

How to Stop Abuse Within The Churches of God

Both The Brethren And The Ministry Are At Fault

by Richard Markland (Lebanon, Ohio) (c) 2006 By Richard Markland

Many of the brethren or ministers reading this have been a member of God's way of life for decades.

The reason we are fragmented, and don't have a clue, is because we are loyal to a certain group and believe we are with an organization that God is exclusively working with. If Luke 11:17 says "...a house divided against itself cannot stand", I have to draw the conclusion that God is saying we will stay in the condition we are in as long as we insist things will be done our way. We are divided and there simply isn't a strong foundation of growth with any one particular group. Luke 11:17 has taken on a whole new meaning because we won't admit that by being divided, it is against God's will.

I honestly do not believe the preaching of the gospel, in the way God wants it to be preached, has ever been done. Perhaps a small glimpse of it did take place during Herbert Armstrong's tenure, but the abuse by ministers destroyed so much of any sense of established credibility, plus the high living standard of God's "apostle" accomplished very little in the overall picture. There are still groups that can't shake the HWA syndrome and move on. Of course, I am certain some ministers and brethren have the hair raised on the back of their necks by now.

We are simply a group of people who respect men, but we are not willing to admit it. Ministers in many churches of God have become equivalent to cardinals in the catholic church. Far too many brethren don't know how to make decisions on their own without the approval of a minister. Some brethren have been coming to church for decades and are still counseling with ministers and certain ministers just can't stop being spiritual babysitters. The ministry overall is not allowing members to think on their own two feet and brethren are among the most naive group of people anywhere. I do not mean everyone, but for many brethren who attend the established churches of God, a self made cocoon is the spiritual comfort zone they embrace. The ministers thrive on members who go along without questioning decisions. Step out of line, and Gestapo tactics are used. I learned first hand what it was like and I thank God I stood up to the abuse and said enough is enough.

The best thing that ever happened to me was to be disfellowshipped from Living. I wonder, however, who is actually worst-Living or Philadelphia? Since I no longer attend any particular group, I have established a stronger and far closer relationship with God because I have to think for myself and rely upon God to guide me. I would say it is about time since I've been in God's way of life for over 40 years. I had to stand on my own two feet while watching my wife die of cancer last year and I haven't counseled with a single minister throughout this period of time with false charges filed against me by the Federal judicial system. Why? Because most ministers don't have a clue what the real world is like, but live in a self made cocoon that is totally out of touch with reality. God promises to guide me if I look to Him-not a minister.

If I were to categorize two of the most abusive churches of God, I would have to say Living and Philadelphia are neck in neck. Restored has a bad track record as well, but I am not familiar with Dave Pack's format, but from what I have read, he is totally off base as well.

Gerald Flurry has become the self-made modern day apostle and is a one man show with members no longer allowed to have contact with family members who are with another group. How this can ever be classified as love is beyond me, but this is what happens when brethren blindly follow a man and don't think for themselves. Is it any wonder a number of people say many brethren have reminded them of number 2 yellow pencils. Gerald Flurry is a self-delusional false minister who can't live without power.

Rod Meredith cannot stop talking about his scrapping boxing days and a message of gloom and doom continues. He hammers away at subjects left over from years ago and doesn't say anything new except how the brethren fall short of what they should do. He never did stand up and be counted when the shootings occurred in Wisconsin, but passed the buck on to other men. He has always talked the talk, but ran in the other direction when it came to personal accountability. To this day, I still make the claim that the messages from Rod Meredith had a detrimental affect upon my wife as she was dying. Only sermons by Fred Coulter helped Linda to realize God accepted her as faithful.

If I were to say all the churches of God need to close doors, it would come across as blasphemy to some brethren. Why do I say this? It is because the ministry and brethren need to know what it is like to make decisions on their own without having a church to lean on. The days of churches being social clubs would be over. This is going to some day become a reality and many brethren and ministers will not know how to handle it because there will no longer be a cocoon to comfort them.

We need to stop being children and grow up. We need to think for ourselves, without relying upon organizations to

hold our hands in order to be in the Kingdom of God. I am embarrassed that I was ever associated with Worldwide, United, Global and Living. There were rewarding moments, but overall I was left with the feeling that I couldn't make decisions on my own without a ministers approval. I thank God that I woke up because I now look to God for help each day in a way I never did before. Only now do I understand who God is and how He is working in my life. I just wish other brethren and ministers could think for themselves instead of thinking they have to be a part of something. We have to be very insecure if we think we have to be in a certain group in order to make it into God's Kingdom. It's the equivalent of saying God prefers a Chevy over a Ford.

If the ministry would stop being spiritual politicians and babysitters and learn what the real world is like, God's church would be far better off. Some ministers don't know anything else and I do not identify with a single one because my life is on a totally different level. I am not superior, but I no longer feel inferior by the abuse certain ministers dished out. Many ministers are totally naive when it comes to knowing what the real world is like and the abuse of their position to this day shows how disconnected they are with God. They are among the most insecure individuals anywhere because they are addicted to power and make poor decisions.

I hope to never be a part of a particular group again. I simply want to be a part of God's way of life and this doesn't mean I cut myself off from brethren either. I simply want to make decisions by looking to God and stop living in a world that doesn't exist by attending a particular church that makes me feel I am strapped tight to their agenda.

Many brethren need to stop being children and think for themselves. The men who claim to be chosen by God need to stop tooting their horn. They need to stop lording it over the brethren by allowing members to be free from the watchful eye of a one man dictatorship who is equivalent to BIG Brother. Brethren need to stop looking up to the college of cardinals and rely upon God. This is not happening. God is going to test every single member at some point and I have to say that I feel sorry for brethren who are dedicated to an organization, yet are fooling themselves by thinking God comes first. All ministers need to read Ezekiel 34. This is a message to God's ministers. This is one chapter the ministry won't touch.

I am not the only person who feels this way. I hear from brethren who are completely turned off by the status quo and now think for themselves. I appreciate their strengths and to know they are standing on their own two feet. I also don't put brethren down who attend certain groups because God is working with individuals who are loyal to Him. There are brethren who attend for the fellowship and don't look to a man. I do believe, however, that the brethren who are independent minded in their loyalty to God, above men, is in the minority.

I believe without a doubt in my mind that God and Christ are taking a hands off approach towards the brethren who look to the ministry and the ministers who thrive on such an attitude. They are not growing as they should, but think the same as in the 70s and 80s era of the church. There are, however, brethren who are growing because they don't look to the ministry for decisions and are able to think for themselves. These are the real troops in God's army.

Of course, how many brethren will disagree by saying they believe a certain leader has been chosen by God, and are not remotely willing to admit their loyalty is misplaced? This is one self-delusioned statement by members who can't look beyond a man and won't come close to admitting it. Sometimes men are mentioned more than God. We simply don't see the state we are in and no wonder Christ says He will spit certain brethren and ministers out of His mouth.

We are in sad shape, yet it is always the other person. We simply are incapable of seeing our true condition because ministers still rule over members. It's embarrassing when I think of how small the churches are, yet ministers are on a high because they are able to have the ultimate say so.

I now have a life. My loyalty is to God and ministers are at the bottom of my list of respectability. They were in the way and still are for many brethren. I fired the college of cardinals in the churches of God almost three years ago and I can now breath for the first time. I can't get away from the memories fast enough, but I am running as fast as I can.