behavior guidelines. In 2012 more than a third of the faculty members at Georgia's Shorter University, a Southern Baptist school, resigned "after being required to sign a 'personal lifestyle statement' that condemns public drinking, premarital sex, and homosexuality," reported [Christianity Today](#). The liberal arts university's Board of Trustees had adopted the pledge, along with a statement of faith, with the arrival of the school's new president, Don Dowless, in the fall of 2011. "By mid-May, 36 of approximately 100 faculty members had resigned," reported the Christian magazine, and "at least 25 more cited disagreement with the pledge or faith statement. Dowless affirmed the school's decision despite the resignations, citing a desire to 'bring the university back to its Christian roots.'"

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