

Ex worker Writes to the Ministry

Jul 15

Dear workers,

I was once one of you. You are very familiar with parables and stories. I feel compelled to share this with you. I am trying to help you understand where I am, why I'm here, how I feel, and who did this to me. The only way I can do this justice is by telling you a story that describes that. Reading this will be (and should be) VERY uncomfortable for you. If you have an ounce of integrity, if you have any faith in Christ, if you have any feeling in your heart for souls beyond yourself, read this despite the discomfort.

I stand on the doorstep of your house. I knock, but expect no answer. How do I know I'm at the right place? There is no address. I can tell because this house is different than every other house I've passed. From them, I heard crying and wailing. I peeked in some of their windows and saw people weeping. What a pitiful state they were in! Their skin was covered with rashes where the uncomfortable sackcloth irritated it. Between their sobs they often coughed as dust from the ashes around them got caught in their throat.

But this house is different. The only sounds that might represent sorrow are the cries of "why me?" and "it's not fair!" when another perpetrator gets caught. I peek through a window and listen in on the conversations. The discussions aren't joyful, but they're not repentant either. "How much longer must we endure this drudgery? Surely things will get back to the blissful normalcy we deserve soon!" The words are loud and clear, no one is sorry for them to be overheard.

Oh yes, I am at the right house. I struggle with the burden in my arms and knock again. Someone has been here before me. They tore the cover off of a copy of your gospel meeting hymn book. With a marker, they circled the part of the cover that carries the warning in small caps: "WORDS ONLY". The cover has been nailed to the door as a warning to anyone who stops by expecting action, change, help, or even compassion. "WORDS ONLY", no fruit here.

I've taken enough time. I need to keep moving. I leave my load on the stoop and walk away.

What will you find when you finally open the door? You will find the body of my faith, faith that has been with me for decades. Crushed and lifeless, totally broken beyond repair. Not my faith in "The Truth", not my faith in a group of people, not my faith in a ministry.

This was my faith in the very existence of a kind and loving God.

Who did this?

You did. Time and again (beginning when I was a teenager), when I personally needed help, you were nowhere. When Dean Bruer's truth was made public, you refused to expose the evildoers you knew about. You took so long to respond to the crisis that it is obvious your care was never for the victim-survivors. You care most of all for your own reputation and so you tried to hush the cries of the injured. I have never trusted wicked men to do the right thing, but I trusted you. You failed me and so many others. Your influence and false doctrine convinced people to write letters to judges in support for perpetrators — letters that called the victims liars.

You did this. You taught that hell was a place for those who disagreed with you. You spoke as an authority on things you could not have known. You had fellowship with abusers but said gay people were "confused". You never asked a gay person what their relationship with God was like. Even today, the thought of a gay person existing and having a relationship with God fills you with discomfort and dread... and even if you feel otherwise you would never dare preach it because you love the praise of men more than the praise of the God you preach.

And what about your treatment of workers who leave the work? "WORDS ONLY". This week a worker from this field went home because his young frame is worn out by this injustice. Did the overseer send him home with any financial help? Nope, we asked him. Overseers have proven to be very comfortable watching ex-workers suffer. You will preach about "love", but you refuse to show it, or to even encourage your ex-workers to get counseling for the trauma you have caused. You refuse to give them funds to make that possible.

But not everyone in the work is an overseer! What about those who aren't? What about brothers and sisters who aren't in positions of leadership? There is no longer a distinction between good worker and bad worker. All who continue are a part of the ministry of destruction. You say you are powerless, but you have a voice. Have you used it? Have you been angry when you saw oppression? Have you valued souls in their agony enough to speak out? Have you been like most, frozen in fear of what you might suffer by speaking out loudly and definitely? Or have you been motivated by love to make things right for the injured and the oppressed?

What have you preached? Have you preached the doctrine of a creator who loved souls so much he made a plan with another part of his divine self to sacrifice him to purify souls? It is said that there was such love and unity between them that still today people debate whether God is one person or three. Was the doctrine you preached similarly united with the values of that divinity? Or was it a doctrine that "flesh is so bad, the world is so bad,

you are so bad", a doctrine that focused not on how marvelous God is, but rather on how right your form is?

Interestingly, scripture teaches that your God lives within people, but few ever felt pure enough to believe it. What if that message was supposed to be that Love lives within us? It does say that "God is love". If there is a God and he is love, he has been sorely misrepresented by your actions and your inactions.

My faith is dead. Others' faith is dying. You are the reason. You accuse people of trying to destroy God's way, yet you refuse to be good or honest enough to admit that you are the force of destruction for so many children, parents, siblings, souls. Some of you say "But we are doing things! We are believing the victims! We are turning people in to authorities and assisting with investigations!" But you also justify the heavy loads you've laid on us when you didn't understand, you've told us to stay in a toxic place, you've scolded us for being "rash" when we got fed up with the psychological injuries we've endured.

My faith is dead and you do not care.

Where is this purposeful stride taking me now? Where am I headed? I am going to the wilderness. You taught me that was a place to avoid, a place that is unsafe. There is nowhere less safe than your house. I am going to the wilderness. I am going to learn and to love. Love is the only thing I trust now. I know those who have loved me and I know those whom I have loved. I will meet others and love them, too. Is love divine? I don't know. I do know love isn't all-powerful. I do know love doesn't know everything. I do know if there is a God someday he will teach me about himself through love. He will not punish me for letting go of false, hurtful, powerless doctrine. Even if there is no God, our love for one another can only make this life better.

So I am going to the wilderness. This is where you have driven me.

- How many more souls must see their faith destroyed?
- How many others must you drive away before you repent?

Make no mistake: CSA is a wicked fruit. You must deal with it now. However, if you only deal with the fruit and not with the root, wickedness will rise up again in time.

- Why has your fellowship and your ministry become such a safe place for perpetrators?
- Why have sister workers gone from house to house teaching that the solution is for parents to do better at watching their children?

- Why do you refuse to clothe your spirit in sackcloth and sit in ashes?
- Why do you preach about repentance but prove to be wholly incapable and unwilling to practice it?
- What is it about your ministry that you are so proud of? What seems so righteous or good to you that you so willingly excuse all the wickedness, deceit, and coverups?
- And finally, Mr. Ray Hoffman, when you knew everything that Ira Hobbs had done, why did you write in a letter, "The things that we have felt needful to discuss here is in no way to take away from all the good that Ira has done, nor of America"?

These are uncomfortable questions you must ask if you have any hope of the future being better. These are not questions I need to hear answered because I am done with "WORDS ONLY". But there are others who still look to you expecting help. Do not destroy their faith as you have destroyed mine. You consider the blood of Jesus holy. If you believe that, then start treating the souls on whose behalf that blood was shed as holy as well.

Sincerely finished,

Joel Riggs