

Ed Alexander letter to perpetrator 2005

Jun 6

WINGS Note - Background: Howard was convicted in 1969 of raping a 19 year-old girl who was waiting to go into the work. He served time in prison. After his release, he was promoted to Elder with meeting in his home. When the workers became aware he was abusing a child, no appropriate legal or moral actions were taken. Years later, when it was discovered he was abusing yet another child, he was no longer allowed to take part. Again, no appropriate legal or moral actions were taken. In fact, quite the opposite as the following letter clearly shows. While this was playing out between the workers and the perpetrator, the victims were silenced, shunned, victim blamed, and their salvation was weaponized.

This letter shows alarming issues.

The worker was aware of his legal obligation to report, yet was waiting for the perpetrator to voluntarily report the repeat abuse to a counselor, who would then make the mandatory report.

After completing a prison sentence the perpetrator had previously been made an elder, with a meeting in his home, and the overseer was now keen to restore him to taking part in the meeting.

The worker expressed love and appreciation for the perpetrator but no obvious concern for the victims.

Token presence of a worker at a counselling session was suggested "*just to establish that the ministry has been involved in your rehabilitation*".

2463 [redacted] CT. NE

KEIZER OR 97303

February 25, 2005

Dear Howard and ...

Far too much time has passed since I should have written you both, and I want to begin this letter with a sincere apology for having been so negligent in my dealings with you. I did especially appreciate our last little chat after the gospel meeting in Tucson before I left Arizona, Howard, and felt that there was truly a difference in your spirit and attitude toward at that time that boded well for the hope of reconciliation in the future. Nearly all of the reports that I have had since then from both the workers and the friends have also been very positive.

Paul's words to the Corinthians in II Cor. 5:18 have been special to me the last year or so, where he reminded them that God had entrusted to his servants the ministry of reconciliation. The hope of our ministry is that those who hear our message will be reconciled to God, and that is often through the avenue of being reconciled to our brethren. We're glad that we have the confidence that you do have a real desire to be reconciled with _____, and I am convinced that the letter that you wrote is a wonderful first step towards making that happen.

I did want to hold the letter a while before sending it on to _____, to be sure in my own mind that the Arizona workers and friends were comfortable with the progress that you were making there. However, I don't justify in any way the length of time that I held it - that was inexcusable negligence, and again I freely apologize for it. My hope is that you will forgive me and that my negligence will have not affected the progress of your reconciliation with _____.

It's very likely that you may be feeling frustrated because of still being restricted from taking part, but that is really one of the less important issues in this situation. We well understand that the liberty to take part neither saves us nor deprives us of salvation. Jesus made so clear in John 17:3 that salvation is being born again and developing a living relationship with our heavenly Father. Nevertheless there are times when we, as the ministry, must ask people to refrain from taking part. These situations usually fall into one of the following categories: (1) Their present actions or way of life are clearly placing their salvation in jeopardy. (2) There is still a question as to whether some serious habits or actions in the past have been completely left behind. (3) Their present way of life is such that it brings blight on the testimony of our fellowship and/or ministry, and we feel that to preserve the testimony of our fellowship and/or ministry we must express our disapproval of their deeds.

Your situation would fall into the second class and that is why we asked you to refrain from taking part. As I mentioned to you in our very first visit, we didn't hold against you the fact that you had served time in prison. That was in the past: However, when evidence of the same pattern of behavior reappeared then the mistakes of the past became a real concern to us, because it was evidence that the underlying problem had not been taken care of. And, our own experience and professional studies of this type of problem indicate that, while this may not be true in your case, most often what comes to light initially is only a small part of what has actually transpired. It is very common in sexual abuse cases that the whole scope

of the problem is never known. One man in our fellowship, when he finally confessed to having a problem with child molestation, was asked how many children he had molested. His answer was that there had been so many that he himself didn't know how many he'd molested.

So, when it came to light that you had molested _____ and behaved very improperly toward _____ (especially as you had been entrusted with the responsibility of eldership and a meeting in your home) we felt that we had to ask you not to take part in meetings until your testimony was completely clear. Unfortunately, as you have found these past couple of years, some things are hard to make clear. When some came to John the Baptist to be baptized, he told them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." That was because there was still a question in his mind, and likely in the mind of others, that their testimony was clear. John felt that it would be best that they wait to be baptized until the fruit (or evidence) of their repentance could make abundantly dear that there had been a definite change in their life.

When Rob, Jeff, and I visited with you we suggested that there were two things that would go further toward clearing your testimony than anything else: (1) Being reconciled with _____. (2) Seeking out professional counseling. At that time we put those two things as the conditions for you to be able to begin to take part again. Since then all three of us brothers have left Arizona and none of us are responsible for the decisions that are made there at this time. Larry is your overseer and Joe is the older worker in your field. I don't have the authority to continue to restrict you from taking part, but when they have asked my advice I have told them that I still feel that those two things are essential so that the workers and friends in the area where you live can see that you have truly put the past behind you.

I am sorry that I didn't make clear from the beginning that one of the reasons that we were so insistent that you see a professional counselor was that we, as ministers of our fellowship, have a legal responsibility to report any cases of sexual abuse that we are aware of. If we do not we can be prosecuted for failure to report a sexual crime. You can understand that we love our people very much and don't want to report their misdeeds to the authorities, so the way we have usually complied with the law is by asking the offender to see a professional counselor. Then the counselor is required by law to report the incident, and we have fulfilled our legal responsibility by having insisted that the person get counseling. I know that I did not make this fact clear to you in our visits, and am sorry for any confusion that this may have caused. We did cover it obliquely, though, as there were several times that you mentioned that if you saw a counselor it would mean that you would go back to prison, and my reply each time was, that if that was the price to be right then I felt that you needed to be willing for that. I appreciate that you did seek out counseling, and I think that I made a comment to you in the visit that Larry, Joe, and I had with you, that it was a good step. I'm still not sure, though, that you ever saw a professional, accredited, counselor that would have gone through the process of reporting your case to the legal authorities. Until that is taken care of, and the local workers have clear proof that the legal requirements have been

fulfilled, I can't feel that the second condition that we put on your taking part has been fulfilled. Maybe I could suggest that the best way to make this step clear to all concerned would be for you to ask Larry to accompany you to a few sessions with the counselor just to establish that the ministry has been involved in your rehabilitation. I suggest Larry because Joe will likely be returning to Washington after your conventions and it would be better to have someone with you that will be able to remain in the state for a while longer. Again, I apologize for not having made this more clear right from the start.

Your relationship with _____ is likely still the most difficult problem that you face in clearing your testimony.

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 18:19 *"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city and their contentions are like the bars of a castle."* What that tells us is that, once a person is offended, every defense comes up, and it becomes extremely difficult even to get through to the person to talk of peace. Some have felt that it is asking too much of you to make your reconciliation with _____, a condition of your being free to take part, and maybe that is true. The reason that I did ask that, though, is that I don't feel that there is anyone else that will know as well as _____ when you have fully repented and made things right. And, conversely, when it is evident that there is complete reconciliation between you and _____, no one will be able to dispute that there has truly been 'the fruit of repentance' in your life.

So I will let this do for today, Howard. Please understand that I am not against either one of you. I still love you, appreciate you, and want the very best for you. Maybe it's best expressed in our hymn that says:

"And though I do not grasp it now,
I'll better know when life is done,
Why Thou didst point the hardest path,
Asked me the straightest course to run."

With love in Christ,

Ed Alexander

Cc Larry Greenaway

Joe Schoen