

# A Pleading Voice from Ten Years Ago

Jul 2

**WINGS Note:** This letter was sent to overseers ten years ago. At the time, the authors thought it was too brazen to be published, were still giving the ministry the benefit of the doubt and hoping they would do the right thing.. Now they recognise that the lack of action and pattern of disbelief has continued all this time.

November 1, 2013

Dear Barry, Ray, Lyle,

We have been meaning to write to you regarding Leslie White, since his case is a glaring illustration of our concerns regarding the handling of immorality and abuse in the ministry, and even further augments them.

We have been informed by various people of a list of allegations against Leslie over an extended period. We are aware that there were consequences imposed on him in the form of divesting him from the position of overseer, moving him to different states (a cover-up rather than punishment) and putting him on probation. We have been given details and names connected to various allegations. We understand that sister workers have complained against him, as well as professing and non-professing women. There is no need to go into details now, as they are all well known to you, and probably there are even more allegations than we are aware of.

It is impossible for us to understand or explain the possible reasons behind the lack of willingness to deal with Leslie scripturally, to validate concerns and feelings of those who have been harassed or abused, to purge the ministry from a false shepherd, and to protect future potential victims. What is even harder for us to understand is the obscuring and the discounting of Leslie's previous offenses employed to justify leaving him in the work. Even worse, those who had sincere desire for Leslie to receive help and be brought to the point of confession and true repentance were maligned as unforgiving and in need of repentance themselves. Instead of showing true care for the soul of the sinner, of the victim and of the church, mercy without confession and repentance was preached.

We ourselves have discussed with Ray and Lyle the current allegation against Leslie as it reflected on the current state of affairs in our fellowship. Our conversations with them, as

well as with other workers regarding the current rape allegation, confirm and corroborate what we have been told by others.

In direct discussion we had with Ray and Lyle, Ray stated: "And now poor Leslie is not in the work because of what seems to be a false allegation." The implication of that statement was clear: Leslie WOULD and SHOULD be in the work even now -- were it not for this one questionable charge. At that time we ourselves were not aware of the offences Leslie had already been accused of by multiple people and in multiple places. Once we found out about them, we could not help but be disappointed that the rape allegation was presented to us as the first and only count against Leslie. Had Leslie been dismissed from the ministry after the true first allegation, there would have been no more offenses, no more victims, and no need to deal with later allegations.

At a subsequent meeting, Lyle explained to us that the reason why the rape allegation seems to be false is that there are witnesses who say it could not have happened the way the victim described it. Later, though, we found out that there are also witnesses who say that it in fact could have happened that way. Obviously, no one can say one way or the other unless they were a first-hand witness. But, it is unsettling to us that the evidence in favor of the alleged offender was presented, while the evidence in favor of the alleged victim remained unsaid. This inclination to disbelieve the alleged victim is even more glaring considering that the alleged offender already had a long history of allegations against him. Again, the long list of previous allegations was not disclosed or included in the consideration of the current allegation.

We have also talked to two sister workers about the rape allegation. One sister worker told us that this is probably a case of a vengeful woman who had unsuccessfully tried to seduce Leslie. The other sister worker told us that the allegation seems to be false, and that "someone is using her". What they told us evidences either the official information presented to workers regarding this particular situation, or the general attitude of implicit distrust toward alleged victims without giving either the victim or the perpetrator a fair trial. Just like in another case known to us, the alleged victim is being portrayed as unreliable, while the numerous counts against Leslie are being overlooked and concealed.

We understand that the validity of the current allegation against Leslie is still subject to investigation. But what is NOT disputable is that over the years many instances of unfitting and immoral behavior have been brought up regarding Leslie. These have as yet not been openly addressed before the friends. It is shocking to us that he was not openly renounced as a minister for his actions. Yet the primary message today is that the ministry has suffered loss of a good man due to a false or even malicious charge.

All this testifies to us of systematic avoidance of dealing with issues of sexual immorality and abuse among workers, and of systematic discrediting of victims in order to disqualify their allegations. This is the very issue at the heart of our recent letter to overseers. It

undermines rather than supports the assurance we sought in our original letter of January 2013. How can we have peace knowing that even now there is impetus to vindicate Leslie White in spite of all but no effort to reach out and seek reconciliation with victims and those who asked for ethical and scriptural resolution?

We are pleading with you, as to those who as preachers of the Gospel are called to be trustworthy and examples to us, to give this plea a consideration and to make things right by denouncing the fornicators and abusers in the ministry openly and "before all." We are pleading with you to apologize to all who have been harmed or knowingly put in harm's way by having been sent wolves in sheep's clothing into their homes. We are pleading with you to apologize to all the victims and their advocates who have been silenced, marginalized and even vilified for their concerns. We are pleading with you to do this publicly and openly, so that the trust in those in places of authority and responsibility can be confirmed and renewed.

Further, we are pleading for the sanctity of our home and family to be respected. When you as overseers send workers to our homes, you are effectively sending them with "letters of recommendation," assuring us that these workers have been found approved and trustworthy, and that it is safe for us to receive them. As long as there is one remaining known immoral worker left in the ministry, and as long as victims and concerned individuals don't feel the liberty to report immorality and abuse, the implied "letters of recommendation" remain dubious, and our trust that we are being sent only true shepherds has no foundation.

We have been told by several people, including elders across other fields and states, that they don't invite people to meetings anymore because of these issues. Indeed how do we tell our friends about the fellowship without warning them of wolves who may come into their homes? How do we tell our family to receive workers when the last worker they received was a known fornicator and abuser, and is still in the ministry? How do we even expose our own children to such dangers?

We are prayerfully and hopefully looking forward to hearing back from you. More importantly, we hope that the whole church hears from you on this matter.

Your brother and sister in Christ,

A & M M, Willis TX