

*Our Dear Friends, Workers and Overseers,*

*We have had many stories entrusted to us regarding the varied abuses that are endured by our workers. With these stories we have felt a compulsion and a measure of responsibility to bring awareness to many that likely don't have an idea of what actually goes on in the "worker world" because it has been hidden to maintain an appearance of perfection. We collectively believe that awareness will help all of us in becoming more vigilant gatekeepers, especially for the most vulnerable workers. Some of these stories will cut your heart like a knife, we know it has ours, as each one has been brave enough to come forward. So many of these folks' scars will never be diminished until they are safe in the arms of God on the shores of eternity. May we all be filled with a heart of compassion and a spirit of Christ as we read each one. Please also know, if you are suffering in the ministry, or have suffered, you will be heard and believed by so many of us that care, please reach out to trusted friends and there will be resources to assist you, a confidential email is available to any who may need assistance [Ahandheldout@gmail.com](mailto:Ahandheldout@gmail.com) where friends can be contacted.*

*Sending love and care from concerned Elders, wives, and friends that love and care about those who have been and are in the ministry.*

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**\*\*Rachel Leigh - Australia and Eastern Europe\*\***

I was a worker for 18 years in Australia and Eastern Europe. I was bullied to the point I tried to take my life. I spoke up about bullying and also CSA and was kicked out of the work in 2019, slandered and lied about. My parents and I wrote a letter to the whole church exposing the overseers and my narcissistic companion. They didn't like it. Our letter and other letters are on the Expressions ex 2x2 website ([www.ex2x2.info](http://www.ex2x2.info)) if you would like to read.

I have just finished my degree, worked in child protection and now support victims of DFV and sexual assault. I am making sure that the overseers in Australia will not be able to hide their evil and criminal activities towards children anymore.

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**\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

My 12 years in the work were incredibly rich in many ways but there were some companions who SEEM to have insecurities or they just waited so long to finally have power as the older companion that they abuse that power because they felt powerless for too long. I don't know if that makes sense but I want to try and give them as much room and grace as I possibly can.

The things that were most difficult for me: - being told at 37 that I couldn't even choose the gas station at which to put gas in the car(1st year).

-being told I talk too much and then later being told I don't talk enough.

-being told that I had to go to my room at a certain time every night.

-total isolation. My companion had a cell phone and was on it extensively but I didn't know how I felt about that for myself at first so I didn't have one. Then I found out that I couldn't plan to ever speak to any of my family and friends at will so I spent many hours alone in my room ( on my bed in a room with my companion who was either silent — or on her cell phone.)

- One of my last years I was with a very unhealthy companion who would tell the friends and I that she was 'going to the gym' and in fact she would go to a restaurant and buy a bottle of wine and sit by herself drinking. She also more than once put her hand on an elder's thigh while visiting with him in the living room while his wife was cooking in the kitchen. When I spoke to the older brothers I think they thought it was all 'incidental' and not important????

-The last full year I was in the work I had two elderly companions to care for but no responsibility. So one was legally blind and the other was deaf and very outspoken and 'difficult'— everyone knew it. Several asked me if the overseer was trying to kill me off. Anyway—the two ladies hated each other and fought incessantly until I told the overseer that one of them needed to go. He reluctantly moved the deaf sister to another field but it was still about 5 more years before she was put on the 'resting' list where she needed to be.

-I found out at one point that one of the brothers was having me 'investigated' as possibly having bi-polar which I have never had any symptoms of and one of the older but sweet sisters came to me and said that there was someone trying to discredit me as she 'always does that to young sisters after they've been in for a while. Don't take it personal.'

-Needless to say, the next preps I was put where that particular sister was in charge of the sisters' side (the one who claimed I might be bi-polar). She gave me every nasty job there was and even insisted that I had to scrub, strip, and wax the kitchen/dining floors on my hands and knees one day. All the young sisters came

and joined me(3) and she got SO mad. She had hoped to isolate me and make a spectacle but instead we had so much fun together that afternoon.

Shortly after that preps I told the brothers I needed to rest. They never put me on the list as resting. I just never showed up on the list again.

Come to find out—the sister that spread the rumor that I was bipolar, was unusually close to our overseer . She even told me one day, kind of bragging, that they talked on the phone 'every day'. One would wonder what they might have to discuss so much, no?

There are so MANY unhealthy people in the work but I know more that are women better so it feels like a lot of the sisters just become more and more unhealthy as they age as they never really get the help they need. They can be so incredibly petty and controlling and they think it's 'normal.'

I never dealt with SA at all but EA was pretty high — of 12 years I would say 5 or 6 sisters really were awful to be with so much just because of their controlling, strangely insecure behavior.

Do whatever you can for those young sisters!!!! They need you!

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\*\*Jon Platte\*\*

disclaimer 1: I am not on any campaign to force changes in the Fellowship, not that changes aren't obviously needed. Nothing done in the present (or future) will be right unless the Lord's fingerprints are on it.

disclaimer 2: I'm thankful for the many years in the Work were my life's experience. It was indeed blessing upon blessing to experience life as a worker. Obviously, though, it wasn't all sunshine and wonderfulness, ice-cream and onion rings, etc..

So, in 2017, I felt LeRoy Sanford, my co-worker (the KS/NE overseer) was telling an awful lot of "porkies" (big fat lies). When it came time for him to make the new Workers list out, I was moved to tell him I didn't want him making plans for me if I couldn't have an honest conversation with him and also didn't feel I could believe anything he said. (Words to that effect, anyway.) Silly me-- I thought he'd back up and say something like, "Yeah, well-- maybe I've been telling a few "porkies" lately..." or "Alright then-- begone and find somebody else to plan for you!!"

Long story short, he contacted Ray Hoffman and Barry Barkley. Barry happened to be scheduled for the upcoming Marysville (KS) conv.. During conv. week, some elders of the area spoke to Barry in my favor but his mind seemed already made up that it was time for me to go. (I think Ray was in Mexico maybe. I talked to him via phone, he sent me an email, etc. It was civil. But-- he never asked about all the "porkies" that started this conflict. Neither did Barry.)

Barry left a letter on my bed, the Sun. morning of Marysville conv.. I opened it up not knowing who laid it there or what it was about. He basically wrote that I was off base (insubordinate) and none of the overseers wanted me. I pretty much just staggered around the rest of the day. If someone asked me who I was going to be with after conv., I told them I'd just been fired. When they asked me what I was going to do, all that came to mind was, "Start a leper colony I guess."

Later it was noised around that I quit. But, that's not true.

The Friends helped me out wonderfully. Gave me a car, a nice car. Gave me \$ to get started in regular life. (I felt very unsettled at times. For about 4 years afterwards, just HEARING the word "homeless" struck a note of terror in me.) Would you believe none of the workers responsible for casting me away gave me a dime? It's true. I mean, THAT was kinda cheap guys, wouldn't you agree??

disclaimer 3: I have no hard feelings toward LeRoy, Barry or Ray. I think it was even God's hand that pulled me out of the Work. A couple years later, I felt deeply moved to apologize for any stupidity, rudeness or dumbness I'd committed against them, which I did by phone in 1 day.

They all said they "forgave me." Yep. My advice for me/Us today is: just try to abide (in the Lord), be thankful and remember to sing hymns. (Don't we have a WONDERFUL hymnbook?!) Just meet where you feel safe. Neither are we competing against anyone. I doubt if I'll attend a convention this year due to all the stress and confusion that's piling on me/Us. For me, enough is enough for 2023!

Let's let the Traumatized amongst Us have their voice. We have a duty to listen to them. People who have been traumatized need to talk. They might not WANT to talk but they NEED to talk.

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**\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

I was molested by Kenny Wahlin at Elizabeth, Colorado convention in the early 1990's. I don't remember when I told Anita <redacted> . She told me not to ever tell anyone what Kenny had done to me "because his parents would be devastated".

I talked to Anita about my experience a number of different times, and EVERY time she had some excuse that I must not speak out. Finally I ended any communication with her because she is very unhealthy for me.

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**\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

The first time I took sleeping pills was about a month after I really started in the work - not preps. I think that first night I took 3 Tylenol PM because I was delirious and just wanted to sleep. I had asked my companion to stop at a drug store so I could get some "girl things" and knew she probably wouldn't go in with me for that. I can't tell you how many I took that week, but I know it was way more than I should have.

This is my 6 month trauma story.

I grew up in truth and it had been suggested my entire life that I had so many worker traits. I never wanted it. But I heard my name, MY name, said on the platform. The guilt immediately set in. What choice did I have? I was called - from the platform - by a worker who was a stranger to me. If I didn't offer, there was no way I would ever be right with God. It's the only thing I could do. So I did it. I offered, and in less than a month, I was at convention preps.

I was there for about a month, and it was a good month. It was the first time I didn't have to think about being an adult or working or school or worry about anything. I remember my day to cook supper, and I made something my mom always did. Everyone thanked me for it, and I was told it was the best new dish that had been introduced in years. I'm not sure if that was true, but I was the youngest and newest at the time. There was one older sister I enjoyed being around so much. She seemed to just get me. I even told my parents that I would be so glad if my companion was her. As luck would have it, she was.

I don't remember being told she was to be my companion, but I do remember she immediately changed. Little things - make sure you wear stockings, don't wear open toed sandals, need to get some non-denim skirts, make sure your shirt is tucked in - so many little things. I wasn't allowed to "think" or talk about my life before. It wasn't so much that I wanted to talk about my life before but that I needed to say goodbye to it and all the dreams I had.

I was only able to stay in the work for 6 months. By the time I left, panic attacks were a daily occurrence and depression was crushing. At least one of the gospel meetings we had, I sat there and cried because I was having a panic attack and unable to speak. I wore a red shirt. It was in someone's home, and they had an ice maker. I remember the sound of the ice dropping.

I remember one instance clearly where I had finally been allowed to go on my own. I went to a bookstore and called my parents from a pay phone. I was sitting on the floor, between the bathrooms, clutching that phone and having a panic attack. A nice stranger asked if they could help. I don't remember answering.

Another vivid memory I have is of hiding phone cards and waiting till everyone was asleep before I used one. I always made sure I blocked the number I was calling so that no one would be able to find out I had called my parents again. It was only my parents that I ever called. I think that was because they were the only ones who might understand. I was forbidden from calling even them.

I'm not sure when the decision was made for me to leave the work. I don't know if I made it or someone else. By the time I left, I wasn't any part of the strong, confident young woman I was before. I was broke. Leaving broke me even further. Now I was broken not only to myself but everyone else would know I was broke too. I never took a real break from meeting to heal. That was the place I was always told would help me heal. I didn't start healing until I had my first child which was around 9 years after I left. When I fully realized God's purpose for me was really to be a mother.

These stories we are hearing these days have rocked me and my family. I haven't been to meeting since, and honestly, have no desire to go back. My little meeting is like the person who avoids danger by looking the other way. My little meeting is also mostly family. My little meeting has never asked my story. My little meeting has made the weight of my failure heavier.

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### **\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

I was conditioned for abuse before I even started in the work. I was told by Kenion Coleman that young workers don't talk and he glorified feeling worthless. I was trained to completely submit to my older companions and have no opinions.

There was a story about a new sister worker that had a companion tell her she needed to hang dry her stockings a certain way. The next companion told her to hang them a different way. I understood that I was to do whatever my companion said, even about personal things.

Ray Hoffman once spoke in a meeting about how "Jesus had no personality." So I tried to lose my personality. Before starting in the work, Ray told me to not have a phone or laptop and to only call my parents once a week. I was warned to not tell

them about any negative things happening in the field, because a sister worker once did that and her family stopped professing.

I had severe depression while in the work. I remember laying on the bathroom floor crying and wanting to die during the emblems one meeting. I dreaded waking up in the morning. I cried everyday. I was scared to do anything other than read my Bible and pray. With my first companion, we were in a busy field and would spend about 1 night in a home before moving on. We would have multiple visits a day. I had no time to myself. When I said I needed time to exercise, my companion said I needed to just write letters and that hopefully someday I would get over needing that. My companion loved to sit and visit for hours with people and I felt unable to leave. It was exhausting.

At conventions and special meetings, I was praised by older brother workers for my brokenness while speaking. (I cried a lot and felt worthless) They were worried about young workers that were "too free." (basically the ones that were confident and not doormats)

Mary Simon was emotionally abusive. She was very controlling and nervous/tense. I had no autonomy and was shamed and treated like a child, even though I was an adult and had lived on my own before. I know that other people have been affected by her. Yet she continues to be placed with young workers, even after Lyle Schober said she would not be.

I left the work to take care of my health and became suicidal. I begged my parents to kill me. I eventually realized I couldn't go back in the work (which was my worst fear); my foundation was shattering. It felt like I was coming out of prison and for the first time in years, I didn't want to die everyday. I had to start over with nothing. Ray Hoffman had told me to not finish my degree before starting in the work ("burn your bridges") so I had to go back to school. My husband was in the work also and had to spend several years finishing his degree so he could get a job to support our family. We struggle a lot financially from both being in the work with no savings or belongings, and a late start on school and a career. Years later, I still struggle with PTSD from being in the work and being raised in meetings. I have panic, anxiety, and self-esteem issues and I sometimes self-harm.

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**\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

My first year I was with Charlotte Johnson and Lydia Pingetzer, at the end of the year I went to Ron because I was weary of the way Charlotte treated Lydia when she was with us and I recall Ron being worried about me and I assured him I could take care of myself. I've sometimes wished I'd been willing to worry about me as well. I mean she was the beginning of the emotional unzipping so you're no longer who you once were because you're crawling inside yourself, zipping up who you once were to protect it from getting hurt.

One time, impartial, I believe I turned one street too soon on a busy street and the reaction of life being over and never being able to fix this situation might have echoed throughout the car as I got us to where she wanted to be, maybe in a self guided tour manner, but we were there and we were safe which is more than I can say for the times she used our car to stop oncoming traffic to get where she needed to go. I recall Lydia was probably begging me to stick up for myself, the day of my self-guided tour by telling me how she stopped one of her companions abusive behaviors by threatening to bring it to the overseers attention. She was my hero that year, I've often said she was the reason I stuck it out.

My third year I was with someone I thought the world of but she had made it her mission to reprogram me on divorce and remarriage. I came to meetings when my mom left my dad and married a man who was raised going to meetings. She brought up her stance and the importance of this unforgivable sin never being tolerated at many meals and visits. I would become isolated and quiet. She saw it and addressed it saying "someday I would understand". When I heard of her Uncle, a west coast Sr worker, who was the major hard-nose to this belief of a merciless sin of divorce & remarriage, was one of the ones who diddled children, all I could do was shake my head because apparently harming one of God's children is forgivable and worth it.

I have lost all respect for the judgment that's cast.

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**\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

In 1986 at Antioch Nebraska convention grounds during convention, Roy Dietzel asked me to come to his room for a visit. It was about 20 minutes before the afternoon meeting was to start, so anyone in the main house was leaving for the meeting shed. I knocked on Roy's door and he said "come in".... I opened the door and he was sitting on the side of the bed, & what appeared to me at that time, fully clothed. He proceeded to grab me & molest me. I broke free and ran from his



room, out of the main house and right into meeting, that had already started. I sat there shocked and completely shook.

After meeting, I told my companion what had happened...she was understanding and said we needed to report this to Ron Thomke. I am guessing that my companion had told Ron, because convention ended and Ron had said didn't have time to visit with me until after clean up, which was understandable to me. When Ron Thomke came to our field for the visit, he already knew what I was going to tell him and did not want to hear any of it....he said I (meaning me) needed to "shut down 'the lie' right now" and he said he had instructed the rest of the staff to deny anything regarding this accusation as false.

My companion was also given this instruction and she confirmed that no one believed me on the staff....except her but she was not to talk of this anymore. From there I was ostracized and black listed....the hatred and animosity was dense and thick and could be felt from Brother workers and sister workers alike. I was truly shunned....it was awful. A well respected elders wife tried their hardest to get me to admit that I was lying and if I did admit to it being a lie, I would be accepted back into "the beloved"

In July we were in a west Nebraska home and Roy and his companion came for the purpose of visiting with me....the purpose of that visit was to "send me home". During the visit I asked Roy why he was sending me home and he stated "because of the lies you've been telling about me"....(his companion was a witness) I said "no Roy, you know those aren't lies and I refuse to be sent home especially by you" ...I got up and left the room. Within 3 weeks I got a letter from Arnold Brown stating that I would be transferred to Wisconsin since I was not willing to fit in with my overseers suggestions.

My first companion in Wisconsin was Ruth Eoff and she very openly told me that she was aware of the lies that I told about a spiritual leader and she had been assigned to humble me....and if it meant that I would decide to go home during that humbling process, so be it.

Let me tell you...it was a nightmare and far far worse than the molestation from Roy Dietzel. What a wretched Ministry. However, Ruth's treatment of me did not go unnoticed by the friends after being pushed down cement stairs and being locked in an attic bedroom for seven days...(we were at the <redacted>

home...<redacted> were snow birds so their home was empty) the friends in that field called the overseer, who was now Charles Thain, and told him that they were worried about Ruth's Eoffs companion as Ruth had been observed being very insensitive, rude and cruel. Charles gave the elders and their wives permission to go to <redacted> home and get me away from Ruth and bring me to their homes and he would meet us there. When the elders came to <redacted> home they found me locked in the attic. Ruth was taken away somewhere....I'm not sure where but it was out of the field. I felt rescued...but I had a pure case of PTSD. I was utterly disillusioned with the ministry by that time and I was ready to go home. Ruth had done her job and done it well. A sweet couple from Beaver Dam took me to my home state.

Since then I have educated myself and raised children and taught them to love God and Jesus and The Word of God, but really never trusted the ministry enough to give the kids a real love for the workers.

The NE staff from that time period should be ashamed of themselves. I have no respect for any of them to this day.

Roy went on to be an overseer in MO and AR, Ruth Eoff went on with her ministry in FL and Ron Thomke never missed a beat.

I totally never thought there would be any vindication for me until eternity.....but somehow I feel vindicated after 34 years of remaining silent. Vindicated just by "knowing" I was not the only one and it had happened many times before me. That's all that I needed.....

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Jonathan Roberts

Many of you know me and have seen things I have written. I have a lot more to say about the abuse and culture of the work than I can fit here. Anyone is free to contact me to know more.

I was not raised in meetings. I only began coming to meetings when I was 17. I professed in 1986 at Knoxville Tn convention. I went into the work in 89 and started in Alabama/Mississippi with Lesley Pulley. That is where any illusion I had of the work being a place where men and women could go to learn to be Godly was dashed. Lesley was a micromanaging tyrant who has broken many a young worker.

Before I went into the work, I was confident, lived on my own, worked a job to put myself through college where I had a scholarship for keeping nearly a 4.0 average in engineering classes. I graduated high school from a private boarding school. I was athletic and fenced(sword fighting) and rock climbed almost every weekend. Was competitive, going to tournaments etc. When I got with Leslie, he began breaking all that down. He couldn't stand it that I had studied more and was accomplished at things. That first year I lost all confidence. I won't go into the details, but I will illustrate it like this.

There was another brother my age who started the year before I did with Leslie. His nerves were broken by the time I got on staff for my first year. He had stomach issues and could barely speak in meeting. You MIGHT say that he just had a weak constitution. Well, he left the work, got married and became a medical doctor in the navy. One of the perks of his job was to learn to fly a fighter jet and land it on an aircraft carrier. He is still a doctor. Now, tell me. Is his job less stressful than the work or is it just less abusive? There are too many abusive stories to fit in this note.

Sam McCracken was the overseer of TN. I went to TN after AL. Sam created competition between brother workers and would take turns promoting one over the other. To get favor, they would work harder and harder. Finally they would break. They could not maintain that level of work and then see the favor towards them change on a whim. I saw it happen over and over. When I finally spoke to Sam about it, it got really bad for me. He would make an example of me (or anyone) by having the other workers give you menial jobs. He wouldn't even do it himself. He would have the least people boss you around. They would feel good to have power and Sam would make his point. It was a win win situation for Sam. Many of the friends saw Sam's abusiveness. When I would talk to them about it, they would dismiss it as "that is just Sam". No one would stand up to him and no one would support me standing up to him.

My home growing up was an abusive home and my dad was a diagnosed sociopath. Narcissistic. Liar. Openly Blasphemous. Alcoholic. Smoking. Beat me mercilessly, sexually abusive. When I went into the work, I truly trusted that Sam and the others, as esteemed as they were by the friends, that the work would be a safe place to grow emotionally and spiritually. I also thought it would be a place where I could help my unprofessing family see the truth and get healed from all the dysfunction. The work was every bit as abusive as my home.

The difference is, the workers stole from me my life in the name of God. My dad didn't mind saying "goddammit" or anything else like that. But that is NOT taking the Lord's name in vain. I see that what the workers are doing is deceiving people like myself to give my life and goods to support "God's work". But they are not being Godly at all. THAT is taking God's name in vain. They SAY they are teaching God, but they don't even know him. It took me 12 years in their abusive ministry to figure that out.

After 12 years in the work, my health was shot. I had been in an automobile accident and gotten whiplash. I was completely depressed. I could not function. Sam gave me a little bit for some treatments, but he didnt see me through to recovery from depression and physical injuries. And he most definitely didn't help me get on my feet to get reestablished in the real world. The ones who did that were my abusive, blasphemous dad who had advised me to finish school, and my alcoholic, smoking brother who doesn't do God but is a nice guy. My brother is MUCH NICER THAN SAM OR LESLIE AND MANY OTHER WORKERS!!! They kept giving me money as I needed it so that I could get on my feet. They did that over a space of about 2 years.

The workers didn't even give me a vehicle. My brother gave me a pickup truck I could use to work out of. The same brother who wondered and asked me what it would be like for me if I wanted to leave the work. They were concerned for me and saw what was happening before it happened. Their concerns were founded. I truly thought that I had a new "family" in the work that was closer than my blood relatives. It was humiliating to have to go back home with nothing at 31 years old. I was way worse off than when I went into the work. The workers and friends really didn't care. I am grateful for some who helped a bit, but it wasn't near enough.

These men were not the only abusive men. There were a few others. Frank Porter was an Olympic level liar and manipulator. There are many more workers and incidences to mention. I hope everyone can see my sincerity in going into the work to help my unprofessing family. You can imagine that the workers didn't care about my family and how they might feel having to take care of the workers' obligations to get me back on my feet and get well and healthy again.

I hope this begins to paint a picture of how self centered the leadership of the work is and how they are using good men and women to satisfy their own lusts for power and control. They are using people's sincere desires to preach the gospel of Jesus and their willingness to give up everything to do it. The false message is that the workers must impoverish themselves and be unmarried to be in the only true ministry on the earth. Young men and women accept that level of dedication only to position themselves to be subject to a controlling man.

My heart is that every single person would quit trying to change the system. I want everyone to stop appealing to these evil, self centered men like overseers have any authority at all over them. There is nothing to gain from changing anything in the meetings and continuing the system. Those who are your true friends will remain your true friends no matter what the workers label you. What we see happening is that more and more people are joining the ranks of "outsiders" and the outside is becoming the new inside. The workers ARE The World they preach against because they act like the world in every way they preach is wrong.

I sincerely hope and I trust that our firm stand for truth will appeal to the many honest ones still trapped in the fear of that system.

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Steve Blubaugh has written extensively about his time in the work. It is a tale of power struggles, abuse, politics, money mismanagement and other issues within the ministry. His story is at this web link: <https://ex2x2.info/2020/10/30/blubaugh-steve/>

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**\*\*Anonymous Worker\*\***

The abuse (all types – mental, emotional, psychological, verbal, spiritual and sexual) in the work is rampant, especially among the sister workers. What goes on behind the scenes is atrocious! Out of 12 years in the work, 3 different states and about 20 coworkers – here are my statistics – only the equivalent of 2 ½ years and about 5 coworkers were tolerable and non-abusive! Let's put that in better perspective: 80% of my time in the work was spent living with someone who was abusive! And 75% of my coworkers I was with were abusive! High statistics for it to be kept going and for people to fight for it to keep going! Not okay on any level. What's more – the overseers knew and so did most all the other workers on the staff. Sad, very, very sad. They are one thing in front of people, another thing behind the scenes, you learn very quickly what you have to do to survive! So, there are many things that especially in front of people, you do not comment, you do not give your opinion. You don't do or say anything because you will pay for it behind the scenes, and it's just not worth it. A huge problem in the work is you live in survival mode 24 hours a day seven days a week – that's why there are so many with "nerve" problems.

When you go to overseers to tell them of a problem with your coworker begging for help - they

say... hang in there... preps is coming soon... a new list will be out soon... special meetings are soon... excuses and no fixing or dealing with the issues EVER. So you are crushed and silenced again and again. They don't care. They are not trained nor do they want to deal with problems.

The overseers knowingly allow all the abuse – all types. Their solution: move them to another state, promote them to overseer or older coworker.

Leaving the work is the worst experience you can possibly imagine – and I did it 3 times with the same results – the ministry and some in the church turning their back on me – judging because they didn't know the full or real story. The last time I left, and got a professional job and they needed to verify employment – they couldn't verify it because

the overseer wouldn't answer their questions satisfactorily. The attitude of pride and power is rampant, especially amongst the overseers and other older workers.

I have lots and lots I could share with specifics and it is horrifying – or should be to people.

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### **\*\*Anonymous Brother Worker\*\***

I remember the day I felt I was "called to the work": I was 18, I had just started a relationship with a girl I met in high school, and I remember hearing the words "I will make you to become fishers of men". I felt like a hook had been set behind my sternum. I didn't want to go, I had plans, medical school among them.

It took 3 years of feeling completely unprepared and unworthy before I broke down and offered, sobbing at a convention grounds, just after preps where I had been "helping out". The relief was immense. A year later I went to help as best I could at another preps, after being told I was welcome to come, the older brother "in charge" of that preps told my mom while I stored my one bag in the brother's quarters that "I'm not running some kind of summer camp". I packed up my things and left, devastated. I had come to offer my literal body to prepare for convention, for the closest thing to heaven on earth, and been told I wasn't wanted.

Seven years later, the day I had waited for came: I got the call that I would have a place in the work across the state from my home, in less than 2 weeks. I moved 2 hours home and sold everything I had, left the elderly cats I had loved since I was barely 10, and met my companion on a Tuesday afternoon for a 6hr drive to our field. I bawled my eyes out leaving all I had ever known, but God had called, so I onward went. I spoke in the gospel meeting the next evening. Thus began a pattern when I spoke, my eyes would leak, after spending all day/afternoon begging God for something to share with His children, finding something that felt "right" to share, my eyes would fill while I spoke.

In my 6 years in the work, every companion I had commented on it. I was accused of "discouraging the people of God", asked "is there something wrong with you?", and told "this is the gospel of joy, and you're making that false by what you share, how you share." Elders took me aside after Sunday morning meetings, saying I was

too "emotional". How can one share the tenderest story ever told, the most precious story of the pure love of God and not feel their heart move? I could not, and I suffered for it. I also over prepared to the point of ending up having more to say than would end up fitting in 15-20 minutes. How to determine what was important, most important, in what I felt had been given to me by the Lord God?

Every companion spoke harshly or straight up yelled at me in the car after gospel meetings, telling me I was "too much". I remember sitting across from my overseer begging for a "young" mother (a former babysitter of mine) to be protected, for her children to be protected against a man that was sexually, psychologically, emotionally abusing them all, yes, abusing his own children in the most disgusting of ways. I spoke with tears staining my shirt in a public restaurant, ashamed of my display or what could be seen as such. I was told that I was like King David when Nathan came to him after his sin with Uriah and Bathsheeba, calling for the death of a sinner, and more interested in judgment than mercy, without realizing that I was a sinner, THE sinner. I was shocked into silence, and felt filthy after that visit. Had I just been told that I was guilty of the sins of another. Sins I consider the most heinous of crimes that can be perpetrated by one human against another. These little ones that I esteemed as the most precious gifts of God were to be hurt, and I was told to do nothing, that I was being used as a tool of the enemy?!

My companion sat next to the overseer and said nothing. A part of me died that day, and it was only my second year in the work. I tried to reach out to those in the depths of mental illness, to extend the grace of God, shown to me in that same place, into the pit. To speak of salvation as a reality vs a distant hope. I was told in the car that if my companion could have reached me to kick me under the table he would have, if he could have told me to shut up, he would have. I "didn't know what I was doing", after simply sharing the hope I had found in my own experience?

Other "breaking points" followed, but I kept on, because "God had called". I gained and lost 30 pounds in a year, my own mental health crumbled despite professional intervention. I was shamed for that intervention as well. After being placed in an utterly bizarre situation for workers, and kept there, I went for my walk (my daily sanity walk in which I called my mom, just to hear a comforting voice), walked over a bridge several hundred feet tall and wondered if it was tall enough to "do the job". I asked my companion if we could visit a bit more in our field (we had been living in the same home for most of 2 years), if I could make arrangements for

meals, I also stated that since we were having phone in meetings and my own health had suffered in the place, I would prefer to stay where I was and meet him for these arrangements. We would both be able to be where we felt safest and most called to be, while caring for our field.

I received an email the next day directing me to "seek other arrangements because [I was] no longer fit for the mission we're having (we had almost 10 listening to the 2 gospel studies/week we were having)". I broke, I have not been to another meeting since. I have no interest in going to another meeting, my confidence in what I believed with all my being has been broken, by those who are "God's chosen ministry". I am to this day not sure how I am still alive. My scars are deep. My home region has been rocked perhaps more than most by "recent revelations", which I knew even in the work were neither "recent" nor "revelations" to most of the "staff". But I didn't dare to speak up, to whom would I go? To the one who was to be a helper and I a helper to him? The one who every year (over 5 different "companions") had broken my trust and treated me as less than an idiot at times? I was isolated, broken, cut, and thrown out by those professing to follow Jesus. I found it was not, is not a Jesus I know, nor is it the Jesus I preached that I saw lived. I cherish to this day the beautiful, bruised, and even broken souls that I was permitted to care for, to love, to interact and live with. But this ministry has little, if anything of the Samaritan who stopped to care, who loved at his own cost. The sheep belong to the Shepherd, not the hireling, nor to the sheepdog. May God draw his own to Himself, to His loving comfort, which is nowhere to be found in this ministry.

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**\*\*Anonymous Sister Worker\*\***

My 18 years in the work was mostly positive actually. I had been in the work several years when a visiting brother asked me "how I read" a certain verse. Don't remember the verse but I remember that my thought was, "whatever the other brothers think about this verse". It started to dawn on me that I had not spent much time digging deeping in the scriptures and had leaned so much on following what others were doing and thinking. The power of the approval of others was concerning to me. How easily we fall into the trap of thinking outward appearance somehow equals inward rightness.

My wife was also in the work at the time. We communicated a lot about some relationship difficulties, bullying especially and lack of listening skills. Personalities are



all different of course. We tend to examine others very closely but fail to examine ourselves in some very important areas. Her frustrations increased and that of two other sister workers on the IL/IN staff. In workers meeting there as admonitions about submission, what you wear, what you do, but nothing about how to create better interpersonal relationships. Simply how to get along better starts with self-examination and letting go of what we think everyone else should be doing.

Right now some wish that Gospel meetings and convention would be canceled to focus on the current CSA/SA crisis. I feel this pause would be a such a helpful choice. However even back then I was weary with planning, meetings, conventions, visits, living in a "fish bowl" and the pressure to perform and do it well or nearly perfect. We should have all taken a break until we could solidly stand on the firm foundation of truly loving one another. We are all individually on a journey sometimes that means leaving religion to find God.

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Galatians 5:13 -For you, brethren, have been called according to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word , even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!