

Abuse Under a Spiritual Father

Jim, a brother in Christ

My wife and I were under the covering of a spiritual father and we were taught it was scriptural. What it was, was abuse.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (Jas. 3:14-16)

I quote James so that it can be considered if you, the reader, are in such a movement, does this apply to yourself, your leaders, or both? For me, I think it was both, although the envy and self-seeking was well masked within myself - and God had to expose it, a process that required time and experience.

My wife and I moved from central Wisconsin to Kansas City, MO. in Sept. of '04, believing the Lord was opening a door for me to go to Bible College, as that was how I thought one answered the call of God. Little did I know of the education we were going to receive - but not in the traditional sense. The reason we moved to KC is that a year earlier I had taken some time off from work, and went for a trimester at the International House Of Prayer.

That exposed me to the prophetic movement, and the Apostles and Prophets that God was said to be raising up. I.H.O.P. had links with Rick Joyner, Peter Wagner, Dutch Sheets, Chuck Pierce and too many to name. I had some life changing experiences and thought they were God. I include this, not only for background, but because I now consider all these things to be linked with the leaven of deception. And just as one cannot eat around the leaven in a loaf of bread, one cannot separate truth from error in these movements. They are too mixed. However, God does have His people in these places and, if one is led by the Spirit of God, one will not stay too long as the Lord Himself will lead you into all truth. (Jn. 16:13), He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), neither does He want us to sup on a lie or we will become that lie. (1 Cor. 10:21)

My wife moved to KC a couple weeks before me to have some job interviews and I stayed behind to wrap up some loose ends. We were praying for a home close to I.H.O.P. and, through some rather miraculous events, we got a place right behind it. So this also led me to believe that I was to pursue their schooling venue. But after we were settled in and I was going to go and register for classes, I distinctly heard the Lord speak to me. He said, "It is not I.H.O.P." I was a little shaken but I knew that it was Him. (Our home turned out to be the perfect location to live and it was a oasis for us.) We also got involved at this time with a church that rented the old Metro church building. This building belonged to I.H.O.P and it was where Mike Bickle was pastor before stepping over to the I.H.O.P thing. We had visited it one other time on a trip to Texas when we were passing through at the time. So now, being invited by some friends helped us to think this must be divine direction. It was also a deliverance church and I had some very limited exposure to that so we thought that I could pick up some more knowledge that way. Also, I want to make reference that I had been praying for over a year that the Lord would lead me to someone that could disciple me and teach me these things, as my AG (Assembly of God) background had no grid for what I was experiencing.

The first service, I was mesmerized by the Apostle Kenneth Hinton and his teaching and preaching ability. We saw what seemed to be some poor souls being delivered of some demons and

people falling out in the Spirit. My wife and I stood up and became members that morning. That night the Apostle had a word for us. He said “The Lord has sent you here. You two have been wounded but you are here to be healed and equipped and you will be sent out. You won’t be here long.” He later added, “I am to be your spiritual father. I will disciple you.” And he said some other things that was like reading our spiritual mail. I was convinced it was God. It had to be, right?

I did not know it then, but it was not the Holy Spirit but a different spirit. Paul addresses that in 2 Cor.11:4. In this case it was a physic spirit and we were all set up to be roped in. After all, it had to be an answer to prayer - someone to disciple me, train me up in the things of deliverance *and* coming under a spiritual covering of an Apostolic church. What more was there that I had not been praying for?

As each week passed, I was given more and more opportunity to speak, to share, to lead. I had some background in teaching and had some groundwork with the Word. We were never left to ourselves too long. We went to church twice on Sunday, also Thursday, over to Pastor’s house once a week, and he was also giving me classes once a week because he had told me that he was a teacher at another Bible college, in which, with his help, I enrolled in. And he told me that his deliverance classes and discipleship classes would even count for college credit. So I went to school two nights a week and had homework that consumed my time, and all the Bible study I was doing as I was going over what was being taught at church. Also I was considered an intercessor and was required to pray for this church and leadership from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. I had to phone the next in line as I was called before I started - that way the chain was not broken and prayer went up 24/7. This is not counting my own personal prayer time and the hours of Bible study we were encouraged to do. Oh, and the fasting we were encouraged to do, and sign up sheets of who would be fasting for three days with out food and water, who would be fasting three days of just food, or who would be undertaking a longer fast. (This is just a setup for spiritual elitism and pride, but why not look at the spirit behind it?) It wasn’t like going into your prayer closet. (Mt. 6:6)

All this is also a set up for control. In fact, my time was not my own. There were times I would be waiting for Apostle to show up for our weekly discipleship class and I would be waiting for hours past the time. There would always be a lame excuse as to why he could not use his cell phone and call me. I had a lot of things I would of liked to do, but I was waiting. If you’re experiencing others manipulating your time, wake up. God is not teaching you patience - your life is being manipulated and it is not wrong to ask questions. (1 Ths. 5:21) And the more independent one is (by this I mean questioning), the busier they will keep you. For me all of this busy-ness was fulfilling an inner need. As I shared earlier, I was being allowed to do some teaching and a limited amount of preaching. But the hidden agenda is that satisfying this inner need gives them more control over you by which they can keep stringing you along and still get even more benefit from you. Like, “Will you drive to New Orleans for the big conference? You can attend classes for driving.” But because of driving the Apostle’s friends around, I only got one class. Most of the time I sat out in the lobby when the Apostle was taking in his class (which had limited seating, so I had to miss that). They did pay for a room with the other “armor bearers” (I had to share a bed with one of them) but we were only glorified servants. I really tried to have a good attitude at the time, and those instances, caused me to go deep with the Lord, and check my own heart attitudes: Was I walking in love?, Did I have hidden pride?, etc.

Another time, I drove across the state because Apostle was going to preach at another church. As his armor bearer, it was expected for me to go. Of course, I drove a van of others who wanted to go and Apostle drove his nice car. Again, they supplied the motel room but I had to stay with a

bunch of young rowdy teenagers who didn't want to sleep at night. Oh, and when the Apostle preached, I would be right behind him and when he needed the sweat wiped off his face, I had the hanky and would be there to wipe his brow. This was all explained away as learning to be a servant. Some of those armor bearers that I have met in those circles are humble men that love the Lord. But they are being exploited. I never saw the leadership demonstrate that humble, servant attitude that they wanted their armor bearers to exhibit. Maybe some of those in leadership are not aware of what they are doing, but if they really have the Holy Spirit within they couldn't continue abusing the sheep.

But remember this: Evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Tim. 3:13) Also we battle not against flesh and blood. (Eph. 6:12) There is a spirit behind this. In all of this, the Lord was exposing issues of my heart so there was growth in this season for me.

I shared my most intimate secrets with the Apostle - later he tried to use that to control me (as I had seen him do with his other armor bearers) but praise God it was my testimony. If my former sexual bondage was brought up, I was not embarrassed as that was just who I was before Jesus set me free. I am a new creation in Christ: the old was past, the new has come. (2 Cor. 5:17) When I questioned him as to why people should suddenly be gossiping about my old life and how did they know about my past (at this time only he and his sister knew my testimony), he said that he thought I must of shared my testimony at church and that it was misunderstood. Up to that time that would have been hard to do because he or his wife were always present when I spoke. It did give me a boldness after that, though, to share my uncensored testimony with as many as I felt it may help others, so in reality Christ was glorified and the Apostle's plan backfired. That is totally God - I couldn't have planned such a thing by myself.

The reason for my sharing all of my past sins with him was because he was going after the demons that had strongholds in me. There were some rather bizarre things that took place while I was "being delivered." Also strange were the demons that were being "cast out." I hadn't had any issues with those things in years and thought they were under the blood. My conclusion was, "I'm glad that I am under an anointed Apostle who has had a word of knowledge from the Lord, that I was not really delivered after all but that the demon was simply in hiding." This again I learned later was not true. He was speaking by that physis spirit again. When he called that thing out, I went down. There was a force or power behind it, just like there is with all the falling out "in the Spirit." I felt like there were hands around my throat. I spit up and choked and coughed. I was told it was demons coming out of me. This I believed for about two years but it was nothing but demonic theatrics. And I was being groomed into their teachings which had a lot of extra-biblical ideas - some of the knowledge came from demons themselves as men were taught by voices speaking through people who were under their control. We were told that a demon has to tell the truth if it is ordered to in the name of Jesus. This method would reveal doorways that the demons had entered into that person (usually during childhood). It could be because of abuse, illness or any number of reasons. This is deception to the max - information from a demon is a lie. Even if it is largely a truth that the demon speaks, there are lies concealed within or else the demon is taking the place of a child of God and speaking some truth. (see Lk. 4:41, Acts 16:17)

It says in Jn. 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

There is no truth in the demonic, it is impossible to gain understanding or knowledge from them. Besides that, it is forbidden to talk to the dead or demons for this is necromancy. (Dt. 18:11, etc.) In addition, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, is supposed to live within us – why can't we simply ask Him for all the knowledge and discernment we need? But yet much of the deliverance teaching that is out there comes from this demonically tainted background. It's that leaven again, you can't eat around it. Paul addressed this quite well:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Col. 2:8)

I am not denying the demonic realm. It is more real and sinister than what I am describing above. The enemy of our soul is not stupid as many ministers would like you to believe. If you hear that from a pastor or teacher, beware of who or what influence he is speaking from. I am also not afraid of my enemy as God has not given me a spirit of fear. (2 Tim. 1:7) But I try now to be discerning. I am sharing a little on deliverance so it can be seen how deep (at least in our case) we were being manipulated. But one does not have to be involved with the deliverance ministry as I was to be under the influence of demons. I hope that is clear. We were taught that God has a theocracy: Jesus is the head, then there are Apostles and Prophets, Pastors and Teachers, Evangelists. This is taken out of context from Eph. 4:11. I should add there seems to have been one more position added that many in those circles aspired to reach and that was Bishop. My, if you were a Bishop that was more than an Apostle and now you were over all five fold positions and other churches too. Ambition knows no bounds. If you're involved in this, it is a lie and it is taught only so that your leadership can have rule over you. This is a doctrine of the Nicolaitans as recorded in Rev. 2:15. Jesus hates it. It means "rule the people."

This one also was used on us: "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father." (Gal. 4:1-2)

And our Apostle, our spiritual father, was that guardian. When he felt it was time, he would lay hands on us and with some other gifted ones we would be sent out. Although to my knowledge, no one was ever sent out. At one time, this church, I was told, had several hundred people in it and was quite prosperous. (At least the pastor had the latest car and \$700 shoes, etc.) But when we got there, the Lord had moved them in to a wilderness, or so we were told. Now there were only about 200 members and before we left it dropped below 100. But the prophets in the group, along with the Apostle, kept getting words that the Lord was removing the tares and the remnant would be pure.

And boy did it cost us financially! We were good tithers, my wife and I. Although that has its benefits, as I had believed, we were told it was the offerings where you really get blessed. That's where you get 30, 60, or 100 percent return. I never did get an adequate explanation as to what determined which one you get. I guess it was up to God. If you're into this, this is Scripture taken out of context - let the reader beware. Read the text about the parable of the sower. (Mt. 13:18-23, Mk. 4:13-20, Lk. 8:11-15) It's not about money – it's about the Word of God that is being sown. But I bought into the deception. There were many times that we would have two or three offerings because they weren't getting enough to make expenses. And although that was partly true, I know that the pastor made his money and supported his lifestyle off of those offerings and, because of the drop in members, was being forced to go look for work. I was, by then, his first assistant and I saw

things that he would try to cover up and if questioned would have some deceptive excuse.

I was elevated to first assistant. The Apostle was using my pride to bring me into submission - but for the grace God. For God was exposing that pride in me at the same time that it was trying to be capitalized. One time we went to see Juanita Bynum. She was in the area helping a church raise money. I was asked to stand in line for the Apostle and hold his place for he and several others. I waited in line for three hours and when they got there and the doors were open, the Apostle and his wife came to where I was holding there place and started pushing people out of the way so they could get to the front. My wife and I settled for seats in the middle as I thought it was the Lord that would give you a better seat if it was His will. We left before it hardly began because I was grieved with the circus-like atmosphere. The next day I was questioned why we left. I told him what I thought and that I didn't have to be rude to people to get what I want. He scolded me and said that the kingdom of heaven is taken by force and that I should have kept up with him and that I needed to be more assertive. That did not check well with the Spirit of God within me. But I was still not to the point of believing all this could be wrong and that the check I was feeling was the Holy Spirit.

My wife and I would go to other churches with He and his wife when he had speaking engagements. (full-gospel Baptist fellowship and their links) One time at a fellow Pastor-Prophet's church anniversary, when it came time to bring a special offering for the Pastor and his wife, the Apostle had a word from the Lord that everyone was to give twenty dollars - this was a word from the Lord. (There were at least a couple hundred people there.) My wife and I had just given everything extra we had at our own church service and now our Apostle was having a word that all here are to give.

We wrote a check - we would have to rob Peter to pay Paul - but we didn't want to be disobedient and we trusted the Lord for His provision. After all it was a word from Him through his Apostle, right? There was nothing extra that came in that week. I have to say as a side note: we did always make it. I believe the Lord did supply our needs at that time and it was always miraculous. I believe He honored our sincerity in wanting to do what is right. But let me make it clear - it was never pressed down, running over 30 to 100 fold. Our bills were paid and we had groceries but there was nothing extra. It was very Spartan living. I'm not complaining because we were learning. I just wish our giving would have benefited those that were poor among us. All the sheep were abused in this manner. These were, for the most part, inner-city black congregations that did not have a lot of money but their pastors lived well. Many gave much money and yet lived on or had supplemental income. That is an oxymoron. I want to say something, my wife and I are white and the people that make up these congregations loved us and welcomed us. There was no color or prejudice for the most part. But they are abused by their leaders as are all that are under this fathering umbrella. We have one Head and that is Christ. (1 Cor. 11:3) Also we are told in the gospels to call no man father. (Mt. 23:9) But I was calling him dad and for some reason did not consider the spiritual father as if he was taking the Lord's place. But he is.

In the spring of the year before moving to K.C., while we were still in the Assembly of God, I had the opportunity to go to India. It was a divine appointment. I was there for 6 weeks and traveled around with some native missionaries. I saw and met many who had been persecuted and even beaten for their faith and who hadn't received any financial help - some for six months. It wrecked me in a good way. When I got home, I could hardly stand to go to a board meeting because of the church politics. It was such a sham. All the Pastor wanted was wage increases, insurance, retirement plans, etc. I could not vote on these things any longer after meeting men who were really living their faith. I had been elected a deacon that is why I was involved in the church politics. And the weird

thing was when I got back, I wasn't even asked by the Pastor to share my experiences. It hurt me greatly as he and I were once close. But even in that the Lord's purposes were being fulfilled. I just did not want to believe that now, under an Apostle, some one whom I looked up to as a spiritual father, there really was no difference than what we had been involved in back in Wisconsin. This movement just had more spiritual manifestations, but it was really still just as self-serving and leavened. It took me two years to accept that.

I could go on and on about different abuses and lies and if you, the reader, are wondering how could I have been so stupid, this article isn't for you. It's for the one that is saying, "This sounds like me." This one understands, or is beginning to understand that we are to be a bondservant to Jesus Christ, not to a man. If your love and service is to the least of these in service for the King that is one thing and that is commendable. But if it is love and service to promote a man or woman at the neglect of the sheep, get out fast! Don't worry about passing go and missing your \$200 - your reward is not going to come through man's ways. Get out as fast as you can!

So we left that church, but not seeing the whole thing as an error, went into another Fathering Apostolic type deliverance church. And this Apostle, Dennis Gilbert, was one of my teachers at the Bible college we were attending. (This Bible college was very charismatic and had students from every denominational background you can just about name - think of the leaven going out all over the world.) This Apostle, and his wife Mary, the Prophet, also had prophetic words. They said that we had been spiritually abused by our last pastor - and they also did not know our story or background yet. It was kind of interesting talking to them later on when he asked where we came from and it turned out that he was a friend of our former Apostle. He said the Lord had been telling him something was wrong over there. Bologna, they are masters at cover up. He and his wife were also trafficking in a psychic spirit or familiar spirits. If it is the Lord, there will be no out and out lie in it - and "seeing through a glass dimly" is not an excuse for telling some real whoppers in the name of the Lord. They might be sincere some of them - and I believe this Apostle and his wife were - but they are also very sincerely deceived.

We stayed there with the intent that I would be licensed and ordained through them. And with some credentials from Bible college, I would be fulfilling a lifelong dream of working for the Lord. My wife and I would start a pilot church and the Apostle would send us out and we would be connected with them. After all, he was now my spiritual father - as the last one God had seen unworthy. But it is all smoke and mirrors. A few weeks before my ordination (at least so I was told), I was going to be ordained. At the end of a service, I heard the Lord say, "Leave." I asked to speak to the Apostle and his wife who, just that day, announced that she was also now an Apostle. She graduated, it seems, from Pastor to Prophet and now she was an Apostle. Anyway, when I told them the Lord said that we were to leave, they at first thought the Lord had told us where to go to start a church. But when I said, "No, He said leave this church," she thought I was throwing everything away and that I hadn't really heard from God - even though my wife and I knew it to be so. I was a little hurt by it all. But as it turned out, the Lord started opening my eyes so I could see clearly. And if it's a learning curve that I am on, it has increased 100 fold. Wow, there is a 100 fold return on the Word!

If anyone is in this type of situation, study the Word for yourself, you don't always need to get a confirmation from your spiritual leader. In fact be very careful about your motives behind wanting confirmation. Check out Ezek. 14:1-11 and Dt. 13:1-3. Let the Spirit of God lead you - He *will* lead you in all truth (Jn. 16:13), and the scriptures will not be twisted to fit some teaching or doctrine. If you have that little check inside, that little doubt, as to what is happening, it more than

likely is the Holy Spirit.

If you hear, “Touch not God’s anointed and do the My prophets no harm,” beware. (see Psa. 105:15 in context! -) If you hear that you need to be under a covering, beware. (see 1 Cor. 11:15. This is the *only* time this word is used!) If you hear that you need to have or if you already do have and you call someone your spiritual father, beware. (This is directly against the work of the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of truth, by which we call out to God our only Father, “Abba, Daddy, Father!” - Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:5-6, also Mt. 23:9)

One final comment on all of the Prophetic and Apostolic movement. It’s like a spider’s web. They’re all interconnected somehow. They may even say, “We don’t believe like this organization or that one,” or “We disagree with that one man or woman,” but in reality the differences are just personality conflicts. They still embrace much of the same teachings - it may just have a slightly different flavor.

Purge out the old leaven. (1 Cor. 5:6-8) It may mean walking away from all you know or have embraced as truth, but hold to the basic tenants of the faith, the initial Word that the Spirit of truth in implanted in your heart (the death, burial, resurrection and Lordship of Jesus Christ) and the Lord will guide you in His truth. Don’t be discouraged. He will unite you with others. But don’t be in a hurry - don’t think you have to be in church. Find out what the church really is first. It’s not something you have to join – it’s something you are. You won’t be in sin if you’re not doing something *for* the Lord. It’s not always about doing – most times it’s just about *being* in Him and being *still* before Him. Think on it.

I personally do believe that there are the five fold ministerial giftings. But those that function in them are few and far between. Or at least they are not flaunting themselves (as if they were all that and a bag of chips) but are active for the benefit of the body. I am very suspicious of those that advertise or market themselves as Apostle so-and-so or Prophet so-and-so, or even Pastor so-and-so. (see all the times the apostles of the New Testament declared themselves. It was *always* So-and-so, apostle of Jesus Christ. Never Apostle Paul. The first gives glory to God, the latter gives glory to the man!) Beware of the subtle, hidden pride of placing titles before the man.

And remember Jas. 3:16: For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

When the Lord started exposing what I had embraced as “Spirit filled Christianity” and “cutting-edge teaching,” along with the many that promote it and enjoy its limelight today, He reminded me of a time I went to receive an autograph from a Prophet, Pastor and author of many books. He then asked me a question: “Do you see the love of the world in receiving an autograph (self-importance)?” I said, “Oh Lord, yes, why did I not see that before? How can they do such things?” Then He stopped me in my tracks by saying, “But those who will receive an autograph would also give it.” So I pray it is real clear that I am not looking at a speck in other’s eyes - the Lord was exposing the logs in my own.

If I sound as if I am angry, it isn’t at what was done to us. As I said, that was a learning experience and the Lord exposed a lot of the intents of my heart. I had to be in it that deep for me to see the error of it. If I am angry, it would be at those that are knowingly victimizing the people - those that know what they are doing and are making a lucrative living off of sincere people.

As Ezek. 34:2 says, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!”

Thank you for reading. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. (Eph. 6:24)

Yours in Christ,
Brother Jim

Editor's Postscripts

As editor and brother of the author of this testimony, I, of course, cannot vouch for the accuracy of every single event detailed. I was not a witness to the events. However, I can and do heartily vouch for the spiritual and Scriptural understandings this testimony presents and add that my own secondary experiences with others in this movement add confirmatory weight to this testimony.

If you wish to speak with the author of this testimony, please email Neil Girrard at paidion@paidionbooks.org, as the author would certainly welcome any thoughtful dialogue regarding his experiences but has his own personal reasons for remaining "anonymous."

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