

Malia Forza Letter to the workers pleading for change

I wrote this letter a few weeks ago and sent to a handful of workers pleading for them to do/say something. I have the letter copy and pasted below, however I removed the portion detailing my own experiences and some of the ways it's affected me as I don't feel comfortable sharing that on a public forum:

I write this with great apprehension. I don't want to share my story...it's raw, it's incredibly painful, and so many parts still feel so disparaging and shameful. I would much rather run the other direction and never look back. I would love to appear strong, fully healed, and "living my best life" far away from the current crisis...I don't believe that is my path right now though. I believe I need to speak. In speaking there is healing and hope. That being said, the path toward healing can often be extremely painful and tumultuous. So here I am, exposing the ugly and messy parts of my heart and life that leave me feeling incredibly vulnerable and insecure - not feelings I relish. I believe there is power in sharing your story though and while I find that quite easy to believe for other people, I think I'm still working to believe that there's power in sharing my own story and that it could somehow affect positive change. Writing this is a step in faith towards that belief. I feel compelled to do this and I have to trust that God's hand is in this even when I feel doubt about the merit of sharing my story amongst hundreds/thousands of other stories, many worse than my own. I would like to believe that while my voice and story on its own doesn't feel like much, if enough of us share our stories, it will lend itself towards a powerful movement of necessary change.

I'm writing this directly to you workers (a couple of you who already know a lot of my story), however I have a number of trusted friends/advocates BCC'd on here as well. I chose you workers because I know all of you to some degree and I believe that all of you love Jesus and want to help victims to some degree. I believe it's important for you to hear the stories of the wounded and hurting. To try and understand the pain and thought process many of us (victims/survivors) are experiencing. I believe you as workers have the potential to affect widespread, necessary change. That your voices

are listened to more than most others. Like it or not, you as workers have been put on a very tall pedestal by many. While some have opened their eyes to the dangers of this, many have not. As unfortunate as that is, your influence can be used for good. So I would ask you to listen. And then use your voice and Godly influence for good!

I can't guarantee this will be short, but I will try and write in bullet points and keep things concise-ish to hopefully make this more absorbable. I will also try to stick to the part of my story that involves CSA/SA, however there are many factors outside of those abuses that play into where I've been and where I am.

*****Here is where I outlined 8 different instances of CSA/SA I experienced between the ages of 10-early 20's by men both within and outside of the fellowship. Aside from detailing those experiences, I also wrote about some of the ways it has impacted my life.*****

What I would like to see from workers/ways I (and likely many other victims/survivors) would feel supported:

- Listen to hear, not to defend.
- Express emotions. Primarily sorrow, anguish, deep lamenting, and righteous anger.
- Full public acknowledgement of the scope of this crisis to the entire church. Hard numbers given (500+ alleged perpetrators), as well as clear language that is not veiled.
- Public acknowledgement of the systemic issues that have perpetuated this crisis (worker worship, exclusivity, a form that is idolized, a hierarchy that does not include checks and balances, no policies and procedures etc.)
- Acknowledgment IN meetings from the pulpit without the use of euphemisms
- Conventions of repentance
- Overseer position being a panel/board rather than being one single man with an extremely unhealthy amount of power and lack of accountability.
- Culpable/complicit overseers to step down.
- Stop blaming ignorance as a primary reason as to why the fellowship is where it's at. Does that play into it? Yes. Is that the main cause or a justifiable reason to be where we are? Absolutely not. The Bible is explicitly clear on sexual immorality. God

is explicitly clear on His love, care, and protection of children and the otherwise vulnerable and/or wounded.

- Disbandment of using lawyers to protect yourselves/the fellowship. If you're innocent, there should be no need to preemptively use lawyers and if you're not, you should accept the punishment of the law rather than trying to evade it...maybe I'm not understanding the use of lawyers? Mark 13:11, Matt. 5:40 & Rom. 13 all come to mind
- Outreach to those outside/no longer a part of the fellowship...perhaps a written statement directly to them that can be spread around so there isn't the pressure of direct communication if they don't want it.
- Go watch Sound of Freedom (Powerful true story currently in theaters...it is a worthy use of your time, and can also be a small step in breaking down the culture of a works-based salvation. I've heard many times throughout my life by various people "what would Jesus think of you if He returned while you were at the movies?"). Also watch Spotlight (movie based on CSA within the Catholic Church) and Leave No Trace (documentary based on CSA within the Boy Scouts). Shiny Happy People is another good one to watch (Docu-series based on The Duggars and Bill Gothard's teachings & resulting CSA) as well as Keep sweet, pray and obey (Docu-series on Warren Jeffs teachings within a sect of Mormonism and the resulting abuse)
- Let practicing the gospel be more important than preaching the gospel. Right now deeply wounded people are needing a massive amount of care. Let that be the priority. While God takes care of individuals, as members of the body of Christ, you are His hands and feet...these places require action. God uses His people to care for and tend to others in need. Read the parable of the Good Samaritan over and over again...Jesus is explicitly clear in His instructions on who our neighbor is and how to love them. There is no greater commandment or more important duty than loving God and loving our neighbor. The priest and the Levite were more interested in getting on with their regular duties...even if they were doing "good" things, it wasn't what Jesus taught. The goal should not be to get back to "normal" and what feels good and comfortable as soon as possible, but to sit in sorrow with the broken and wounded. To wear sackcloth and ashes. To work towards healing and true repentance.
- When the gospel is preached, let it be the gospel of grace where our Saviour is the only One glorified and the only Way to eternal reconciliation with God.

I could give a lot more suggestions, but these feel like the bare minimum, and yet also a far-fetched dream. I'm aware that most of these things likely won't happen, and you as individuals likely don't even feel like you have the authority to make all of these things happen. You do have a voice though and you can be the change.

I send this with care, love, and prayer for you all.

Malia