

## Closing Down the Game

God has called us all, whatever religio-cultural background, to be “Little Christs” or “Christ Ones”, “Followers of the Way”. Gandhi studied the Sermon on the Mount and was a follower of the Way. We need to claim that place for ourselves all the time. When someone has sexually offended within the home, work, spiritual community, we need to deliberately, assertively, affirmatively declare who we are in Christ. Who we are in Christ is not passive. We, through the grace of God, have the power to shut down the sexually laced gaming of the person sexually loading the environment we live in.

It has been an interesting observation in the sexual abuse research field of prisoners that only when the perpetrator knows there is no one left to back him up or no appeal left to be made, the perpetrator not only confesses the guilt he has been denying, he also admits to other offences no one even knew he/she was involved in.<sup>1</sup> In short, he gives up the denial game and then he is ready to engage the road to recovery. Negative associations can then be unlearned.

Often there are warning signs which we miss or overlook. If we realize that we are our brother’s keeper and we are called upon to minister to the minister, or other abuser of power, we can decide to establish a healthy and holy environment before God as we pay attention and intercede for one another in prayer. Driving away the injured party or the offender is not a model of what the church is meant to be: it only refreshes the playing field and the behavior in question escalates with the fact that the perpetrator “got away with it”.

Upon discussing clergy who are sexually exploitive, a female elder actually said to me that I should just accept it. “Boys will be boys” was her theme and that it has always gone on. “Put up and shut up” was her answer. But “put up” when you are the target often means “put out”. And it always, under such an environment, is interpreted as the target’s fault. Offenders are targeted by triggers. Instead of healing the offender of developing more and more triggers, those who have the misfortune to be a “trigger” (by existing) get blamed. But there is hope and there is healing; but only if we want it; only if we choose it; only if we exercise faith and take it.

The first order of business to help maintain or restore spiritual health for the clergy (it could be a Sunday School teacher, member of the choir, and so on) is for the spiritual community to decide that psychological or physical torment of any kind is not to be tolerated. Tacit approval of sexualizing situations must not be allowed. We resort to inappropriate behavior when we run out of socially acceptable ways to express ourselves

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Booker, **UnHoly Orders: Abuse of Power That Tempts Us All; The Identification and Recovery Process from Sexual Harassment and Assault by Clergy and Other Religious Leaders**, FreedomLine Enterprises, St. Catharines, Ontario, 46. Endnote 2: Richard I. Lanyon; Clive R. Hollin and Kevin Howells, editors, **Clinical Approaches to Sex Offenders and Their Victims**, John Wiley and Sons, England, 1991, 37-40.

and cope with life's demands. We pick up rote habits which steal our free will. It is the foundation of behavior modification to affirm appropriate behavior and correct inappropriate behavior with a consequence attached.

Do you harbor repulsion towards breaking the silence of inappropriate behavior as “tattling” or “squealing” like a school yard child afraid of getting in trouble among your peers? Remember Jesus said that if we hang on to our own life we will lose it. Let go of your fear and precious reputation! The only reputation which counts is what God thinks of you. The relationship you have with the Almighty God, our Lord and Savior, our Comforter is all that really matters.

We all must be accountable and responsible to use initiative and intervention. Get together and openly discuss the issue. Do not dance around it. Every bully, no matter at what age, has to come to understand that they will not be looked up to nor will their behavior be condoned through silence, or they will have no drive to change.

This does not mean prayer is ineffective. On the contrary, as prayer is active and declarative of God's promises, we in our own actions and behaviors with one another must be active and declarative of God's purity and holiness. Pray for those who persecute you in any way, yes, even in the church. Repent of any part you have played, wittingly or unwittingly, in this sad drama. Jonathan Goforth found that the seeds of revival came when people repented of the duality of who is right and who is wrong.

We are all sinful before the holiness of God. Our ears are dull to hearing God's direction. It is a great grief to even find oneself a trigger for someone to begin to offend in thought, word or deed. Collectively we need to repent, the fall on our faces repentance. We are all cut of the same cloth, with mote, beam and splinter in our eyes. Matthew 7:1-5.

We need to seek God's holy presence or our “helps” will degenerate into the proverbial hysterical “witch hunt”. We need the Holy Spirit to guide us. Psalm 105:15 “Touch not Mine Anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” Read Genesis 9:20-27. “If we, as with Ham, reveal another's nakedness, all of our seeds – our works, our ministries, everything we do in the ‘name’ of Jesus – will be a *Canaan* (a humiliating curse, Heb.) We will be a servant of servants. When we see somebody walking in a different realm in the Lord, that doesn't mean they are not in the Lord. They are still His.”<sup>2</sup>

Avoid envy, strife and divisions (1 Cor. 3:3). The sin of avoidance of sexual harassment and abuse issues when people are expressing concerns only serve to ferment sickness, strife and evil, grieving the Holy Spirit. Pray for the gentleness of wisdom (James 3:13).

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<sup>2</sup>“Do Thyself No Harm” by Margit H. Roach, [Miqra@mweb.co.za](mailto:Miqra@mweb.co.za); [www.godfire.net/whyseekye1.html](http://www.godfire.net/whyseekye1.html)

Keep Jesus your Lord of lords, and King of kings. “The offender sets about to establish intense loyalty in key people within the church.”<sup>3</sup> Seeking God’s presence in your daily life will help to inoculate yourself from this ploy. When a victim or secondary victim (a person within the church who heard about the situation) attempt to articulate situations or concerns you will be less likely to respond with ingrained pat, flippant, discounting responses. If the congregation is chasing after God’s Presence, willing to let God catch them, they will not fall for a clergy who focuses on self and theatrics instead of the good news given to us by Jesus the Christ.

Generosity of spirit is an important tenant of our faith, but that does not excuse setting out to make others indebted to you. God knows our underlying motives. Does the language around the church talk more about people’s indebtedness to their minister than to God? Encourage one another to refocus upon our Savior Jesus Christ. Increase your personal and corporate praise time. Use silence in waiting on the Lord.

The troubled offender may try to hide behaviors by alienating him or herself from family, friends and colleagues. Like the old commercial, “Do you know where your children are?” do you know where your minister is, or is he/she elusive? How may the church reassure their minister? Pray a protective hedge around the clergy person and for God’s mighty anointing to heal and restore. Be a help rather than a hindrance by speaking and acting God’s Truth and Love. One-on-one pastoral care may best be done in a public place as in a café and minister to special interest groups.

If the offender does not feel safe enough to repent and stop offending by this gentle but tough love stand of the congregation then official action needs to be taken with in the church court system. If there has been sexual assault, it needs to be reported to the police. Remember, that even in these things, “All things work together for good to those who love the LORD.”

Once we have done “missions” in this redemptive way within our own congregation and national church as a whole, then we are ready to truly see what God can do with us in missions outside our spiritual community.

Tackle society. Protest the rampant sexualizing of airwaves and pornography. Support wholesome programming. Start writing scripts to counter unbelief in movies and media.

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<sup>3</sup> UnHoly Orders, Op Cit., 14.