

Milford Townhall with Ray Hoffman

Jun 25

WINGS note: Mr. Hoffman issues challenge to prove cover-ups.

Townhall meeting in Milford

Setting the scene

90 minute discussion, about 50 people in attendance, 7 workers arranged in a big oval. **Ray Hoffman** and **Barry Barkley** were two of the workers in attendance. The discussion started with a hymn.

Discussion

The first person that spoke was Barry. He stated an apology and that they were there to listen and learn.

Someone spoke next about their professional experience with children that have been a victim of abuse. Explained that it often takes years for a child to come forward and that statistically they only mention it once. This is part of why it is so important to believe victims when they come forward. The speaker expressed concern that when instances of abuse are brought to light that nothing is reported to authorities and perpetrators are simply shuffled to another field. They then told a story about a rape victim that they only discovered because the victim began to self mutilate. The rapist was a known offender moved into that field, and there were other victims after they were moved. The speaker asked for reassurance that the decision makers would make good decisions for everyone. (This request was not responded to by the workers)

The next person to speak said that the only way any of these perpetrators have a chance with God is to be in jail where they can't hurt anyone. Where they have time to think and repent.

The next person said that they were glad the workers were at this town hall tending to the flock. They told stories of generations of sexual abuse in the family from perpetrators within and outside of meeting. They said we need to understand the difference between legal and moral and that the legal aspect of this would catch up to the ministry. They

asked a rhetorical question: "where is the scripture that supports covering up? David's sin was not covered up." They ended by saying there is hope.

a brother worker responded with "the more informed we are the more we can move forward." He explained that the CSA stuff was new to them and that MinistrySafe has been a real eye-opener.

Someone spoke in response to this worker that "no adult needs a course, book, or instructor to tell them that rape and child molestation is bad"

The next person to speak stated that they wanted reassurance that all allegations would be reported and people in the area be informed.

The moderator tried to bring the mic to Ray Hoffman to respond to this and Ray motioned the mic away and did not respond.

the next person said "how can we know children will be safe" (at meetings, conventions, etc.)

A brother worker responded with "that's a hard question to answer but parents need to be aware of where their children are and who they are with. It's a red flag if they are separated."

Someone responded to this saying that this implies that parents of victims are to blame for not watching their children like a hawk and that guilt should be placed on the parents. The perpetrator is 100% responsible in every case. They then shared their own experience as a victim of CSA and explained how their parents knew exactly where they were but had entrusted them in someone's care that ended up taking advantage of them.

Someone else responded to this by saying that it's definitely partially on parents but parents know this and they know to watch out for their kids. The lack of communication is a big part of the issue. People are not told about perpetrators when they are transferred to their area. They also noted that the only information about this topic is from a website run by people who no longer go to meeting. They also called out the cover ups and victim shaming

A few people made demands for a public blacklist of perpetrators to keep people more informed and aware. Workers seemed to be open to that but no verbal confirmation from them.

Someone mentioned that Ray's name was brought up in a few posts about coverups and that people were calling on him to step down.

Ray zeroed in on one report. He painted a picture of the reporter being untrustworthy. He said "I'm not aware of anything I've been involved with with CSA. If people can prove that I knowingly moved a perpetrator to another field I will happily step down, I will happily step down, I will go to jail, I'm not afraid of jail. I don't think it would be wise to step down off the suggestion of one person."

Someone responded to Ray by saying "on the behalf of all victims, believe victims"

A question was asked how we as families can keep the ministry safe. The interpretation of the question was "how can we make sure there aren't perpetrators in the ministry"

A sister worker responded with referencing the MinistrySafe course again and being informed.

Someone suggested that some kind of group is created of sister workers and mothers to be a resource for victims. If something were to happen to someone they would know of a safe group of people they could take their case to.

Someone asked why overseers travel alone and that maybe if they didn't travel alone, they couldn't lure people into their hotel room.

Ray responded to this by saying that that is a great suggestion and that he fears traveling alone. That he doesn't like it when his name shows up alone on a list. (doesn't he make the list?)

It was stated many times throughout that there needs to be better communication and we need to be able to trust that the workers will inform us immediately and those people need to be removed from meeting, special meetings, and conventions. That there is no grey area in waiting for the law to deal with it.

Ray responded to this by saying that they have notified known perpetrators that they are no longer welcome. If anyone shows up they will be escorted off the premises. He encouraged people to come forward with any cases or allegations and even things that just seem like red flags.

Someone responded agreeing and that it is important to put out the fires when they're small.

Someone had a follow up of "what is the biblical justification for overseers?"

Ray referenced James as an overseer and that James had the last word. He also said that someone has to make the plans and organize. He then said that he used to be Catholic and he definitely won't be going back to that and that he didn't like the hierarchy.

The person who asked said "there is a hierarchy of the friends, elders, sister workers, brother workers, older workers, and overseers."

Ray said that it's important to have overseers who are led by God and to manage, otherwise every worker would just be doing what they think is right. (Pointing to the sisters workers) he says the sister workers are submissive in their place and are happy to be. Maybe you would like to speak on that? (Motioning for a sister worker to speak)

The sister worker described her relationship with their coworker as a marriage and that she feels her older companion is in a lot of ways in service to her.

A brother worker shared his testimony and love for being a worker and serving the friends. He said that he has respect for the overseers he's been led by and that they've (the overseers he's been under, not all overseers) always had the kingdom's best interest at heart.

Someone shared that we are like a family and that being abused by someone in this way is not like being abused by someone from outside. Paraphrasing: There is a different level of trust/betrayal

Someone spoke on the importance of talking about everything and coming together in unity and focusing on serving God.

Someone responded to the workers defending the hierarchy saying that they weren't trying to poke holes in anything and that they love this way. That their trust hasn't been broken by the workers in general by those in power, the overseers. They said that there needs to be reflection and accountability there.

The discussion ended by Ray saying "we're sorry and thank you"