

CRIES...
From Among US

Bob Faulkner

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May to December 2019

Describing the agonies of the “troubled teen” industry
that has existed from the 1960’s to this present hour.

Bob Faulkner

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DEDICATION

TO SUSAN AND CINDY AND MARY
AND A HOST OF OTHER SURVIVORS WHOSE STORIES OF
COURAGE HAVE INSPIRED ME TO JOIN WITH YOU AND
HELP BRING ABOUT THE END OF THE TEEN GULAG

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PREFACE

Following are nearly six months' worth of posts about a subject that became dear to my heart a little over one year ago (November 2018). It was able to grab my heart so quickly and stay there so long because I had been involved with something like this before.

For over thirty years I have dealt to one degree or another with the plight of the suffering church. I have had personal encounters in Romania, Bulgaria, and with the North Koreans who made it to Seoul. I have heard and written their stories, cried, prayed, and given to their cause.

When I became aware that there were Christians in my own country, suffering abuse at the hands of other Christians, I had to react. These posts are a part of the reaction.

You will read of a network of homes that have been referred to by some as a "teen gulag", by others as the "troubled teen industry." These are homes that appeal to desperate parents and youth, by promising correction to their teen's issues after a stay at the "home" or the "ranch".

One of my chief concerns is that the severe and harmful discipline policies utilized at many of these homes are inflicted on young people in the name of Jesus Christ. To this day, many suffer post traumatic symptoms and more, though they have been released as many as forty years ago.

Worse, many have turned away from Christ after seeing what He had to offer, ostensibly.

I will share some of the allegations, relate portions of the history of the gulag, and share relevant Scriptures that are used to justify the treatment of these children. I will speak of other sources than the Bible that are used. And I hope to impart some basic Biblical corrections to the methodology in place.

Christians will be in tears and in prayer by the end of this volume. I know I am not unusual in that regard.

May 13, 2019

CRIES

Cries from among us, who call ourselves the people of God? Can you hear the cries of the heart-broken, the enslaved, the cries of those suffering at the hands of evil men and women? Is it possible that some of those cries come from within Christian institutions? This blog will be a call to God's people to monitor what goes on in church ministries. To care. To do something!

The church is responsible for the church!

We will look at some of these institutions, explore their history, check out their founders.

For example, the well-known Baptist preacher of the 60's, will figure prominently in this report, as his "Rebekah Home" and the fight to keep it open, inspired a great number of "look-alike" homes throughout the nation.

Fortunately, many of the scores of homes that came from that family have already been closed. Charges continue to come against the others. Memories of victims, the nightmare existence they still live, I will try to record here.

We will search the Scriptures. Moses, Solomon, Jesus, Paul. They will all weigh in on the discussion. Yes, the Bible has much to say about children and child abuse. The homes in this report have focused much on Solomon. We will focus on the one Who called Himself "greater than Solomon", Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He knew a few things Solomon had never heard of...

Your host here is a Christian, and he is speaking to other Christians . Of course anyone is allowed to participate... Please do.

Bottom line, Sadly, Child Abuse of all sorts from those calling themselves Christians is very widespread. Don't be a part of it. Join me in prayer and crying.

May 14. Of prisons and such

Romania

Romania 1985. I guess that's as good a place as any for me to begin. Yes, I was there. For some time there had been a curious burning inside of me. The message of a suffering church was finally registering. Wurmbrand. Popov. Brother Andrew. Even a man in his 40's can have heroes. These were some of mine. I went with a team in the summer of 1985, then took my own team in 1987. These were among the greatest weeks of my life. No, the greatest. I touched the body of Christ in a way I had never experienced it before. These people were for real. Their lives were on the line for Jesus. Some were beaten while we there, simply because we had visited them. Spies were everywhere. Some said that one out of every three Romanians was working for dictator Ceaucescu.

I was permitted, lovingly forced, to preach all over northeastern Romania. My cover was the classroom. During the days I was enrolled in a culture/language class specifically made for Westerners. Propaganda. But at night and on the weekends, church after church.

The Communists had forced many buildings to be closed, scrunching congregations together. A great idea. Brethren and

Baptists in the same room. Denominations didn't matter anyway. Christ mattered. Oh, these were great days.

We visited homes. One room homes. Open the door, you're in the bedroom/dining room area. Kneel at the bed. Pray together. Weep together.

How I wept again when I had to leave that place. I vowed never to forget Romania. And I have not to this day. But Romania is technically "free" now. All of that horror stopped in 1989. Only the poverty remains. And the memories.

Why am I telling you this? Did you come to the wrong blog? Isn't this space reserved for abused youth and the like? Hang on. Quick trip to Korea first.

Korea

1990 came and I married a Korean. Over fifteen years into our marriage I got captivated again. More broken people, nearby. I visited the County Jail often, preaching to and teaching inmates there. I was a representative for Voice of the Martyrs for a couple years.

But the next real jolt came while I was watching a video of North Korea. People in hiding. People giving away their son to someone who could afford to feed him. Even the secular media had gotten the bug. North Korea was a painful place to watch or experience. Whatever it is that makes me ache, made me ache again. For two years I wrote daily and spoke online daily for North Korea. I am still speaking for this tragedy of a nation. You will find 800 audios on my sermonaudio website that are either about North Korea or published by a North Korean. Hundreds of photos. Messages now and then. A whole book. Prayer of course. They break my heart.

But that's not what this site is about either.

I just wanted you to see the pattern. To see the reason why I react the way I do. Can't stand confinement, and am in fact seriously claustrophobic. I don't fly any more. And no one is asking me to. I travel by internet, and hope that I reach someone with my cause.

My cause today is still about the walled-up imprisoned suffering church. You may be surprised to know that there is here in the West a segment of the population – the Christian population – that is suffering. And at the hands of other Christians.

Oh my, I said it. Sounds pretty cold. But you will see there is truth in what I say. You will see also that I am in no way opposed to true faith in Jesus Christ. And the Bible, word for word cover to cover. Oh yeah, I'm one of those. But what I have uncovered in the recesses of some Christian institutions must be dealt with. I have lost a church membership – voluntarily – over this. I have picked up on my crying thing again too. This is deep. This is real. Let me share with you.

Troubled Teen Homes

In the little church I once attended, I was made aware of a ministry in a land not far away. It is a ministry, they say, for "troubled teenage girls."

Word was that this precious ministry was under fire from some disgruntled past residents. I decided to find out about this. Not sure why I felt led to dig any deeper, but I did. And I'm so glad I did.

I researched this home and found the stories of fifty young ladies with tales that started up my waterworks again. Oh my. Yes, I will share some of this on future blogs. I knew I had to do something, so I visited the ministry's headquarters, talked with the director, even

got a tour. Then I made the rounds of churches, state offices, library and more, in that city. I wanted to know. Now I know.

Next I got in touch with victims – that is what they were calling themselves – to get more personal insights. It became clear that this ministry was way off base. I left the small church, because small churches know everything everyone is doing and either approve of it or the other thing... I knew I was causing tension by challenging the assumptions of the leaders and members.

In the course of studying this I became aware of the history of this ministry and ministries like it. I had to act. I was advised to do what I am doing right now, and intend to keep doing for some time...

Not long ago, someone protecting that ministry threatened to take me to court. Can you believe it?

I do hope you will go with me.

Okay, now you know why this 73-year-old is in the crying business. Why I can't help myself when I see God's people in trouble. I am one of many such folks, of course. Join with me for awhile. Send me links and stories and whatever relates to institutions that Christians run, but run amiss. There's a good chance that what you send will soon show up in a blog. And we will cry with you too.

Bob

May 15. A Little House in the Big Village

One of my favorite Gaither tunes.

“Hear the cries of the shackled from the onset of time,

“For the chains of defeat there's no key.

“See the tears of the broken, the cries of the slaves:

“Is there no one worthy to set us free?” (Bill/Gloria Gaither)

Of course there is One worthy. Jesus loves setting people free. He sets prisoners free. He sets their captors free. Your prayers will start this process...

Troubled Teens, and their Troubled Helpers

This story is tear-soaked. I cried for the subject, for my own teenagers of decades ago, for my own ways, over counterfeit brokenness espoused by those who misunderstand God's discipline, over youth who have no fathers except drunken ones, unloving ones, absent ones, unprotecting ones, brutal ones, perverted ones, or outwardly religious ones.

Then I saw Jesus, the Jesus I have claimed since my own teen years, in a new light, how he handled the “troubled” of his own day, with no violence, except to a demon living in a troubled man. Behold his loving handling of a troubled adulteress, a troubled pagan woman, those troubled by disease. See His tears for a troubled nation, His desire for them to come under His wings and be sheltered there, troubled no more.

Yes, I know the God who is angry every day with sinners. He shall do what He shall do one day. I have not stopped believing in God's ultimate judgment, God's wrath. God's discipline. But I see in Jesus, One who would shelter us from that judgment. He is the One Whose heart burned with such a fire of love that even on the day when He was being slaughtered as the Lamb that He was, He dealt with the troubled thieves and troubled soldiers around Him, not with vengeance and deserved punishment, but with forgiveness.

Troubled

(My computer keeps italicizing troubled because the Christian homes I am describing bill themselves as homes for troubled teens...)

And Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." It is this Jesus and this Father that the girls that I describe in these blogs, are often not permitted to see. Rather they see another Jesus, as if there were such a Person. This version of the Son of God is petty, judgmental, cruel, desiring judgment instead of mercy, shame instead of covering. At least, that's what some of the past residents of these places have said...

All of us who have abused the privilege of bringing up children, and that includes a huge number I think, must sit under the judgment of God now, or face it later. But have I reversed myself? Is God really that way? The way the houses for the troubled depicted Him to so many? The God of pure love yet the God of judgment? A mystery indeed, but it need not concern us if we simply go after this God and find Him. He will gladly and forever, receive us.

But God has told us that if we will judge ourselves now, that is, be truly broken by His loving Spirit now, we will not be judged. I call all care-givers to that soul-search that leads to the tender breaking, as

opposed to the violent sort, of God. There is a better way than the "troubled teen home" way. Jesus spoke of it and lived it. But we will not know of it unless we enter into His Presence and ask Him about it.

Let the self-trial begin.

Let the witnesses break us with a holy breaking. Let the verdict resound somewhere deep within. We will never – hopefully, thankfully – be the same.

A word of caution to my audience. I am a Christian. I speak to Christians. We in the church are in no way responsible for telling non-Christians how to live. We put the message out to them clearly that Jesus invites them to become one of us. But failing that, they are not under our jurisdiction. So when I give out advice and ideas from the Word or my own experience, I am speaking to the church.

A word of caution to myself. If you look carefully, you will see a heavy Hand on my shoulders as I piece this information together and pass it on to you. The Hand is a reminder for me to be very careful. I cannot condemn. I cannot step outside the love and wisdom of God. This is not easy.

I was not the model parent.

You will be on your knees and faces with me, some of you, crying out not only for the hurting adults (no longer residents, but still hurting!) but for your own inadequacies.

God gave the Spirit to Christian parents so that they can discipline their children properly. They have often ignored His gentle approach and used fleshly power plays, methods that actually work... but only for a while. Often they have little if any eternal significance.

Did I say, a self-trial?

It is time for judgment to begin at the house of God. I Peter 4:17. The apostle Peter asks, that if judgment comes even among us who are believers, what will it be like when the world outside Christ is judged? We - and when I speak of "we" , I am referring to born-again Christians - have been, since the first century, called upon to judge ourselves, to discern what is evil among us, and to do away with it. My profoundest apologies to those who now think the born again experience is a myth because of what those wearing that title have brought on them.

So, no judging, no condemning of others. Yet I may put myself on trial here, as I tell the stories that were told to me.

No, no judging, but the release of a prisoner from suffering is a worthy activity for Christians to be about. Did not Jesus come to set captives free from false religious systems of thought? Cries that come from a North Korean concentration Camp are no more valid than those that come from an American Christian ministry. All must be heard and addressed.

I shall present the cries, as criers presented them to me and the public at large. Together we will address them. Together we must address them.

Touch not my anointed.

When I traveled in charismatic circles (quite literally), I used to hear this Scripture (Psalm 105:15) quoted a lot by, and in reference to, charismatic preachers, who wanted the audience to know that "You better not come against what I am saying, if you do not want to incur the wrath of God!"

Sorry, Mr. Preacher, I think you've got it backwards. The context is

Israel. The people of Israel. “Don’t you dare touch people upon whom my favor and blessing rests!”

Speak against my own people?

The question is, should a Christian (that would be me) speak against his own people (that would be the founders and staff of certain institutions)? No, not unless said persons are hurting others of God’s people, i.e. residents of these homes, some of whom are Christians, some not, but all of whom are worthy of respect in the eyes of a loving God who wants them all saved.

Consider Nehemiah, rebuking Jews for charging interest on their newly-arrived brothers from Persia, also Jews. Think of Moses rebuking Aaron for allowing sin in the camp, then undoing all of Aaron’s false ways. Think of Jesus rebuking Israel’s leadership for binding heavy burdens on an already-oppressed nation. I’m sure there are other examples. Rebuking false ways of God's people is appropriate.

Be it known, though, that I work alone. No church or organization or individual therein has asked me to write these posts. No victim or victim’s relative or victim’s friend has called upon my services. I simply saw some young people crying, and went for help, what every decent citizen would do. I report their plight, give my reasons for a need for assistance, and pray assistance will come. And in my own sphere, I begin offering better assistance to the children still under my care.

Gut-level emotional reactions like the one I experienced dealing with the stories of these youth aren’t always indicative of reality and truth. One must follow up with something from the head. Research online and elsewhere took care of that component. Mind and heart are engaged here.

I never thought I would experience a tragedy that would stir me up like North Korea did a decade ago. That turned into a book, a visit, a shared website, and eventually a nervous breakdown. I'm not good at this emotion spending. Eats up adrenalin.

Start the fire!

But when I began to know about that little house in the big village, and scores of places like it, the fires began to burn again.

I visited such a house once. Only once. Am I qualified to write about atrocities and ongoing pain and suffering in all the houses because of one visit?

Well, I was never in a Nazi death camp, but I believe their stories. Never in a North Korean prison, but I pray with them constantly based on the stories of escapees, former residents. My sermonaudio website features hundreds of audios and hundreds of photos about this North Korean tragedy. So in a way I've been to North Korea, too.

In that way, I've been to the "Little House" a lot of times, come to think of it. Don't eyewitnesses matter? Suffering ex-residents?

Now I want to bring you there. Granted, many of the stories are very old. Some of the practices have stopped, perhaps. People change. Laws change. What's going on there today? Who knows? There's a 10-foot wall around one of the compounds, and the locks on the doors are incredibly secure. No one gets in or out without permission. And permission isn't granted that often. No one really knows the secrets of the Little House, or its cousins nationwide...

...except the ones who finally do get out. Eventually, you know, they do get out. Regardless of the walls. They do get out. And such stories they have!

May 16. If we would judge ourselves

"If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged," says the Scripture.

Nuremberg

"We were just doing what we were ordered to do."

Surely you have heard of the Nazi trials that took place after World War II? Movies have been made about them. In many of the testimonies that came out at that time, the idea was advanced that the Nazi criminals ought to be let off the hook because they were just doing what their superiors ordered.

Most of us see through that. But there is a haunting fact that bothers me as I write. Could it really be that in committing the atrocities I shall record, the leaders at these "troubled teen group homes" sincerely believe they were obeying God? Just doing what their Heavenly Superior ordered? That this really was/is the finest way to raise children? That violence to a child's will and very person will produce a Spirit-filled holy Christian youth, who will go on to be a great man or woman of God?

Did they really believe this? Or did they believe something better, but something that was simply too difficult to perform?

In other words, was there a policy problem, or just a weakness in human nature, in dealing with teen ways? If the former, we must, as the church of Jesus, investigate and cry out for a change in those policies! If we Christians would judge ourselves, and rid ourselves of evils among us, God would not have to judge us.

But if the latter, we must ask for confessions and forgiveness... and move on with our lives. May no reader of this blog who has merely

made a lot of mistakes in raising their children or running their home feel he is included in the call to repentance I shall sound forth in posts to come. But may every reader who has a non-Biblical starting point for child-rearing be convicted of God to drop it now before any more lives are ruined.

A myth confronted...

So there were a "couple of disgruntled teens", like the employees we're always reading about, a couple of self-willed rebellious teenagers, who got thrown out of this teen home. They decided then to get even with their caretakers, and they gathered a bunch of former residents as degenerate as themselves, and told them what they should say to cause the most damage to their ex-superiors.

That's how many first hear it spun. You know, "Oh, those kids today can be so awful! These teens are trying to destroy a valuable ministry that has lasted all these years. How despicable!"

Uh, not exactly. So far I have read multiplied stories of anguish and unnecessary pain by and about teens who were dropped off by their parents by surprise (in many cases) one miserable day, to serve a multi-month or even multi-year sentence in a "home" that was no home. Not for them.

That is what they report. Do I have a reason or a need to disbelieve them? I mean, is the Holocaust a myth? Are there really concentration camps in North Korea? And are the stories of these teen homes just made up?

Believe their stories?

Some say, Of course you have a reason to disbelieve these so-called witnesses! They were not truly believers when they went in. They

fought the Lord, and the Lord rewarded them, and now they are bitter and fighting back for their lost honor.

Really? Grown men and women with nothing better to do? They are not teens any longer, you know. Dads and grand-dads, moms and grand-moms! The testimonies on hand go back many years. Some of the letters are written by now-middle-aged and then some, who with much trepidation re-open a chapter of their life that they wish with all their power they could forget. They do it to spare others.

I will share in the posts that follow, bits and pieces of their stories, for those who have strength to read them. It will not be an easy read. But so necessary.

I will also share some Biblical principles of child-rearing, as well as introduce you to the history of the "Teen Gulag", as some have called it.

I will seek to keep names out of this. It is the evil we are going after, not the person. And the wounded victims of the abuse need not have their names brought out again. I am confident that everything I have said is the truth, and you will be too as you follow up. All of this is so easily traceable online.

How did I get into a battle over teen homes?

I mean, I'm too old for this, right? Retired, got my routine, enjoying my church, my home, you know, settled.

Well, there was this church that I had come to love because of its "old" ways. You know, the old hymns, the Bible-filled sermons, that kind of thing. In this church, I kept hearing about this special place, this safe place, this wonderful place, where "problem" kids could get it together with God and learn good things about life.

Everyone at my church was looking forward to a time when the representative from this home could fit us into his busy schedule. Lots of anticipation when he finally had set the date.

Now, we had heard that the ministry was under “attack.” From the devil of course. Some angry ex-residents had started a campaign some time back to shut the place down. How awful. How demonic. But God would prevail because we would be praying!

Okay. But when Herr Director came to our little church, he mentioned none of these things. Did not mention the home at all. Later his wife told us they had only eight resident "problems" at present.

Why so few now?

Later I surmised that there had been so many complaints against the place that teens and their mothers did not want to take any risks. Good idea!

Another thing that impressed me then as positive, but later settled in the other way. This man's pulpit presence. A huge guy with a strong voice. Scary. Not to be messed with. Intimidating. He almost fell off the little platform behind the pulpit from getting so agitated in his message.

As questions entered my head, I decided to trace down the red flags I was seeing and find out for myself if the “attacks” were really attacks, or just the desperate pleas of those who have suffered, and who desire that others not suffer. My research led me to leave that little church, and start this blog site.

Then came the lawsuit threat... And thank God for it. Now I have the motivation to tell my story all over again, for the few that may have missed it first time around.

One must wonder when the past errors of these homes will be dealt with. Some people who hear the names of certain teen homes, speak immediately of payments owed them for PTSD and other illnesses contracted there.

It is time for the Christian Churches that sponsor homes like these to judge themselves, before they are hauled into court and judged by their neighbors. And worse.

May 17. Just the facts, Ma'am

Why we need a self-trial

Trials aren't held just to say nasty things about people, even ourselves. They need an outcome. One outcome we all need is information. "Just the facts Ma'am". What really happened, or is happening, for example, in those "troubled teen" homes across the nation? Hopefully, information and exposure will lead to reassessment and reformation. Failing this, one must think in terms of some closings wouldn't you think?

Many have been considering this for years, on the outside. But as long as Christians and churches support these places, not knowing the facts, doors will remain open.

If they are shut, parents will have to shoulder their own responsibilities, with assistance from various pastors and church members. And why not?

Closure

One other desired outcome, when people begin to look closely at themselves and their work, is closure for victims. Ability to move on. If they are finally told by self-judging ministries that those ministries were wrong, that they are sorry, and that they are either closing or radically changing, closure can be speeded up. Meanwhile, these souls must be commended to God and His power. And for non-Christians, sadly, it will be hard to convince them that anything Christian is the answer to their ongoing problems.

But there really is a true church out there.

Truth

It is the truth we are wanting in this report. The whole truth. Nothing but the truth. And yes, we must accept the fact that there is truth on both sides of the courtroom. I heard a famous politician recently get in serious trouble for suggesting that two opposing groups could actually contain good people in each. But it is a fact. Perhaps it is the most important fact, moving forward.

Personal testimony

I was never abandoned to a teen home. I'm sure that at least one of my parents, a step-parent, would have been happy to send me there... But it never happened.

Further, I have the happy privilege of being a friend of the Bible believing Christians, and a friend of the accusers, at the same time. There are mixed motivations in each group. I will try to bring out every possible "spin." Of course, you will not read very far before you realize I have failed a bit in this effort. Tears often blur one's vision.

Nevertheless, listen carefully to both sides. I have tried to obey the

classic words of Sgt. Friday, “Just the facts Ma’am,” but if my heart has won over my head at times, your comments will be appreciated. I have been known to change. But just the facts Ma'am, or Sir, please!

Defendants?

If this were a real trial, who would be needing defense for having broken laws? Let's start with the present writer. Not wanting to be overly dramatic here, but I don't believe the Lord would be pleased with me seemingly throwing stones at others without taking some heat myself.

I raised teenage girls. It was not easy. I was not totally successful on a personal level. My “girls” have gone through the child-rearing process themselves now, and found what I experienced. They will vouch for me that the challenges can be overwhelming.

But no excuses.

I was loud.

Angry too often.

Unnecessary rules and regs and restrictions. I have since repented and told my family so.

In their upbringing, I have been one given to church “ministry”, who often honored ministry more than family, ignoring the greatest ministry of all.

There was reacting, rather than praying, when situations arose.

A constant need for control.

Though the spanking stopped at the teen years, there was verbal

pain. I was raised in a restrictive environment myself and tended to pass it on.

And those other kids

I also helped raise other children as a teacher on Chicago's West Side. Many painful years. What did I do with rebellious teens when I had a chance there? Normally I called for security. I could not handle them alone. That's not a confession. That's an obvious fact that others who deal with teens need to recognize and correct if possible.

Once I slapped a girl, another time I shook one. Both times brought censure and near loss of employment. That's illegal. More than that, it was uncalled for, and showed my own problem as well as the students'. There was a better way.

There were good things I did over the years, as the other defendants will be able to claim. But if this is to be a serious self-trial, we don't cover our bad deeds with good ones.

One thing though. My mistakes were not policy. They were not what I wanted to be and do. This is a line that will be drawn sharply, later in the proceedings.

My readers

Can't some of you sit with me on the bench here? Haven't some of you been unnecessarily rough with your teens? Yelled too much? Punished out of retribution instead of love and correction? Not easy, right?

Let's all be willing to say we have shortcomings in parenting. But none of that excuses the behavior I will document in the coming pages. All of our, and their, behavior is forgivable when confessed.

But how does one confess when one has created a policy one thinks is straight from God, and then carries out that policy religiously?

The Little House in the Big Village, revisited.

We're asking the Little House we mentioned in an earlier post, and all little or big houses like it, to judge themselves, too.

This "home" that I know about, a place for the troubled, somewhere in Midwestern America, is a private Christian boarding school for teenagers, founded many years ago. The idea was a Christian education for young people who were having some issues that parents couldn't deal with. The teens would learn ways to deal better with adults and their own problems.

Years into their existence, charges came against the school. Students were split up, sent here and there, some returning to their homes. Within two months, charges were dropped, and the school re-opened. But the accusations continue.

This school is a part of a Baptist church. It is very difficult to shut down anything that is directly church-related. Other efforts through the years have failed. Accusations have fallen on deaf ears. Children continue to suffer. Or so I am told...

Accelerated(?) Education

This home, and many others like it, educates its students with ACE products. This is "Accelerated Christian Education" a Christian-based program not recognized by many colleges as having the quality of modern educational tools. Released residents have been shocked to find that though they graduated from this "ACE" school, college was not available to them.

Letters, we get letters...?

Students in this and similar homes are supposedly allowed to write to parents regularly. Testimonies of witnesses tell a different story. Censoring. Monitoring. Saying only the right things.

The same holds true with parental and pastoral visits. The same promise. The same actuality.

The work ethic

Students do work. But often they work for staff needs. Some feel they were given slave labor.

More facts on the way

This is only a taste of the teen gulag. In posts to come you will hear more and more. I will try to tell you what witnesses told me. Good and bad.

"Just the facts Ma'am". And the facts may not be too pretty.

May 19. How about a stay in the teen gulag?

Let's go to Beulah Land, a fantastic home for the troubled in Smallville, America. It is only one of the many places we will examine in weeks to come, Lord willing. Check out the posts before this one to get into the conversation.

Seriously, would you consider being a resident at a group home? Just to visit and see what it offers? Or to do research as you

consider sending your daughter there? Here are some FAQ's you might want to consider, as we continue our investigation into America's Teen Gulag.

What about parents? Any requirements for them?

Custodial parents in Christian homes must be "Christian". They must be a part of a local church. Preferably one of "ours."

Do parents make the decision for a student to enter a teen home?

Often, no one offers the student a choice in the matter, and delivers him/her there under false pretenses. Do you see something strange in the fact that Christian custodial parents are willing to give their children away? Could they not work with local Christians to serve their child?

I have seen parents giving kids away in North Korea, for financial reasons. What is the justification here in America? Are irresponsible parents as much to blame for the abusive institutions we have, by abandoning their children to begin with, thus creating a market for teen exploitation and abuse?

What is the length of stay?

In some places students stay for years. No place to go. Unwanted. A tragedy for sure, and at least one point scored for a home willing to hold on to such students indefinitely. But at what emotional price for the student?

Often a serious argument ensues if the student wants to go before the pre-arranged time. They may deem him/her to be "not ready", even students beyond the legal age of 18, when they should be allowed to walk out on their own.

Are students spanked?

The official answer today is "No." But as long as it was legal and/or unnoticed, the response was a decided "yes". Why this has changed, we can't be sure, beyond the legal question. Public pressure? Losing students? Certainly there was not a Biblical basis for change? Most of these homes swear that Solomon demanded corporal punishment for most any defiance. How could they so radically change their faith because of a mere law of the land?

Or have they changed? Is paddling continuing secretly? [Please note that the Bible does not object to corporal correction, when done in love and moderation. Many of these homes are guilty of excessive brutality. I'll show you later.]

They do use other methods of correction. Punishment. Like, extra work. Writing Scriptures. The demerit system.

I wonder. Do children come out of a place like that loving the Bible, if the Bible was used as punishment? Just askin'.

Why do parents send their children to places like this?

Desperation. Negative influences "out there". Christian values are not taught in public institutions.

Many have in fact given up on their children, and in many cases abandoned them. Some of these are actually Christian parents for whom such behavior – giving away their child – finds no Biblical precedent. Others are derelict parents, even incestuous ones, trying to cover their sins by this give-away.

So, Christian home staff sells the church and the parent a bill of goods. They make promises they cannot keep, and the parents breathe a huge sigh of relief and turn over their kids. [All of these

comments are based on ex-resident testimonies.]

What about the success rate of Teen Gulag students?

The honest schools will tell you there is no guarantee for success. With all the beatings and deprivations and all the rest, the human heart is the human heart.

At least, they promise, we will keep your child safe from destructive relationships, drugs, drink, moral problems or other dangerous behavior. But as we shall learn, they are not kept safe from unloving staff, shame tactics, and more, all in the name of Jesus. Is this "safe"?

At least, they say, your child will be in school each school day. But many ex-residents testify that they were dragged out of class to do the work needed around the house.

At least, they will go to church regularly. They will attend devotions, and memorize huge amounts of Scripture. Yes. So much so, that some students have "freaked out" under the pressure. I'll give you proof later...

At least, says the promise-maker, they will have godly staff around them. Staff will work with, play with, eat with, sleep in the same dorm with. I will share with you the testimonies of some staff members who have been imprisoned with the girls 24/7. I will share what they found at a teen home, and why they were so relieved to go.

Yes, Beulah Land is a wonderful place. Why, some of our people leave here and go into the ministry. They become missionaries. A few of them, in spite of their time in a "home", do indeed overcome and continue on with God. The Scriptures were available to comfort them in their distress. Thank God for His Word.

Not sure what the numbers are behind "some." It would be interesting to know just how many students live to this day a successful Christian life, overcoming their past and the huge bump in the road manifested at "Beulah Land." Or wherever.

But, and they are sure to tell you again, not all succeed. Some resisted our loving care and the Scriptures and the principles we gave them. Of course, that is all their fault. They had everything possible that they could want or need. But they spurned the opportunity to grow up. They go back to harmful habits, to destructive relationships.

Caveats like these excuse the ministry home from any guilt or repercussion. Supposedly.

But there are other "some's" that these ministries need to know: Some parents will be horrified when they find the truth of what happened. "Some" will consider lawsuits. "Some" will protest in front of the Beulah compound and at churches where the Director is speaking. "Some" feel their lives are ruined forever, or at least could have been.

I am aware of hundreds of such ex-residents.

"Some" will reflect that if this teen home is Christian, they want nothing to do with Christian. Testimonies to come will say that very thing.

No matter how many "cum ba ya" moments, no matter how fun are the games from time to time, some persons know what rejection is, saved or unsaved. Some persons know what a merciless beating is, saved or unsaved. Some persons know what the shame of a bed-wetting is, saved or unsaved.

You can fool "some" of the people...

Still interested in signing up at your nearest teen gulag home? I have contact information for a bunch of them, including Beulah Land itself. Just let me know.

May 20. More questions about troubled teen homes

Christian self-examination

The task of “exposing” a Christian institution is a serious one. I am a Christian. In fact, my own belief system roughly matches that of the sponsoring churches of many of these homes. “Christians” agree with one another on a whole range of issues. I can even find “good” things in the Roman system, though I am clearly a Protestant. But looking only for good and ignoring the cries of hurting people will not ultimately end well.

Through the ages, Christian people have made mistakes. They have often corrected themselves. More often they have had to be corrected in ways they wished never existed.

And speaking of Rome, look at what is happening in that system today. At long last many are speaking out against the unspeakable outrage of pedophile priests.

Anyway, here are more questions about the gulag of teen homes sponsored by "us."

How are Christian teen homes supported?

Well, there are "love gifts." Staff visits churches, gives a stirring message, and takes an offering. Not a problem. So many ministries must operate this way. We can only hope that the monies collected can all be accounted for. Many ministries submit their books to Christian organizations that were created to monitor such things.

Now, when a home claims to be supported only by offerings, as one that I know about, then charges parents for their services on top of that... Just let me see the books.

Be specific. How much do you really need to take care of a student? Food is often donated. Clothes are uniform and very inexpensive. What do parents pay, and why does that not take care of the residents' needs? And tell us of the labor money you save at your house and staff houses because of the girls' sweat.

What about the health of the students?

Reputable homes require a physical exam to be sure the student is free from disease. Nurses should be on the grounds. Of course, promises to this effect will be made in all cases. But as in many things, the reality can be a bit different.

Stories abound of the trauma incurred when a new female student is directed immediately to a little room that has been set up for examinations of private areas. Young girls are terrorized to think that this man is going to perform a procedure on them without permission. Later she will call it a vaginal exam. But some feel at the time that they are being abused in the worst way.

Then the ongoing care can be punctuated with exceptions, based on good behavior. Some students are ignored altogether. Insurance problems arise. Evaluations are made by non-medical staff as to the importance of a particular condition. Do the teeth really need

checked? Is that wound really worth worrying about? And so on. Again, future posts will give testimony to these very inconsistent if not scary policies regarding the health and welfare of students.

Do students get to say good-bye to their parents?

Truthfully: Not always. Knowing of the pain of the parting and the possibility that a parent might change his or her mind, parents can be whisked away to leave their frightened teen to "get over it."

Many students cry away the first night there, as their parents have just abandoned them , after which staff has strip-searched them, scrubbed them, and some unknown man has vaginally examined them.

Would you like your precious child to go through this?

Who are the staff?

There are people from all walks of life, all of them church members. Their resumes are in order. You would hire them. So should we be questioning the policies, the work, of such honored people of God? In the sentiments of one of the victims, let us at least say that - perhaps - they should go into another form of ministry, that some of them are out of place as the staff in a home for troubled teens. They seem to have serious troubles of their own.

What are the testimonies of past residents?

Go to any website of any of these homes. The testimonies of former residents are all very glowing and happy. Some of them may even be true. But unfortunately all the names of the students have been taken out! They say this is because the ones who are "for" the house were being attacked by those who suddenly had to speak out against them. They removed their names, we are told, to

protect them. But now we have no way of knowing who said what, and how reputable their testimony is.

I can understand this "attack" mentality. The truths on this very site were attacked, and caused me to shut down the entire site for a short time. You will see only fictitious names now. But actual words of actual residents. It's all true, but cautiously so.

By contrast, the girls who are now speaking out about their experience, have left their full name elsewhere online, in many cases with ways to contact them. They want to be heard. Why shouldn't the pro-house girls want the same thing? Why should they be afraid?

For reasons you may now understand, I will not link to those excellent sites. But it was their bold testimony that started the wheels turning inside of me. Do a little looking around, you'll find them.

What churches sponsor such homes?

There is a denomination that is the main culprit here. In kindness to them, I will not mention their name. I will speak of their teachings later. And not every congregation among them would get behind teen gulag residences. Plus, there are some churches outside this denomination that freely give their monies to support them.

Their church's doctrinal statement is online for anyone caring to peruse it. My acceptance of it and agreement with it, is in the high 90 percent level. I have been very conservative over the years and will probably remain so.

But these churches seem to have an unwritten code that is not clearly noticeable until you've been around awhile. One item on that agenda has to do with the raising of children. It was one of

these churches to which the founder of the teen gulag movement belonged, when he launched his original “homes.” There are carbon copies of these churches and their homes dotting the American landscape today. We could hope that they would all be exposed and shut down, if they do business as the ones I am describing.

Most Importantly:

The real defendant “on trial” here is ultimately not a man or woman or home or church or denomination, but a philosophy, somehow taken from the Scriptures, adhered to by quite a number of Christian people, and governing the behavior of leaders of homes like these, not to mention private homes of individual families.

We are not talking only of some folks who have made mistakes in bringing up children. All parents fit that category. We are pointing out that a way of life has been described by certain Christian authors (we’ll look at one later) that binds people to certain behaviors.

To some, this way of life is so connected to the Christian message, that, when we dare assail it or them, these folks feel they are being persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Some would be willing to do prison time rather than change or shut down. I will tell you of some who did just that....

Not just child-rearing but church-leading is on the line here. Do independent pastors have the right to sever themselves from all outside authority, even Christian brothers and sisters who need to correct them?

That’s what makes all of this so delicately difficult to address. Some of these leaders are God’s people. Not all, but some. But they hide behind the wall of their denomination, believing they are clinging to

the Word of God.

But please don't forget this: there are quite a number of God's people on the team of "survivors", as they call themselves. Shall we ignore their cries? Do they not deserve to be heard as well as leadership? Especially if their number is in the hundreds and growing?

You have figured out my answer to that.

May 21. Nightmares in Beulah Land

Introducing the claims.

The true church as God sees it is justified, glorified, known from before the foundation of the world. The cries I will introduced are meant to cause compassion, not judgment. I do not indict the church, but false teachings within it.

Also, please recall that your reporter agrees with Biblical truths wherever they are found. But there is a growing list of non-Biblical teachings and practices that distress me in some some churches and their sponsored "homes." They cause me grief. I must speak. Pray with me that cancers in our midst will be cut out.

What I am about to uncover before your eyes could have happened in many places dotting our nation, even in individual families. I will speak with some authority about the place I am calling "Beulah Land". But having researched the history of homes like this one, I am confident now that that authority extends to covering a

movement, a sad movement.

Many of these things happened many years ago... some recently... some are ongoing. Strangely, though, an admission of guilt has never come forth, except for some faint whispers of "Oh, we made some mistakes along the way..." The ministries continue on, deaf to the cries of the wounded, assured that God is in their policies and that the rest of what they would call the so-called church, is anywhere from liberal to antichrist.

Weep with me. The pain is real.

From Psalm 31...

Have mercy on me , O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye wastes away with grief. Yes, my soul and my body! For my life is spent with grief and my years with sighing... I hear the slander of many; fear is on every side...

A response to that Psalm from Jesus in Matthew 28: Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And from Charles Spurgeon, commenting on Psalm 31:8 (From his Treasury of David).

Many saints have had their greatest enlargement of soul when their affairs have been in the greatest straits. Their souls have been in a "large room" when their bodies have been lying in ... some narrow dungeon. Grace has been equal to every emergency; and more than this, it [grace] has made the emergency an opportunity for displaying itself.

Remember the prisoners... (Hebrews 13:3)

If prison is a place to which you go when you've done bad things, or, if prison is a place where you don't want to be, but can't escape

from, or, if prison is a place where bad things can happen to “good” people...

Then we must classify these teen homes as prisons. Therefore the Scriptural injunction follows, “Be mindful of the prisoners, as though bound with them.”

Now I know that there have always been those who were relatively glad to be in some sort of a facility, for reasons of their own. There are people at Cook County Jail who are glad to be there, also. No one will accept them anywhere else. People are feeding them. Someone keeps them in line by harsh rules. They have forgotten how to live their own lives, for better or worse. Think Shawshank Redemption.

No, no, I did not just say that the residents, past or present, are like the inmates at Cook County, but indications are that such is the case for a number of them. The testimonies I relate in this blog will bear witness.

We will cover the amazing story much later of people who actually praise these holding cells for juveniles. For them it was a step up...

"Bad Kids"

Some of these girls we would have called bad! Parents “arrested” them in many cases, and brought them by deception or force to a Christian facility, then abandoned them to whatever fate the home might have in store. They trusted God and the pastor and the leadership that things were going to be better now.

And as in many prisons, some escaped. Some were then returned. Others were able to prove abuse and stayed out for good.

Am I making all this up? Trying to be dramatic? Read the stories in

posts to come. See if you agree that something is amiss in a facility that calls itself a “home” for the “troubled”, but has become a “trouble” of its own.

If I have misspoken, please show me where.

On accusing an elder.

The passage is 1 Timothy 4:19. An apostle wrote the letter to a member of his team. Paul has assigned Timothy the job of putting the Ephesian church in order, by ordaining a group of elders, training them, and then moving on.

His instruction here is never to receive an accusation against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses. Hearsay would not do it. Someone must have seen the wrong activity. Two or three “someone’s” just to be sure.

Hundreds. Hundreds have witnessed the wrongdoings I document. Fifty of them give their testimony on one popular site. Others are scattered over the web. We’ve met the quota . Two or three witnesses, plus hundreds.

The entire passage from verses 17 to 22 is about church eldership. Paul goes on to say that those [elders] who turn out to be in error need to be rebuked before the congregation, so that the congregation may “fear”, realizing that no one is above the law of God.

I have indicted myself already in a past post. I have suggested that some of my readers need to judge themselves. And let’s include in this indictment institutions like the ones in question, in various states where such abuse is not monitored. But none of that clears me, or anyone aware of these sad events, from allowing these people to bring forth their clear and painful memories of their

incarceration.

Let us hear your stories!

The format

I have combined all the experiences I could find of pain, regarding these students, then combined them all into one composite person, one picture of suffering. I have then taken all their charges and placed them into categories. No names are mentioned. I have scrambled the events. No attempt is made to identify an individual, even though a relatively simple search online will discover every one of these people with names, and ages, and dates and all the rest. The evidence is clearly available to anyone willing to care enough to look for it.

For now, if you can, and maybe you should take this a little at a time, just read the three hundred or so statements of suffering that I will produce in posts to come. Some of these statements come from true sisters in Christ.

The cries I will document represent approximately fifty persons, aged twelve to eighteen, and testify of facts that happened in the years from 1980 to well into our century. Counting these, and the ones who came before and after them, there are approximately two hundred and fifty girls with similar claims, or so they tell me. And those are the vocal ones. How many wish to remain silent we do not know.

My method.

Further explanation of the way I have put all this together: I did not repeat some offenses the entire number of times they were listed by survivors. I have grouped them by type of offense, and just written one item after another from several different residents in

one paragraph.

But every statement is from a past resident . Believe or don't believe, but do listen. See if you do not come to the same conclusion that I did.

There is absolutely nothing fictitious about this listing. Every allegation is from a real person, that could have been your child, or friend, or fellow church member.

And understand that they are not calling for your judgment but for your assistance in helping future "troubled" ones.

Another Caution: Do not try to read these hundreds of allegations all at one time. You will experience grief beyond what you can imagine or handle, unless for some reason you have heard much of this before. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Prepare yourself. Next time we begin.

May 22. Stop Beating Me

Before I share the first of the cries and screams issuing from teen gulag homes, namely excessive physical punishment, three things:

When the laws changed, they at the homes told us that corporal punishment stopped. Reports that come out say this is not always the case.

Though the practices may have stopped, from legal or financial pressure, the emotional pain these things caused lingers on. The grown men and women today want to hear confessions of wrongdoing. Not to bring someone to court. But so that the past residents' forgiveness can be meaningful.

Recall, from the last post, that all of these things did not happen to one person. But that every statement made is a literal quote from someone that lived at a Beulah Land style home at one time or another. This is a collective "cry."

What follows is horrific. Should never have happened. And I am not alone in pointing this out. Do the Google thing. Look up "victims of Christian homes." Try "teen gulag." Or "church related abuse." You will eventually be led all over the web, and start wondering, Where have I been? How could I not have known about all this? Why didn't my church leaders make me aware of it, so I could at least pray?

Those are some of the things I was thinking anyway...

Unfortunately, those searches will make you run across the ungodly and even unscrupulous. Many hate Jesus Christ and His Church and are looking for "dirt". But one must consider this: If the ungodly, the people of this world, people who are not bound for Heaven, consider these abuses to be outrageous, why don't God's people? Why is there not a collective SHOUT to address the collective CRY of the abused, from the CHURCH?

Enough. Here is the first category of abuse:

Excessive Physical Punishment

Remember that somewhere today, right now, someone is suffering at the hands of a person known to be a "man of God" !

Here is my first collective person.

“Staff called me out of the dorm after the lights were out, to receive nine swats from a paddle. I used to lay in bed thinking I would be the next to be paddled. Because I am not good in memorization [of Scriptures] I could not keep up, and they paddled me for that. They made me lie on the floor for beatings. They lifted my skirt, and pinned down my legs and arms.

“Upon arrival, and hearing the rules, I said “Oh my God”, and someone immediately slapped me . My first “spankings” were seven swats each time. Severe swats. Swats produced bruising and sometimes welts, with blood droppings oozing from the welts. Sometimes they missed my buttocks and hit my spine. They told me that if I tried not to cry, it would mean I was beyond help, and they would swat me less. Not so. It was more.

“They bruised me so badly from beatings that I could not sit or sleep comfortably. Staffs spanked me my first night there for questioning my food. They spanked us for looking at girls we were not supposed to look at. Even as a small frail 12-year-old I had to endure much paddling. The paddle whacks were often so forceful I could not at first scream, but rather I just took a deep breath as I knew more was coming.

“I received many beatings , and they slapped me across the face often. They told me that the paddling would continue until I was quiet. Because I couldn’t contain myself in the long line to the bathroom, I wet on the floor. They shamed me before everyone, then paddled me. A huge man with a paddle beat me as staff pinned me to the floor . One staff member often had fits of rage and slapped us.

“There was screaming from the punishment room often. I could not

sit after a beating, but they told me I was being overly dramatic. They spanked me because of my “general attitude.” I didn’t cry during a spanking, so I got more. Everyone sat in silence as though nothing was happening, when screams came from the punishment room. The staff even believed in spanking babies! They beat me so bad, my underwear stuck to my skin. I had two large open sores from beatings, was never taken to a doctor when they discovered the sores. They spanked me because I took the rollers out of my hair and brushed it out.

“They paddled us because we took too long brushing our teeth. The paddle used on me was 1-2 inches thick and 12 inches long. Once I received 22 swats. I got sick from eating too much, and they paddled me for it. They paddled me for biting my nails. If I did not know my Bible verses, they paddled me or gave me demerits. They spanked me so I would have an attitude adjustment. I peed all over myself while a big staff member paddled me severely, seven or eight times, then had me sit on my wounds. For still crying after three days from my arrival, they slapped me repeatedly. They beat me –supposedly –for withholding information about a relationship forming between one of the staff’s sons and a student.

“They told me that beatings would rid my soul of its wicked ways. One beating shook me so much, that they had me breathing into a brown paper bag. Family dropped me at this home, abandoned me, and left me to the care of strangers who brutally beat me and violated me. Physical beatings left dark purple bruises and welts all over my bottom. To avoid contact with the seat, I had to sit on my pubic area. They beat me on my first day there because I tried to escape immediately. They beat me from my back to my knees, bruising me all over. It hurt to sleep and move for weeks. If we got sick from eating too much, they beat us. They beat me because

they had already assigned too many work-duty punishments.

“If there was a broken plant in our weeding row, they beat me. I had never experienced paddling like this. We could hear the screams of other girls and would lie awake in our bed waiting our turn. I had blood blisters on my rear and bruises beyond what I can describe, from the paddlings. I didn’t dare have an emotional response to the beatings. If my hair did not curl properly for a church service, they might paddle me. Within a day or so of coming they paddled me for rolling my eyes. They paddled me every week thereafter. I had deep purple bruises from paddling. Once the paddling was so severe that I soiled myself.”

Enough, enough. So hard to report. So hard to read. But report and read we must. This abuse must stop!

In days to come, many more categories of abuse used at teen homes.

May 23. Shame and Stress and Total Control

In the last post we learned of excessive physical force. Beatings. Before we move on , an additional word or two about those spankings, which reportedly have stopped. The question is, have the beliefs changed? If not, how in good conscience can the present leadership continue on? Is brutality Biblical or not?

I hear that the way some of these homes have adapted to the new reality, is to allow entrance only to students who are of the more non-violent type. They are better teens. Then the question comes, why would a parent send a “good” son or daughter to a

home for the troubled?

And are we hearing that, 1. it is possible to raise a certain class of teenager without corporal punishment, or 2. that corporal punishment is still going on secretly?

One other thing. This site does not offer blanket condemnation to all the churches who support teen homes. What we want to go after, and what we believe the Scripture condemns, is men in these homes raising themselves to a power they were never given by Scripture, and acting on teachings that have no basis in Holy Writ. Oh, and putrid practices that anyone who loves the Lord Jesus, must assail! We hope to go after the problem, not the people. And we hope that the people causing the problem will repent. And that we will repent along with them for problems we have caused...

Now to today's quotes (Borrowed with permission from a website that deals with victim testimonies.)

There are many Biblical ways to correct a child. In my opinion, none of the following fall under some Scriptural mandate. Leaders beware! Recall, every one of the statements I produce, even though collectively, is from a former resident of a Christian group home. And remember that each paragraph is a compilation of several students, but seen as one student.

WITHHELD meals, FORCED meals, SUBSTANDARD meals, SICKENING meals

"If my work was not done well, they could withhold dinner from me. I lost forty pounds in four months. I missed meals if I did not do my chores correctly. Because I was underweight, I had to eat enormous meals, but in only twenty minutes. What I did not finish, I had to eat next meal. I got very sick by eating too much food. We

had to eat worms that might appear in vegetables from the garden, since we were responsible for food preparation.

“We went to bed hungry many nights. Sometimes there was a no-dinner punishment even after three-four hours of vigorous work. We had to earn supper by “passing” chores or writing proper church notes. We made soup by throwing together the ingredients of a bunch of unmarked cans. My first week, I threw up every meal because they fed me so much. My mother had told them I had an eating disorder.

“They told me I had to finish my meal at the next meal, along with the new meal. We had such a short time to eat that we just swallowed food without chewing it. They often fed us expired Dole lettuce with expired salad dressing, or rotten vegetables or burnt oatmeal. I was fed Alpo dog food. My dad fasted for me when he saw the diet I was on.

“ ‘No meals’ was a form of punishment. I remember the smell of the staff food cooking above us. They ate what they wanted, and were heavy-set. I was wasting away and even lost 80 pounds in my first eight months. I was so hungry that I resorted to stealing from the special ‘blessing room’, where were many foods and juices we could not have. My parents were shocked at how thin I was and how plump the staff members were. I went many times with nothing to eat due to not memorizing Bible verses.”

THE SHAME OF ADOLESCENT BED-WETTING

"Because of scheduled bathroom breaks, often I wet the bed. If I wet the bed I would have to strip the sheets in the morning, wash my plastic mattress and receive a paddling. If I could not take care of my wet sheets and mattress in the morning in a timely manner, they could withhold breakfast. I had to share one bathroom with

twenty-six teenagers. Because of my inability to wait for scheduled breaks, and my subsequent wetting, they forced me to wear a diaper. Then they made all my peers aware that I had to wear a diaper.

“I had to contain myself while waiting in a long line at scheduled bathroom breaks. If I did not, they would punish me. They took all of my underwear and forced me to wear diapers all the time. If I used (wet) my diaper I would receive extra demerits. I could not take my diaper off because it was sticking to my bottom, from blood from a recent beating. Even if I dreamed about wetting my bed, I woke up crying and soaked – with sweat. I tried to hide my urine-soaked clothes in the laundry room. When they discovered that, I got demerits for being embarrassed.”

VERBAL ABUSE/ HUMILIATION/SHAME

“They called me lazy, filthy, disgusting. I was verbally abused by one staff member. She called me lazy and said I needed to work harder. She herself was much overweight. They publicly rebuked me for failing a history test. They called me selfish for not memorizing dates of wars, where people died for us. I fainted during a blood test, and was told I was pathetic after I awoke. We were the victims of humiliation, told we were worthless, and that was the reason we were there. Angry staff grabbed all my belongings and scattered them across the lawn in the backyard.

“Slow in my learning, angry staff grabbed me by the neck, and threw me up against a brick wall. Staff told me that my hair would be growing out because harlots wear their hair short. They broke us down and humiliated us at every turn, often calling us “worthless” or “harlot.” A leading staff member told two of my future college friends to stay away from me, since I was a bad influence. I always

felt I was never good enough. The staff took any opportunity to humiliate me in front of the other girls. They made me feel as though I were a 'bad girl'. Staff demeaned and ridiculed me, told me I was hopeless. Before my peers staff told me that until I straightened up my parents would never love me. This place tried to take away every bit of dignity I had."

MOUNTING STRESS and ANXIETY and FEAR

"I often cried myself to sleep. We were afraid to speak out against atrocities we saw around us. We were constantly in fear of someone humiliating us or giving us physical pain. Constant fear. One person actually terrified me. The staff ladies were scary people, even with rare moments of kindness. I lay in bed at nights nervous about what the next day would bring. I worried about whether a certain staff member would scream at us, about whether our chores would pass inspection, about what the next meal would taste like, would the food be old and dangerous to eat?"

TOTAL CONTROL and MANIPULATION

"They accused me of not washing after using the toilet, so I protested. Then they accused me of arguing and possibly lying. They told me there was no place to run to, that neighbors were friends of the House, as well as police."

Abandoned. Trapped. Shamed. No place to run. Can you imagine? Can you weep with us over this?

More categories of abuse next time.

May 24. You are the Man

This is the post that grieves me more than any I shall write, the recording of a voice that says to me, "You are the man!" Time to climb down from the ivory tower of pontification, and make it plain that I understand failed humans as much as the next man. Personally.

ABOUT DAVID

The title of this post is from the Bible's story of King David. Nathan the prophet had just stirred him with the report of a wicked subject of David's domain. The man in question had taken his neighbor's pet lamb, and killed it, to barbecue it for a visiting friend, though he had a flock of sheep of his own.

An incensed king decreed the death of this evil man, without even thinking. The man's actions were outrageous. He must die.

David was then informed that he was the man of Nathan's made-up story. David had taken his neighbor's wife, then killed his neighbor to cover his adultery. This, in spite of the fact that God had blessed him with wives and riches and an entire kingdom. David was utterly crushed. He repented and God forgave him. He kept his kingdom. But life was never the same in David's realm.

ABOUT BOB

I too have been a man who knows how to be stirred with the outrageous abusive activities of my fellow man and I shall continue to be stirred. The pitiful behavior being reported by victims of homes dedicated to Christ must be heralded far and wide. Abuse must stop.

But there has been one man conspicuously missing from my

outrage. I have hinted at, talked of, my former years, my crying for my own children. Then quickly I have gone on to other subjects. It is time to unmask this man a bit more, and tell more of the truth. The truth is,

I too was a physically and verbally abusive parent. In some ways, I was like the ones I report on this site.

This terrible fact was brought home to me recently by a family member who cringed as I spoke of other men's abuses of children, but seemed to forget that I had a track record of my own. Bruises. Rage. Belts on little children. Degrading insults. And more.

I AM THE MAN

All of this is ancient history for me. But real history. 35, 40, 45 years ago. But the pain lingers in the abused, though all have forgiven me. They forgave because I confessed my sinfulness to them. God forgave too. But life has had ways of coming back at me, and especially at them.

In their case, unlike the victims I speak of often, they do not wish for me to rehash all of this. That is an advantage of confession and forgiveness. It allows a person to move on with his or her life.

So let me not speak of them but of my own ways. What goes on inside the mind of a child abuser? We are all good at self-justification. But for the Christian of course there is no use trying to get beyond the basics: We are sinners. From birth. Sin manifests itself in many ways. In my case, the peculiar formation that is me, turned into an angry young man.

WHY

No excuses here. God does not allow that. Only confession and

forgiveness. I shall stand before Him one day either condemned by my sin, or forgiven entirely. No excuses, but I know some of the things that contributed to my own tendency to abuse, to hurt other people, even my own.

For example: An abuser raised me. I was an illegitimate son. One parent gave himself to alcohol, and left the home often. A parent given to paranoia placed serious restrictions on my life. No real love in my home. Only anger and rules.

This messed-up child found a measure of peace and joy in the local church. Without God's influence in my life, I am not sure just how far my anger would have taken me. The church accepted me. I entered the ministry. Learned the Scriptures. Married. Had three beautiful children. Yes, had an experience of salvation during that period.

But the angry man had been formed along with this new person that was trying to emerge next to him. In those younger years, Angry Man won many of the battles. That man needed control. Now he had a set of rules the Bible seemed to be giving him that could be added to the rules his brain had formulated.

Everything must be perfect. Orderly. Clean. "Biblical." (God forgive me.)

THE CONFRONTATION

But children don't come into the world with such desires, that is, to be perfect and orderly. The clash was early and often. I'll put you in your place soon, said Angry Man. Within seven years of this warfare, Mom left. I was given partial custody .

Life continued to build in its pressures, as every single parent can testify. I wanted the best for my children, but often showed them

my worst. And I claimed all during that time to know Jesus Christ. That He was the only Way. That He was life and love.

My children would have to meet other believers before they could buy into that. As David, and troubled teen home leaders of today, I had given God a black eye. I had given my own children a reason not to follow the God I claimed to know and love. Offending a child, says Jesus, is a serious offence.

It is true that no abused child will be able to use effectively the excuse of an abusive parent when giving an account of his or her life before God. I cannot. My children cannot. Past residents of teen gulag homes cannot. Sin is personal, and regardless of what triggered it, each individual is responsible.

That gives no parent the right to do the things I did.

Eventually the children grew and moved away. The father saw his sins later, and as I said, asked the children for forgiveness.

HOW SOON WE FORGET

A strange part of this story, an awful part, is that the things on that family member's list, some of the nasty acts of my parenting four decades ago, had not one item that I remembered! I knew I raised my voice a lot. I was sure there was an occasional spanking. But all had faded from my memory. Four decades is a long time. And the offence had been forgiven. But the abused do not forget. Even if they do forgive. The pain lingers a lifetime.

My first thought after receiving this rebuke was to shut down this blog altogether, and to stop dealing with other men's sins. I would merely deal with my own. I should run far from victims of child abuse and let them work out their own issues. (Which they will, with or without me.) Stop the hypocrisy, I thought.

More thoughts came. If an ex-alcoholic can counsel people to stay away from drinking, if Paul the Pharisee can condemn Pharisaism, then Bob, the former physical/verbal abuser, can continue to issue warnings and pleas for the release of prisoners. He can cry over his own children along with the children of others.

But life is never the same when once a person is reminded of his own sinfulness. Forgiven as David was, yes. But bearing for all of this life the consequences of failure, yes to that also.

NOT ABOUT FAILED PARENTS

Perhaps in my investigations of “troubled teen homes” and “Christian” ranches and camps, someone will be encouraged to help stop people like me from continuing their angry ways. Maybe leaders will find another line of work or, an institution will be reformed, or shut down altogether.

Perhaps prisoners will be released to go on to healing and success. Maybe the victims will find the true church and the true Jesus and live forever.

This site is not, has not been, about failed parents, though it shall touch them, as it does me, in certain ways.

No, this is about flawed policies. Men and women and groups who will not repent, not yet, because they believe they are doing God a service with their meanness. People captivated by a false understanding of Scripture who when they are rebuked believe they are being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Some of these folks are sadistic, for sure. Others are simply zealots for “truth” as they see it. Put that zeal and some sadism into one person and you have a problem.

I know.

If there is anything in this post that makes me or any abuser of children look good, I have surely failed in the reporting.

Now let me issue the challenge to those who are operating way outside the Scriptural norm for discipline of children: Do what I have just done. Don't tell us broadly that you are imperfect and made some mistakes. Contact your victims, cry and pray with them, ask their forgiveness for specific sin against them.

In the goodness of God I have been given another chance at bringing up children. It is not something I desired, but an unusual circumstance brings two beautiful relatives to my home 8 to 10 hours a week. God has changed me over the years. Details are still being lived out every day, but it is clear that I'm on the right track with them and with this blog.

People can change. But admission of and confession of guilt must come first. So we pray for the persecutors as well as the persecuted...

May 26. The Definition of Trauma

From Martin Luther

"...A Christian should guard against giving offense to anybody by his life, lest God's name be blasphemed... whatever of good a Christian

does, or whatever of evil he does, under the name of a Christian, either honors or dis- graces God's name.

"... whenever you ...do naught but give occasion to the slanderers—the devil and his troop —to blaspheme the name of God... the devil, even without your assistance, at all times seeks opportunity—nor can he desist—to befoul our dear Gospel and the name of God with his slanderous tales, composed, if need be, entirely of lies.

"But where he finds the semblance of occasion he knows how to profit by it. He will then open his mouth wide and cry : ‘Behold, these are your Gospel people ! Here you have the fruits of this new doctrine! Is their Christ such a one as they honor by their lives?’

"So then a Christian should be exceedingly careful and cautious for this reason, if for no other: to protect the name and honor of his dear God and Saviour and not to do the devil the favor of letting him whet his slanderous tongue on Christ's name."

That’s why we review these issues. Some among us are not only “making mistakes”, as we all do, but are continuing in them, even glorying in them, and consigning those who differ with them to the ranks of the unsaved.

It is not slanderous to report that person X is hurting person Y. It is slanderous to abuse the person and character of another Christian, especially one who cannot defend himself.

ALLEGATIONS ONLY

Yes, the following issues are allegations. I was never a resident of a teen home. Never was an eyewitness. But many eye-witnesses exist, and have chosen to step forward and testify, and cry before you. Shall you ignore them, shall I? They deserve to be heard, and they desire an explanation, a confession, a statement that what

they experienced of evil in the institution of Jesus, was not of God, the God they desire to serve. Perhaps such a confession will turn back the many who no longer follow Jesus...

Are these things still going on in these homes? We have no way of knowing. The walls and the locks are still in place. The Directors refuse to talk to those making the allegations... Time will tell. It always does.

But here is what eyewitnesses have told us. Listen to my composite person, whose make-up I derived from online and personal sources. Every sentence was spoken by someone who was there.

STRIP SEARCH on ARRIVAL

When I first arrived they stripped me of all my clothes and forced me to shower. They stripped me and placed me in an itchy polyester outfit. I had to take off all my clothes in front of two staff members. Like jail. Though I had never been to jail. I felt used and dirty after the initial strip search.

THE PUNISHMENT of SILENCE

They did not allow us to talk with certain residents. They did not allow us to look at certain residents. We could only talk to our assigned talking buddy. They only allowed us to talk to or look at the ones who had talking privileges. Even while working or eating with them. I had many enforced long periods of silence, when all I could do was think of the things I could not talk about. Complete isolation finally broke my will.

UNANNOUNCED UNEXPLAINED VAGINAL EXAM

I had to take an exam in a room that looked like a closet. The man who first examined me did not seem to be a real doctor. They made

me have a vaginal exam from a man they never introduced to me, and who never asked permission to touch private parts. It was traumatizing to have my body privacy invaded. They refused to tell me anything or let me speak as they gave me a pelvic exam. As a grown woman I still cry about the humiliation of my forced breast and vaginal exam when I was a 15-year-old. To me at the time , a vaginal exam was a form of violation.

NO PRIVACY

I had to record publicly my bowel movements and my menstrual cycle. And show it. I had no privacy at all. They even inspected my sanitary napkins. They punished me for not filling in the blank of “how much” on the amount of diarrhea I had offered. This was a public chart.

INHUMANE PENALTIES.

I threw up and went to the bathroom at an unscheduled break. This put me on punishment all the next week. They made me drink my own vomit.

RELIGION, BIBLE AS A TOOL of PUNISHMENT and SHOW

They shoved the Bible and God down my throat. All day and all night was religious indoctrination. I got into trouble for questioning the Bible. I must have written some ten thousand sentences as punishment. They used God to scare me. He was only the God of judgment and wrath. They took me out “soul-winning” although God had not yet saved me. I had just memorized verses. They misrepresented God to me. My sin was thrown into my face daily.

EDUCATION INADEQUATE

The high school curriculum here is not accredited and made it

difficult for me to continue my education later. I was doing well in school and on my way to graduating. Their educational system forced me to have to go the “GED” route when I left.

CUT OFF FROM PARENTS, FRIENDS, even PASTORS

I saw my parents only every four months. Visitation with my parents was only for three hours. I could only write to immediate family. They allowed me one phone call a month, during which time I had to talk to my entire family. A staff member sat inches from me and would suspend my call if they thought it necessary. Staff monitored all my visitations. They didn't tell me until my first day there that I could have no contact with my grandparents, only parents. My phone calls were timed and monitored. Everything I said was written in a book. I could talk to my parents ten minutes once a month.

They accused me of giving my sister too much eye contact during a rare visit by my family. They blamed me in front of all, for having all future siblings banned from future family meetings. When my deaf mother visited, they did not allow me to communicate with her in sign language. I received many letters that they had blacked out, and censored. My pastor did not call me often. Staff discouraged parents from releasing us to my home.

I was not told about either of my sisters having children or getting married until it was time to leave. They sent me letters but they were not given to me. I learned to lie when my mother visited so as not to lose privileges. When my mother visited, I was not allowed to talk with her alone. When residents left, they did not allow us to say their name any longer.

What you have just read is the definition of trauma.

Exaggerations you say? Made up, you say? Are you willing to believe that this composite report of fifty ex-residents is all one big lie? A lot of smoke here. Surely there was a fire. Surely it burned many people.

And are such things going on in "troubled teen" homes around the country today? What do you think?

May 27. Let me out of here!

"Let me out of here!" No, not everyone in a "troubled teen" home wants out. Some have come from horrible circumstances and feel they are finally safe. Some know how to comply with the rigidity.

But the people who are now reporting their losses on this site, are of a different sort. To them, the house was a prison experience. Would that both sides of the brewing controversy could accept the validity of the other side's arguments.

We all understand the need for strict rules and strong enforcement. We know that the teen years can be trying for all. But we all instinctively recoil at the reports I now share with you, from a composite of fifty different testimonials I found online. The combined testimony spells, Let me out! Not just for the sufferers of yesteryear, but for young men and women incarcerated as I write.

Each sentence in the following paragraphs is from a victim of such a home, but I have scrambled and re-united the sentences to match categories as defined by the bold headings.

QUESTIONABLE FINANCIAL POLICIES

“My parents had to send money every month, plus send all my necessities and supplies. In spite of all the donations they received. They asked me to make crafts for them, which they sold for profit. Staff sent me out of the house to work for church officials in remodeling. They did not pay me for this. No one gave me the \$20.00 a month my sister sent me to use on books or socks.”

UNREASONABLE DEMANDS

“They only allowed three minutes in the shower. If I didn't place my sponge rollers perfectly, they punished me. The price we paid for minor infractions was ridiculous to the extreme. We were punished for gagging. Once, they forced me to wash dishes in scalding hot water because I had forgotten my rubber gloves. They did not allow me in the hallway with other students.

“They did not allow us to talk about home, location, phone numbers. I had too many mistakes in my written memory verses and so they did not allow me to talk to anyone but staff all week. They could punished me for having too many hangers in my assigned area. We could not keep journal, diary, or calendar. I had to learn a verse a day, five days a week. And I had to maintain all those verses, and recite them weekly. Or punishment. They punished me for every error in recitation by work-duty or paddling.

“Staff assigned work duties for wrinkles in my bed-making. They assigned punishment for looking in the wrong direction. If they gave me too many work duties, they paddled me. If I left one piece of grit on the floor after we swept, I got no credit for the work I had done. I needed to change my pad often, but they told me I was being wasteful and they didn't give me one. Someone shoved my head onto the floor because I didn't see a piece of dust a staff

member saw.”

THE FORMATION OF MINDLESS ROBOTS

“We learned to comply. We did and said what we had to do and say to make it to the end. When I first met the girls of this place and started to talk to them, they just stared at me. We were victims of mind control continually. Every day, every moment, they controlled our lives, I was becoming like a robot. I became like a puppet, with no mind of my own. The staff did everything possible to quicken the breaking of my will. I trusted no one. This was extreme brain-washing and mind-control.”

CONSTANT NEGATIVITY

“They made me feel I wasn’t good enough for anything. I felt I would never make it in the world. They never praised me for the things I did right, only criticized me for the wrong.”

AWFUL AFTER-EFFECTS

“I still have horrible dreams of my stay, waking up 3-4 times a month with horrible nightmares. I cannot trust anyone to this day, and am suffering depression because of my stay. Through learning a wrong kind of submission, I became involved in a verbally and physically abusive relationship when I left. I have female problems to this day. Difficult labor.

“It took me years to get the real me back. I have done my best to forget that such a place exists. They forced me to conform to them so long, that I could not speak to my husband about this horrible experience until many years of marriage. Now I have PTSD and abandonment issues. I left there a shell of the girl I went in.

“I thought about suicide constantly when I was there and still have

weekly horrible dreams... The pain and hurt thinking about it even now, is unimaginable. I still have nightmares about that place. Still I fear that someone will abandon me. Still I am healing twenty-thirty years later.

“I never forgot the nights I cried in those triple bunks for some sign that there was hope and a reason to live one more day.”

OVERWORK

“They made us work constantly. I still feel guilty and lazy if I am not working. We were given jobs that grown men should be doing: breaking rocks, loading them onto a truck and was asked to do so much outside work that it interfered with our schoolwork. I had to work from sun-up to sun-down doing back-breaking labor. Working on some building or cleaning project, I missed days of school.

“I was awakened in the middle of the night to help clean roadkill, deer that was donated and never eaten by the girls. I was expected to do all my work even when having severe menstrual cramps. These people were lazy. They made me clean staff houses instead of being in school some days.”

Sure, some of this is teen perception. But why doesn't that matter? If you feel you are a prisoner, should I simply tell you to get over it, or explain to you why you are not really a prisoner at all, but are being lovingly nurtured? Is the staff offering any explanations to these people, any chance for them to heal and understand? An ear for the crying?

May 29. What's happening to my body?

What if you were to visit one of these homes?

So you've heard about them, cried over them, and you want to see first-hand what is going on. Possible?

I imagine you'd experience what a person close to me did some months ago. You'd tell them you've heard some bad reports. They'd tell you it was all false, vicious attacks of the enemy. A couple disgruntled ex-residents trying to get even for perceived wrongs. You'd point out that there were now scores of people saying the same things. They'd say it was a psychological phenom known colloquially as "piling on." Case closed.

So you'd ask if you could walk through the home. Alone. Nix. They'd tell you this is maximum security. You'd need a minder. Only they wouldn't call him that. But you'd get your tour.

Everything would be in near-perfect order. Too near-perfect. Children quietly studying. Little doggies running around the place to give it that homey atmosphere. Wow, you'd think, how could this place be as bad as they say?

Then, hopefully, you'd come home, get on your computer, and visit the same place with other sets of eyes. Like the ones I provide for you now. People who lived there 24/7 for many months, for several years. They know the truth.

Let me continue with some of the allegations that my "composite" persons made, who represents fifty different people testifying. Those who experienced these things are the authors of these statements. They do not represent all that this house is, but they speak clearly of a part that we hope has been or will be shut down.

Only a few categories a day because the reading of such things is so difficult.

MENSTRUATION STOPPED

“... stopped having regular menstruation after a few months. I had only one period in three years. No, I did not have a period all the time I was there. I did not have a period for 34 months. I was normal before and after my time there. They told me that my lack of menstruation was a good thing, that I only had started menstruating this early because of a bad diet before I came.

“My periods stopped, like so many others'. No one reported this. Did they give us hormones to stop our menstruation? Someone there told me that none of the girls had periods while they were here, so I would not need to ask Mom to send tampons. Don't know if it was the stress or if it was something they fed us, but in my nine-month stay, I never had a period.”

SHADOWING

“They disciplined me by ‘shadowing’ for nine months. Had to follow a staff member 24/7, even at sleep. Could not look at or talk to any human being. They

broke my spirit by shadowing. I went a little crazy during this time. While they shadowed me, They did not allow me to face anyone, but only the wall.”

LITTLE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

“They gave me no medicine when I had the flu or a cold. They did not give me pills for migraines I began having. I was in great pain from my front tooth, but they would do nothing. Eventually my face swelled up. My parents had to convince them to take me to a

dentist. They sent my asthma inhaler home. I had an asthma attack and they told me I would be fine... but I could hardly breathe.

"I sprained my ankle and they did not take me to a doctor to check for fracture. They handed me a pair of crutches. My skin was peeling off me in huge pieces so they gave me some Vaseline. My skin was splitting and they gave me cod liver oil. I never saw a doctor or dentist in my months there. My glasses frames broke. They did not allow me to have an eye exam to have them fixed. They put the lenses into frames that didn't work, and that gave me headaches, to use. Since I could hardly see I missed things when I was cleaning and they punished me for that."

FORCED TESTIMONIES

"I wrote a glowing testimony about this place, but only because they forced me to do so. These were not my feelings. They forced me for my fifteen months there to write happy letters home, telling of my spiritual growth. All my letters home were glowing reports. Anything negative, they blacked out or did not send.

"I wrote a great 'testimony' for their website after getting out. Now I want other people to be spared going there."

A PATTERN OF DECEPTION

"They deceived me about where I was going on the day I entered. It seemed my mom was paying these people to get me off her hands. I felt like meat. They coerced my parents into sending me. My mom never signed the papers for me to go. Staff would not let me say good-bye to my dad because I was begging him not to leave me there.

"They told lies at my church to convince my parents and me that this was a wonderful place. They lied to my pastors and parents

about the conditions. I screamed and tried to run when my father took me, but it was too late.

“My family took me there deceptively. I wasn’t aware of the plans being made for my going. When my time was up, staff put extreme pressure on me to stay.

One more post of this nature, and then we will move on to other things.

May 31. Abuse By Any Definition

One more look at alleged abuses at “troubled teens” homes. These happenings are a bit old, to be sure. As we have said in other posts, we are recording them here to confront the leadership of these homes and ask them to find a way to bring peace to those whom they have wounded. Also to warn parents that these things went on, and that some of them may be happening still.

And... to call for these houses to open their facilities to regular visits. To cut out the monitored phone calls and letters. To bring the rest of the church of their community into responsibility for what goes on around them.

Incredibly, it is true that churches in the area are often mum about known abuses, preferring to continue the code of silence that

prevails among many church leaders: "I won't tell on you if you don't tell on me."

No, it's never stated that way. But we all know it happens. A feeling that your church is none of my business, and the other way around.

Wrong. Let the church speak loudly against abuse of any kind within its community.

So far, if current newsletters can be trusted, some have admitted that, over the course of their long history, "Sure we made mistakes. Everyone does."

I've said that very thing, in the last post. And I abhor myself for those mistakes. What victims want to hear are specifics, and impassioned pleas for forgiveness, not generalizations about mistake-making. In this case they want to know that their Lord Jesus Christ is not guilty of menstrual cycles gone awry, of bullying beatings, of isolation and imprisonment.

Here is a final listing of some cries from the homes. This is what fifty ex-residents were willing to share with anyone who would listen. I have rearranged their comments, but not changed them.

EMOTIONAL TORTURE

"I could touch no one and could show emotion to no one. They forced me to act happy though I was screaming inside. Finally I lost it and began yelling and screaming that I had to get out, that I could not live like a robot. I was normal when I came here, but later was crying all the time like a crazy person.

“Aching for one little hug, I had to pray every night that God would keep me sane. I was so lonely and lay sick and asked God to please kill me. This was sheer emotional torture. They did not allow me to console, or be consoled, by anyone. They made us feel there was no hope. The staff tore us down, but never built us back up .”

PRISON-LIKE

“I never was allowed to leave the grounds, so I was totally cut off from the world by a high fence. I was a prisoner, unable to escape, but the police who examined me did nothing. This home is a prison. This place is a dungeon of disillusion, heartbreak, and anguish. They did not allow us to leave the building while we were there. It was incarceration ... The doors and windows had alarms, not to keep people from getting in but to keep us from getting out. I felt like Joseph in prison. Unjustly incarcerated, but God was with me through it all. There was a prison atmosphere.”

MADE ME HATE CHRISTIANITY or CRY OUT TO GOD FOR HELP

“They abused me in the name of God and I hated church for a while because of what I saw there. Though I grew closer to God there, it was not because of the staff or ministry, but because I had to find strength in the Scriptures. I lost my belief in God (though I finally got it back long after I left). For some time after my stay, I could not step inside a church without having a panic attack.

“They did not allow us to enter the church service until after it started, then we had to sit in assigned places, filing past a guarded door. We had to stare straight ahead in church. We could not use the bathroom between services at church. Three hours or more. To this day, I have nothing to do with religion and don't attend church now, and left the church after my stay.

“I am a miracle, having come through this home with my faith intact, in spite of the way they treated me there, but I learned about true Christianity by seeing its opposite. I often prayed for the residents around me to receive peace and relief from the torture they were undergoing.”

NO LEGAL HELP

“When the House found that a lawyer and private investigator were checking the school out, they asked me to leave. When the State investigated us, staff was present. I could not tell the truth or they would punish me.”

RACISM

“I was told God didn’t like girls who strayed outside their race.”

So these are the cries of some, just some, of the people hurting at the hands of leaders in the church. Leaders who “made mistakes.”

Yes, people make mistakes. But isn’t it time that the victims of these houses have peace with those who hurt them? I propose a meeting between offended and offenders. With a moderator between, each side tells their story, gives their reasoning. Confessions. Prayers. Forgiveness. Closure.

Nightmares don’t go away automatically. Even in Christ, scars can follow. Will “God’s people” do the right thing now?

June 1. Introducing Bob.

Bob. That may be one of the few names you will see in these posts. Ever. People are so lawsuit-conscious these days. I've decided that the only suit I want to deal with is the one I wear to church on Sundays. And it desperately needs some tailoring, but we don't need to go there.

So, this "troubled teen" story is my story, but it's only mine by adoption. I didn't start any of this, but found it in different sources, pieced it together, and brought it before you. But you need to know a little of who I am before you can trust what I am saying.

In super-short, I'm an unknown male, aged, and a hard-core Bible believer. Perhaps, in other words, of all

people imaginable, the most outrageously unqualified person to advocate on behalf of teenage girls, many of whom have left off Bible-believing, at least for the time being.

You will see one more thing. Ever since I read their stories, I've been prejudiced on their behalf. Still, everyone deserves a defender. Everyone deserves to have his point of view out there. I'll give it my best shot down the line. But no promises.

So, who is this old guy?

Please listen to a little more of my story, so you know who's talking to you and therefore you can better judge whether you should trust him. That's important, you know. A lot of stories about the gulag, told by a lot of people. Who will you believe?

I'll try to keep it short. But I am a grandpa, so give me a little grace here.

Born into a non-Christian home in Columbus, Ohio, 1946. You can do the math.

God's been going after me from childhood, and I'm so glad about that! Living at home was not a good thing. Dad (though I found out only a few years ago he wasn't really my dad!) had a drinking problem. Mom had a nervous-emotional problem. There was rejection, control, general unhealthiness at home. I somewhat excelled at school, but my real break came from the church.

The local church was of the church of Christ/Christian "non-denominational" denomination. They were into helping neighbors who were in poor situations. That was us. My dad's drinking and a lingering illness contracted in the Navy took him from us and from his work. Po' folks, for sure.

One day some bags of groceries appeared on our doorstep and we knew the local church was blessing us. My mother, I believe acting out of guilt, got us all to go to that church soon after the gift arrived. One time. Mom and Dad never darkened the door of a church after that, and I have never stopped attending since ...

That's not a salvation testimony, though I do have one. It's just the way God got me into a safe place where I would hear the salvation message, and delight in it.

Called, sent, confused

God did follow through, called me into the ministry, sent me to Bible College, gave me places to minister, started a church through me, and above all gave me a night during which I felt the great weight of sins removed by His grace.

So, I was saved, and an ordained minister. But I came to blows doctrinally with my denomination and they could not use me any

longer. I spent the next fifty years or so “at sea” in the so-called charismatic movement. There is so much good in that group, but more and more the extra- and non-Biblical teachings and experiences crowded out the solid foundational teachings of Scripture. In February of 2018, I decided I could no longer be called a charismatic.

Don’t get me wrong here. I probably never was a charismatic by their definition. I never spoke in tongues in the Biblical sense. Maybe in their sense, which is a letting loose of the tongue to speak whatever syllables want to come out.

Anyway, I held on to the cardinal doctrines of the faith, leaning more and more to the “doctrines of grace.” Never totally gelled with the “movement”. I think of Captain Von Trapp’s message to “Rolff” in the Sound of Music: “You’ll never be one of them!”

Indeed. I was a fundamentalist all along, and for the past twenty years or so have published messages and readings to the huge sermon outlet known as Sermonaudio. My website is still there.

How I met the Teen Gulag.

So, after the charismatic part of the journey, I had to look for a Bible-believing church . That’s how I found this little fellowship that took me in, let me preach some, warmly accepted me.

But then this discovery of some unusual happenings in a “troubled teen” home that that church supported.

It’s as though that, in the following days, I went down Alice’s rabbit-hole and began seeing the strangest of things before my eyes: Strip searches. Adolescent bed-wetting. Acute hunger. Severe beatings for the least of offenses. Shaming. Humiliation. Protests.

Sleeplessness. Terror. Trauma.

Was this a dream? I had seen much of it before, at least heard of it and dealt with it by writing and visits and prayer and giving. But only in places like Romania, North Korea. You know, Communist places.

I was stunned and broken. I had to write. It is what I do when I am stressed by something like this. I wrote in Romania when I was there. I wrote about North Korea for two years and published a book about the sufferings there. And now...

America's Teen Gulag is on my radar. I have visited. I am writing. Praying. There's a pattern here, get it? Perhaps a book will come from this series of posts? No matter. But I must keep crying and praying and writing. Join me when you can.

Thanks for your time. Bob.

June 2. Of Broken Prisoners

Continuing my story from the last post, and expanding on it somewhat:

I have heard so many people crying, and wanted to know why. When I have found out why, I have wanted to tell others about it. Maybe they could help. At least they would hear.

This is a story of prisoners, broken prisoners.

"Brokenness"

I will speak of this topic more when we read Solomon's wisdom in later posts.

For now, may I tell you that I almost was a broken man, in the worst sense. I was raised in a home where Mom had an illness, mentally, that caused her to desire perfect control over everything. I was not beaten with a rod, but her language and mannerisms and rejection formed me into less than a person.

An act of kindness – not a whip – from a local church put me into fellowship with God's way of breaking people. Namely, His love and acceptance, something I had not known at home. The people of that kind church took me in. I still lived at home, but at church I was loved. It was enough to see me through those young years.

I have fond memories of staying at the home of one of the elders, who to this day is my friend. I saw a loving family, what it meant to have Christ in a home. What a blessing.

Little boy broken

I was broken again, in the God way, when I learned that this God would answer my prayers. And when He did, in a spectacular way, tears of joy and gratitude flowed from a pre-teen's eyes. I was not alone. I had a real Father.

Shortly after my teen years, the Gospel itself got through to me. Broken again, I mean really broken, hearing a message by Billy Graham. Sin was real, but grace was more real. I broke down once more, but only to be built up with the joy of the Lord.

More? Oh yes. The Romanian Christians and their plight under Ceaucescu, brought me to Communist Romania, where I was able to minister to those in a prison-land. The pattern repeated: What joy! But what breaking of heart.

And in North Korea, the cries of the people of God got to me, just a decade ago. Broken! Those poor people! Who will speak for them? Many have and are, and I joined their voices. I still advocate for them.

My latest breaking

My last breaking was just months ago. When I read the stories of the prisoners in the teen gulag, stories so carefully and purposefully gathered together by those who were themselves victims of homes, I could feel the familiar breaking coming again.

Yes, I know brokenness. It did not happen when I was spanked for smoking. And I was. Or when the principal of the school whacked this first-grader for his antics. Yes, that was me. Or when the gym teacher in High School laid wood to seat, in front of the whole gym class. Ouch, I feel it still. That may have broken my pride for a short time. But God Himself broke the real me.

When certain discipline gurus speak of breaking a baby's will by spanking him/her until he/she cries no more, my heart gushes out with rivers of agony. I can't stand it. My brain has no place to put it. I know the Scriptures, and no Scripture speaks of such evil!

May God arise and stop this ongoing "breaking" of humanity by Christians who should know better!

The Prisoner

Remember it? It all began on September 6, 1967. The Prisoner TV series lasted for seventeen episodes and told the story of Communism and all other mind-control methods of mankind.

In the show, a man is kidnapped off the streets of London and brought to a village of idiots. Happy, nice people. No trouble.

Nothing negative. All is sweetness and light.

These village people have all been victims of a “breaking” procedure using drugs and operations, etc. They are left with functioning bodies but non-functioning brains. They can eat and sleep and work and interact. But they can’t speak against the government or anything in their society.

They are broken. Destroyed-broken.

There are many ways to get to such a state. Brutality is one. Shame is another. Imprisonment.

Do I need to say that this sort of brokenness, advocated by some churches and their “homes for the troubled”, is not the Bible’s brokenness at all? Do I need to say that David’s contrite broken spirit did not come about that way?

Peter was broken by a look at the Jesus whom He had offended. He had denied Jesus no less than Judas. But He was forgiven.

Punishment must come. Look at David again. And, look at Saul of Tarsus. But David and Saul/Paul were of a broken heart before they were punished. The aim of some practitioners seems to be, to use punishment to bring about godly brokenness. Ain’t gonna happen.

North Korea

In my early 40’s I began hearing the painful cries of the persecuted church. I have traveled to Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania, in the days when Communism ruled. How my heart burned for those people of God willing to endure such suffering for Christ.

Romania became a gut-jerking passion for me after that. I visited her four times. I advocated for her here. Wrote pamphlets. I prayed

and corresponded. Then, Romania was free. And I felt free from that burden.

Then 2007. I became in that year aware of the awful pain present in Kim's North Korea. For two years I followed that nation by blogging, then collected all those blogs into the largest book I have written to date. I visited Korea with my Korean wife. We worked with refugees arriving in the South after their arduous journey from the North, via China and several Southeast Asia nations.

Broken soul in Seoul

Some of the Koreans who had made it to the South told us their stories in that summer of 2009. Concentration Camps. Torture. Humiliation.

Reeducation. Forced compliance. Brainwashing. Daily and constant loudspeaker broadcasts. Starvation. The elite blessed, the rabble cursed. Families separated. Whole families imprisoned for one member's offense.

Forced confessions and testimonials. Stories of prisoners and ex-prisoners daily.

It had been a difficult year for me before that trip. And those difficulties, added to the constant hearing of North Korea narratives, and writing them down for the mission I was representing, evidently exhausted my supply of adrenalin. Nervous breakdown. Second-

hand trauma. For months after my return I could do little but pray and listen to Gospel music. I understood just a little about the kind of stress that causes fear, that causes breakdowns of the nervous system...

Passion is a good thing. But too much will eat a man up. The situation is so wicked in North Korea. Let only the strong approach it.

My website [www.sermonaudio.com/aservant70] continues to feature photos and hundreds of audios both in English and Korean, addressing Chosun. I do not plan another visit any time soon.

But what in the world does all that have to do with troubled teen homes? Everything. Bear with me. Come back next time and I'll show you ...

June 3. Mothers Aghast.

Don't stir up a mom. Mothers upset at what they are seeing happen to their chicks, can cause serious problems! I've learned that little lesson a thousand ways over the years. One can only imagine the chagrin of some moms as they found the truth of what had been going on at the friendly home for "troubled" teens. I'll share some of their reactions below, but first:

"Deja vu all over again."

Last time, I gave you a list of things happening in some of the worst places of earth, like North Korea. I promised to make a connection to what goes on there and what has captured my heart now. Here's the list:

Concentration Camps. Torture. Humiliation. Reeducation. Forced compliance. Brainwashing. Daily and constant loudspeaker broadcasts. Starvation. The elite blessed, the rabble cursed. Families separated. Whole families

imprisoned for one member's offense. Forced confessions and testimonials. The "people" do all the work. Control by the State. Slave labor to make government look good.

Now tone it down a bit. Or even a lot. Add "Jesus" and "the Bible" and "church." Then read again, if you possibly can, the allegations of past residents of Christian reform schools, which I have been sharing for days now. Let me remind you that their full story can be found elsewhere online...

But again, let only the strong attempt it.

When you read their stories, even my condensed versions, and you look at that North Korea list, you will see why I let out a wail of emotion when I encountered them. I've dealt with these things before. I know what is going on here. My heart is broken again. Already I have had to back off. I was advised to get out of this altogether, for it leads to bad places in the human psyche.

But I cannot. Perhaps it is the aching inside of the little boy from the unhappy home. Maybe it's the grown man, who has looked Romania and North Korea in the eye and seen the evil there. I can't tell you why my heart beats more quickly for some teens-now-adults that I have never met, and probably will never meet. All I know is, I've been here before, and I must tell God's people about it.

And I must beg God's people to pray and act until something changes. The imprisoning of youth, the actual beating of babies...

Please.

It Happened in Church One Day

Here's one of many stories that will get a mother's blood boiling. A grown witness of abuse of many years ago.

"Age 2, I was. I was in my mother's arms, disturbed about something, making a fuss during the preacher's sermon at a teen home. A leading staff member at that time suddenly stood with paddle in hand and forced Mom and me to a room adjoining the area where they all sat and listened to her husband preach.

"Soon they listened to another sound. It was me, screaming for my life as the woman's paddle struck me on my hind-side. I screamed until I could scream no more, Mom said. When I finally ran out of breath, the swats stopped, and victoriously we emerged from the little room as the sermon went on without interruption...

"...Except one, where another staff member, who could hear the swats, cheered her on."

Many, many tales like this one. Let me line up a few of them as I did the residents for a few posts. Every one of the following statements was spoken by a regretful mother of a student at a teen home.

Moms are very concerned! You will note that their grievances mirror those of their returned teens of years ago. And also as with the teens, these comments are directly from documents easily searchable online.

Speak, Mother

"Arrangements were made without my daughter's knowledge."

"We were under stress and were talked into it by pastor." "Better

that she not know.”

“Calls and visits monitored.”

“Prison-like atmosphere.”

“Wish I had stood by my feelings and not sent her.” “Called, but always someone listening.”

“Meals withheld for punishment.” “Letters tightly censored.”

“I was looked on as a ‘sorry’ parent.” “Received few letters.”
“Humiliation.”

“At buffet could eat anything but if they got sick, punished. Deprivation.” “Letters home were always positive.”

“Horried to see how skeletal she appeared.” “Her arms were just sticks.”

“Her cheeks sunken in.” “Isolation.”

“Calls monitored to prevent the truth from coming out.” “No period in her seventeen months there.”

“Wonder if she will ever truly be over her experience.” “We live with deepest regrets.”

“We chose a horrible path for her.”

“Shows signs of PTSD, twenty-five years later.” “Such deep scars from her experience.”

“I regret my daughter ever being there.” “This is not a ministry but a business.” “Beatings.”

“In the 80’s we sent \$350 a month and all of her personal needs, but she was denied the things we sent.”

Any mothers listening? Is there something you can do?

June 4. Yep, we worked at a “troubled teen” home.

In our last post we listened to some of the moms telling their sad stories of a mistake they had made, namely giving their child away to a “troubled teens” home. We now want to look at a “composite” former staff. By that I mean I am combining the testimonies of more than one former worker into one story. As always, every word I write comes from the mouth of an actual witness – in this case, persons who saw personally what happened there as staff workers.

As I did with the residents’ complaints, and the moms’, I will list these allegations in random order, with no names. Be assured there was more than one staffer complaining. And all of these statements also can be found online:

“All they teach is fear, everything negative.” “Always cutting down everyone.”

“I committed to two years, but I could not stay because of the abuses I saw.” “I was dumbfounded at what I saw.”

“I cried for these residents when I read their testimonies later.”

“Had to clean staff car, which took four hours, and included picking

up of many candy- wrappers, a substance denied to any of us.”

“Staff’s son called us morons.”

“The way things were operated reminded me of a Nazi concentration camp.” “Monsters.”

“There was a ‘prison line’ for the bathroom.” “Three-minute showers even for some staff!”

“Scrubbing brick floors on hands and knees with a toothbrush.” “All mail censored through the staff. Even mine, as staff!”

“Ate rotten food, expired and slimy.”

“Staff could be seen on their porch, cooking steaks.” “Humiliation. Psychological tactics. Bullying. Abuse.”

“I almost gave up on God after I left this place of horror.”

“Few girls had periods. Pads were rationed and monitored. I did not have a period either.”

“They had to post their bowel movements publicly. I too was quizzed about my bowel movements!”

“Residents worked in warehouses filled with great foods. But they ate out of unlabeled cans. They ate undated food. I know they ate dog food at times.”

“Not eating every bite of food was punishable.”

“One leading staff member had a very bad temper, her only emotion seemed to be anger.”

“I was told to stop writing a man because it could lead to marriage, but to take his money when it was sent.”

“Students with attitudes could not make eye contact with any other student, as a punishment.”

“No love, joy, encouragement.” “Residents and staff used as free labor.”

“Ten-foot privacy fence, locked gates.”

“Made to clean up their own vomit, caused by ignoring a plea not to drink lactose milk.” “I never saw a resident misbehave. But punishments continued anyway.”

“Even as a staff member, my phone calls were monitored!” “I wet the bed while I was there.”

“When I resigned, it was said of me that ‘the devil got another one of the hearts of a staff member.’ “

“Didn’t mind supporting myself financially until I learned of the staff’s income and property holdings.”

“Serious threats and lectures when I said I had to leave.” “Took me four months to retain strength.”

“Warped view of God.”

Let me remind my readers that the statements you just heard were from staff, not residents. If the staff was having difficulty dealing with these issues, can you imagine the impact on a troubled teen, who has already gone through traumas enough before he/she arrived?

June 6. Meet the founding father.

Once upon a time in the South there was this preacher....who became the founder of a movement still with us today. Its foundations are crumbling and perhaps we shall soon see its end, but until we do, we must speak against many of its elements.

This preacher was one of my favorites many years back. I know that must hurt a few of you who know what I now know, but history is history, his and mine. Do you still want to meet him? Read on. But be aware. This site does not

mention names any longer. Though this man is long gone (1982), his family is still with us.

I will tell you what I know, and how that knowledge relates to the subject at hand. The story is not pleasant. Nothing on this blog site would rank as pleasant.

But necessary. To ignore human suffering, especially of brothers and sisters in the common faith, is to be complicit in the implementation of that suffering.

The rise of a preacher-man

I am gleaning some of the details of his life and ministry from respected sites online.

The preacher was born in 1914. His education and early religion were both very basic. A one room schoolhouse. A strict Baptist. He decided to preach at the age of 18. Through some sacrificial saving he was able to be accepted at Baylor University, from which he graduated in 1936. It was in that year that he married his wife Marie. And in that very same year he began preaching. He was a senior at Baylor.

Then three years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, during which time he also pastored the Magnolia Park Baptist Church.

In the 1940's he became pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church in Corpus Christi. While there he put together the "Baptist Ministerial Alliance," and became its first president.

The preacher & me

The way I got to know him was through his popular radio program. It started out in 1944 and kept increasing until it was a national broadcast. I picked it up as a young man, in the 60's, and frankly loved it.

I mean, he was conservative. So was I. Still am. He was folksy. Hard-hitting. Uncompromising. Quite enjoyable for a Bible-believing Christian to listen to. So I listened.

Evangelist

Well, the church in Corpus Christi now had a nationally famous voice, and it grew. And the man grew. He became a John-the-Baptist type voice in the American wilderness. He soon began preaching at other churches. The demand for his messages increased.

Oh, the liberals hated him! But his base adored him. He was the prophet of the hour.

I cannot fault any of this ministry. Neither would I fault some of the preachers in churches like his today. I know that some of you are expecting the worst when I talk of this man and men like him. Interesting, that when you do a search online for this man, as for certain "troubled teen" homes , you will turn up either squeaky-

clean reports, or damning condemnations.

That's not my style. I hope to tell the whole truth just by telling all the facts in my possession. You will find, as did I, that there is much to praise and much to cause concern in the best and worst of ministries. And people. You and I included.

So the preacher expanded on all fronts. He became especially concerned with his young people, and opened up a Christian Day School. But it was to the churches outside of his own that the greater call began to be loud in his ears. In 1951 he actually resigned from the pastorate and went into full time evangelistic ministry.

The preacher then became the singer. His singing voice was as folksy as his preaching, and endeared itself to the masses.

Church-planter

Then his conservatism went a little too far. He began offending even conservatives when he would not honor the politicians of his day. Revival invitations went down. Time for a new re- invention.

In 1954 he started his own church. Nearly four hundred joined up with him in the first half year.

The singing radio and pulpit preacher now became a writer and publisher. And radio station owner. And pilot. Sounds more and more like some men of our own day. But his message was still solid. Unlike most of the mega-men of our time.

Rehabber

All of this time he had tried to be a loyal member of his denomination. But a message he preached against

denominationalism in 1956 finally brought that era of his life to a close. Soon after that was when the preacher entered the rehab business. Not rehabbing real estate. Rehabbing ruined lives. Something like the Teen Challenge of later years. Rehab for men and boys ruined by drugs and alcohol and law-breaking of all sorts.

How I wish he had stayed in the preaching and singing business. Let's give him credit for wanting to help the needy kids of his day. But is it too severe to say that he was acting outside his gifting when he entered rehab? Could not one say that of the directors of homes in our own day? (Answer: YES!)

There's even a case to be made against homes like this altogether. Perhaps I will make that case. Another time.

His boys'/men's ministry was a huge success. Some of the guys came out of these homes changed, and some were even made into preachers.

Good, bad, and the rest

Nothing in the research tools I used mentioned one negative aspect of his rise to fame, and creation of rehab facilities. One bio was penned in 1982, the year of his death. The report is glowing, and understandably so.

But if you will patiently wait for the next installment, you will see how the policies in his homes were passed on to another generation or two, including our own. You may still see some changed lives and preacher-boys and preacher-wives coming out of these homes.

And much more. But you won't like all that you see. Look anyway, will you?

We have to let history, and not biography, take over from here, for the stage is now set for a new element to be added to this Empire forming : A very well-known home that became the center of many years of controversy. We will leave this girls' home un-named also. But a quick search of "Christian troubled teen homes", or "teen gulag" will get one all the information he could possibly handle.

I'll continue my little tale next time.

June 7. The first child is born

In the last post I introduced the founder of what today is labeled the "teen gulag." Feeling a burden, we assume, for the youth of our day, the preacher put together a boys'/men's home, then a girls'.

The girls' home began with one pregnant 15-year-old who had no place to go, and a preacher appealing for help from the pulpit. A couple in the congregation agreed to take her in. The

child is born. The big-hearted pastor soon had other girls knocking at the door. The church couldn't turn them away. The home became an institution, 1968.

The volunteer couple, who I might add have a good reputation to this day, became the first supervisors of this new initiative. And soon it was attracting not only the pregnant but the "troubled", the rebellious. Difficult teenage girls. Soon a second branch was opened in Hattiesburg, Mississippi to house the hundreds of girls that

applied. Fifteen hundred girls passed through this ministry in its first seven years.

What could be troubling about all this? They were reclaiming young lives in the name of Jesus. It is what we as a people are about, yes?

And many other homes

More ministries followed, male and female, young and old. A retirement community.

Let's stop here and acknowledge the good that came from this one man's efforts. If there were mistakes, may we all be big-hearted enough to forgive the mere mortal and look in a mirror while we're at it. This blog has not been, and shall not be, about human "mistakes." It is about misguided unscriptural policy that damages lives.

License or leave!

In 1971, the preacher/founder was asked either to license, or to close down altogether, the girls' home. And here is where we must depart from the positive sounding biography we have been following, and look at eyewitness reports of what was going on alongside the good that may have been happening.

One last look at the biographical narrative. It here turns in the wrong direction, in my opinion. I quote. "[The preacher] and his associates staunchly opposed the agency's order [to license], considering it a clear case of breach of church-state separation. The controversy resulted in false charges of neglect and brutality, attacks by the [local] newspapers, weeks and months of counseling with attorneys, appearances in court, and numerous meetings with officials in [the state capital]."

Do you see how one word changes everything? Everything in that quoted paragraph is true, but one word: the word false. Take that word out and what do you have?

False witnesses? Really?

Well, were the charges false? Are the charges still being leveled against numerous homes like this of today, false? All false? Hundreds and hundreds of charges, all false? Were the church's supporters correct in assuming that they were being fought "by the devil" and by lies?

In fairness, reports started coming out about miraculous salvation experiences, transformed young people. Hey, these troubled teens could now quote Scripture, sing the Gospel, give testimonies. But what about these stories? Were these stories false?

Radio listeners responded to this new child-saving ministry with grateful offerings. The church was reaching today's youth! But now it was under attack. We must help!

We've seen this pattern repeated recently.

Like mother like daughter

That other side to the preacher's ministry began to surface. These reports sound very much like the strange and awful happenings I have documented elsewhere on this blog. Things such as:

Locked isolation rooms where one had to listen to the founding preacher, preaching 24/7. Corporal punishment. "Better a pink bottom than a black soul," was the preacher's boast. When the Attorney General investigated, he (the AG] said he was more concerned with "bottoms that were blue, black, and bloody."

No songs but Gospel songs allowed to be sung. Nail biting forbidden.

No looking at boys in church.

Forced "tattling" on others.

Do not get closer than six inches to another girl. No falling asleep during the day.

No eye contact from "new girl" to "new girl."

Must finish all food.

No bad attitude allowed.

There will be no negativity. No TV, radio, magazines.

Only approved books to be read.

30-60 Bible verses recited from memory each day.

All mail censored.

Wooden paddle spankings for many of these offenses. Standing with nose to the wall, arms at side, all day.

"Sitting on the wall", imagining a chair underneath while your back is against a wall, arms outstretched, sitting position.

Hmmm. Sounds a little familiar, yes? Now you know where the other homes of today got some of their ideas.

The fight begins

So it hit the fan. "It" being an uprising of concerned parents and government agencies.

A brother of one of the girls in [a gulag home still with us] had been sent to the preacher's home in the South, before his sister was later sent to [that current home]. I quote Sister's comments:

"It was so terrible [at that other home] that he [her brother] broke into my parents' house when he figured out I had been sent away and found a piece of mail with the name of where I was . He sent this [mail] to my real mother, who had no idea I'd been sent to [the home] , to try and help me... he told me years later that he had to get me out; he knew these places were dangerous and wicked and I was not safe."

Anyway, the preacher did not stop fighting, believing he was God's champion for young people. He, like some of the folks at all of these homes, did in fact have good stories to tell about real people who had been changed. Preachers. Preachers' wives. But was that enough then? Is it enough today?

Where did it go from here? Let me tell you of the continued story next time.

June 9. Preacher in Jail.

How movements change

Before I continue the saga of a home founded by an erstwhile preacher of the 60's, these thoughts:

Two centuries before Christ came, a well-intentioned assemblage of Jews decided to “come out and be separate” from the growing menace of the Greek culture in Israel. Such filth.

Such obscenity. Humanism gone amuck. We must make a statement, they thought. These “separated ones” or “Pharisees” as they were called, had the right idea. But by Jesus’ time, the Pharisaical holiness movement needed castigated and condemned. They had missed the point. Movements do that.

The down-South people need to be given credit for addressing a need. But we have seen in our own day that the fruit of their labors has been quite mixed. Something was wrong from the beginning. Addressing teen issues in a group setting may not have been the best way to tackle the problem. Impossible one-size-fits-all rules mean impossible enforcement. And that leads to abuse. In some cases, it leads to tragedy.

The State became aware of the abuse and moved in on the home. The preacher fought back. And won. And lost.

To the State Supreme Court

Valentine’s Day. A popular preacher is in jail! How in the world did this nationally famous radio and revival preacher-singer wind up here? Financial improprieties? Sexual misconduct? Not at all. He is simply making a public statement about his rehab homes and the fact that they need to be re-opened. And he will not license them with the corrupt government.

Yes, the State had actually closed the Home for Girls ,and others, on the grounds that the founder refused to have them licensed with the state. The fight that ensued only caused the preacher’s star to rise higher in the sky of fundamentalism. Here was a man of God

willing to stand up to the government, to defy the rules of men for the sake of the rules of God.

Great theater. Great press. And he took his case to the State Supreme Court! And won. The homes were re-opened.

About licensing

Let's stop a minute. How valid is the struggle against the State in a nation like ours? How serious is "licensing" after all? Where do Christians draw the line?

I mean, licensing is everywhere around us, and for the most part we don't object. Electricians and plumbers and repair people of all kind are licensed. You can use the other kind if you choose, but licensing usually brings with it a measure of knowledge and capability. It's not a bad thing. It can ensure quality and safety.

Your local restaurants and food stores must have licenses to pass on food to you. Thankfully so. Countries that have no controls over such things spread disease.

But the church is free, you say. Hands off!

Licensing in the Bible?

The issue never comes up in Scripture, does it? Rome ruled all in those days. The Jews ruled in Israel. But the church thrived, and obeyed the governments involved, until those governments told it not to preach about Jesus. Other than that, the rule was "Let every soul be subject to the higher (government) powers." Government powers are ordained of God. Let them rule.

I mean really, how bad is it for a government to be concerned about the welfare of its citizens in institutional settings? Government

“interference” can also be government protection and health and safety. How bad is that? Why cannot we follow the early church and obey the government until it messes with our message?

Was there anything in “licensing” that would have forbidden the preacher to preach Jesus to his girls and guys? I think not.

I think he may have fought the wrong battle. And in the process of this public fight, the private issues I detailed in my last post went unnoticed except by some outraged parents and ex-residents, as in today’s homes...

To the U.S. Supreme Court!

The preacher’s fight was not over, when the homes reopened. But, the very next year, the Child Care and Licensing Act was passed. The preacher himself, say some, may have been the reason for the need of such a law! God give us more such laws! I know a state or two where we could start. Like yesterday.

A restraining order was served on pastor Founder. As a protest, he went to jail again. But theatrics notwithstanding, in October the homes were once more shut down. The residents were taken to State juvenile facilities.

He fought still. Rallies, court cases. This time, all the way to the United States Supreme Court! But that august body upheld the State law. Desperate, preacher closed the doors in the homes in his state and sent his residents temporarily to homes in two other states! (One can only wonder what the residents were thinking about all this mobility.)

Before the final closing, the preacher had called on people all over the country to come to him, surround his church, and keep the law from taking his students.

From the newspaper that covered this bizarre event:

“More than a decade before violent confrontation between church and state became newsworthy, inspectors arrived at a Christian children’s home to encounter a human chain of 25 ministers blocking the entrance. The state agents were investigating numerous abuse allegations leveled at homes run a fire-breathing preacher and exponent of “Bible-discipline.”

No dice. It didn’t work. The homes had to leave.

Then came a legal maneuver which was used elsewhere and even became a staple of the gulag movement: the preacher transferred ownership of the homes and all their property to the church. Because they were now under the legal umbrella of a church, and protected by laws about church and state, the homes were allowed to open again!

There were more legal battles...

More about government control

I must say that in those long-ago days, this pastor inspired me and many like me when he came against state control. He felt, as so many of us did, that the government has no place in the church. We were free Americans after all! We had escaped long ago from the government of Catholic Europe! Freedom, freedom!

That all sounds so empty now. Oh, I still believe the government should not be dictating its will to the church. I’ve been in the Communist countries, where churches little by little capitulate to every governmental demand until they nearly close down altogether. Church members are told when they can meet and where. They are admonished not to teach young people these Bible things. More and more their dictates sound like the old Pharaoh of

Moses. That kind of government interference is anathema.

But I've also seen, and so has the government here, how the "church", whether the true or false church, gets away with murder by saying, "Leave us alone, we'll judge ourselves." Roman Catholic priests come to mind immediately. Things just don't get taken care of. Evil festers. Only the God-ordained ministers of Romans 13 can be called upon now.

Did the home in question survive, then? Well, yes and no. But no more time for that today...

June 10. The preacher is gone. The homes are here.

We're talking about the history of "troubled teen homes" and one of the forerunners of them all, founded by a well-known preacher decades ago. That home in our last episode is being challenged by the State to license or desist. The founder wins the initial battles and is then shut down. For a while.

A few more years of struggle. Opening of other ministries. Dealing with legal challenges. The preacher has now passed his mid 60's but appears much older, as the stress and strain of courtrooms and ministries has taken its toll.

Still he keeps busy. Still he is in demand as a speaker. He is a hero to the faithful.

He must now travel by private plane, as some evangelists in our own day have concluded, interestingly enough. As a licensed pilot

[we wonder if he balked at being “licensed’ for that privilege, since licensing was such a problem for him] he flew from place to place on his own, sometimes carrying a team of fellow ministers.

On one such trip, he had aboard a singing group with which he would be ministering for a week-long series of meetings. Or so he had planned. The plane crashed. No one survived. A tragic end to a decades-long ministry.

New director, same mission

A staff member for the last ten years of the preacher’s work, was now the pastor of his church as well as the administrator of the whole range of ministries.

The legal battle for that home we are following, and other homes, dragged on in the courts. A few years down the road, and an inspection of all child-care facilities is mandated by the State. The State prevails, and the home is closed again. Time to move to another state again. A Bible College provides a temporary home.

Next, a well-meaning Christian governor named Bush, for whom the Christian religion was meaningful and helpful and not to be messed with, was able to introduce and eventually pass legislation that would allow private homes like the one in question, to opt out of licensing! Suddenly that state is the place to be if you have a home like the deceased preacher’s!

Open again!

So come on back, ladies. But more accusations surface. I quote again from a newspaper article:

In the three years since the homes have been licensed in this state , they have been the targets of two allegations of abuse — the first

just weeks after the homes reopened. At that time, the mother of a teenage girl living in the Home for Girls reported that her daughter had been tied up with duct tape.

Just months later, a resident at the Home for Men, a self-styled "Christian boot camp," made a sworn statement to the County Sheriff's Office that he had been abused by officials of the home. Supervisors at the home had suspected him and another teenager of trying to escape, and in response, roped them together and banged their heads together a few times, according to the statement.

Then, an employee of the home forced the two boys to run barefoot through brush into the woods, hitting them with a stick when they slowed down. The boys were taken into the woods, where they were forced to dig in a pit, while school personnel looked on. "They threw dirt clods and rocks at us and they also threw empty cans," the boy's statement says.

The statement also claims that on the cold March night when the incident occurred, employees urinated on the boys and threw ice water on them. At around 2 a.m., after four or five hours of digging, the boys were told they would have to jump the pit if they wanted to rest. One boy did so, spraining both ankles and breaking three toes. The employee was arrested in connection with the case, as was the pastor and program operator, who refused to turn over the home's papers that were requested by the sheriff's office.

Abuse allegations continue

Soon after this, the wife of the new director was forced to remove herself from the girls' home on charges of abuse and neglect. The director stayed on until a lawsuit came against the homes the following year.

During this time, the new leader had been able to secure approval from a Christian association of childcare facilities. At least there was a sense of being “licensed”. But I find a bit chilling the defense given by the head of the association:

“We are completely against abuse, of course, But how to define it is for the courts to decide. If you see a baby going to the stream, drowning, and you get a rope and throw it to the baby and it gets the baby around the neck, do you drag it out of the water by the neck? Of course you do.”

Sir, I think we all know when we are seeing abuse. Defining it is not a court thing at all, though you have made it so. Human beings of all stripes define abuse. It is instinctive. Show us what you are doing and we will tell you whether you have abused. The question is, why don't you know what it is?

And by the way, to your hypothetical case, one has to wonder why a baby is being allowed to wander free around a stream in which it could drown.

Like his predecessor, the new director will not license. But the accusations and lawsuits are overwhelming. He shuts the home down. More legal twists and turns. Best to get these girls out of their newly-repressive state and get them to a place where freedom reigns. Another southern state is chosen.

So, we'll follow the home to this new location.

No, the Preacher's dream home did not die. She lives in a number of ways today. This story is far from over... But before we continue her history, let's look at some of the damage done by this home for the “troubled.”

June 11. Surviving the first Gulag Home for Girls

Here comes the aching again... just been reading survivor comments online. I really must stop doing this. But I'm compelled to share with you the pain being caused by the wrong application of Scripture. Maybe the directors of "teen homes" are well-intentioned, maybe they aren't. But bad fruit lives on.

I found a site online that bills itself as "A growing collection of information about a wide range of people places and things related to the Troubled Teen Industry". You can find a number of such sites with a simple Google search. Here are a few of the comments, to give you an overall picture of many different young people that were there at that place we have been studying for several posts, the firstborn product of the preacher:

"The place was a cult. They brainwashed and used mind control on us. There was never a counselor. One girl ran and jumped out of the window of the second story."

"They were big on the preacher. He is their hero, not Christ. Where did all of his money come from? He had boats. He had airplanes. Buses. Three million dollars tied up in this home alone."

"Healing has been long and hard. The challenge in learning to interpret reality for one's own self."

Chained to a bed?

"We chanted, girls kneeling on salt. No girl had a period for the entire time they were there. I can remember a girl being chained to a bed after she ran away."

"I was there. Many years ago. Speaking about this is like talking about someone else I know, not me. That place is EVIL. They practice child abuse and call it biblical. I'm now almost 40 and I was there when I was 14 and it not only still hurts, it still harms."

“We need to have these homes closed down.”

Then comes a positive note. Yes, there are residents in all these homes who defend the practices and the people. This lady goes for the jugular, calling one of the negative post-ers a liar, and wicked. She claims that the people in charge were better to her than some of the real parents of these girls.

(I will talk later about the strange range of opinion on these homes. But little middle ground. Extreme devotees, or people with axes in their verbal hands, ready to take the place down.)

Then comes a rebuttal to the positive post: Hitler Girls

“To compare the love of the caretakers with that of our parents is unfair... To be thrust into an unknown environment without coping skills, counseling, or a friend in the world... it’s an achievement to have survived and come out normal... I came away with a profound understanding of God’s faithfulness and his ability to change a life. I do not believe that the brother in charge was an evil person... he had a dream to help young people... these girls showed the enthusiasm of Hitler youth in their desire to find wrong in others and prey upon victims of the weaker less accepted youth.”

Oh my. Hitler youth. What a helpful insight that is!

So it’s possible to “change” and “inspire” young people, given the proper motivation, either stick or carrot. They can be conformed into the leader’s image, be he Hitler or Herr Director of a troubled teen home, or... anyone. But this is not the way of the Christ, is it? Forced acceptance of an ideal?

Next on the site, follows the testimony of a young lady there when the initial directors were in charge. She, and the testimonial following, remembers this home as a wonderful place. Evidently

things got progressively worse over the years, and different types of girls were added to the ever-growing population.

At that point, growth and diversity, it would seem that wisdom would have demanded that serious limitations in numbers and behavior would be imposed before anyone else was allowed entry. Why could they not see that things were getting out of control, that “helping teens” was now turning into “hurting teens”?

After that “first couple“

Here’s a woman who reports twenty-four years after her experience. This took place after that first volunteer couple, who were evidently two loving individuals.

“I too am a survivor. It was a horrible time. I was shocked to hear the non-stop, taped sermons... I remember looking around at the tall fences with the barbed wire over the top and wondering if I could get out of there... one day a crew from 20/20 came with cameras. I started trying to get their attention and jumping up and down and yelling to them but was quickly restrained and pulled back inside and locked up.

“I was so scared but God did answer my prayers because shortly after that my dad came to get me... It did turn me away from God for a while... I recently had a spiritual revelation and feel so new and clean. It gives me chills to think about that Home... I think it was a cult for sure... there were even two male guards that were walking the halls with guns. You can’t be forced to accept Jesus as your Savior and the Director and his followers should know that.

Enough already

Enough, enough. My heart is like wax again. But this last lady has hit it right on. The prison environment. The armed guards. HELP let me

out! Rule by fear. Forced into faith. Isn't that how the Roman Catholic missionaries approached evangelism when they came to the Western Hemisphere? Convert or die?

Is this the way we should go? All right, all right, give the preacher his due. Great preaching. Great ideas. Maybe even great heart. But there must be a better way! Tear that wall down, Sir! Cut through that barbed wire! Set prisoners free! Stop glorying in your "successes" and look at the wounded souls all over the nation! Church, what are you going to do about this? Get together and pray about a better way! The Royal way.

So how did the Home re-invent itself after it was finally forced out of the state for good? Next time.

June 12. Hide and Seek

Let's see if we can pick up the trail of the great preacher's girls home.

It re-opened under a new name in a new state soon after its close, under the watch of a couple who had worked with the preacher for 35 years. We mentioned in the last post how the wife of this new director actually was banned from the home due to abusive practices. A third director and his wife eventually took over in the second state, and when state officials began investigating the home, they moved this troubled home to yet another state!

Before all of that, another brother in jail

The second director, a true disciple of the first, goes to jail. His cause is a little different. He refuses to turn over records of the Home to the State. Perhaps this is to protect his wife, who as I reported, has been allegedly so abusive as to

cause the State government to ban her from further access to young girls.

A new beginning in the new state, to be sure, but a familiar outcome for homes like these. Survivors cry out, the government gets concerned, starts investigating. Then, what state will take us now? And all of this “persecution” because of their doctrine? The name of Jesus? No. As always, allegations of abuse.

Details about that second state.

A newspaper in that new state tells it all.

One young girl said she was 16 when her parents sent her to the girls’ home to stop her drinking and pot smoking. She recounts extreme punishments, including being forced to stand in one place so long she urinated on herself. One day in 2003, she’d had enough. When she was made to stand at a wall for a deed she doesn’t remember, she gave up and sat.

She said girls were ordered to take her to the preacher, who made them pin her to the ground as his wife unhooked a thin plastic rod from the blinds. The wife started swinging. “It didn’t matter where she hit me,” the girl recalled. “I had bruises all over my butt and my lower back and my upper legs.” Two others told the newspaper they were forced to witness it all, made to hold her down as she wailed on the filthy floor, then made to sing once it was over: Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound... Officials with the

home did not respond to a phone call, emails or a letter.

Verbal abuse

The article then goes on, At the home, teenage girls got a heavy dose of strict Christianity. They were forbidden to wear pants or hear news of the outside world or even make eye contact with crowds when they toured churches in the summer. One girl recalls Pastor's introduction during the first sermon. "He just looked right at me from the platform, ran at me, and all these girls jumped out of the way," She remembers. "And he jumps, like, onto the pew in front of me and then bent down at his waist and told me I was a 'faggot.' 'God's not going to bless a bunch of faggots.'"

A familiar story

The newspaper interviewed nine women who attended the home over six years. They say their menstrual-stained underwear was waved around to chastise them for being unclean... and they recall being timed when they went to the bathroom and rationed squares of toilet paper based on what they disclosed they needed to do.

Reporting abuse? Unlikely, former residents said. This home, like many other unlicensed homes, monitored all phone conversations. Several former residents said they were scared to speak out and were intimidated by adults at the home about talking to investigators.

A resident said she witnessed the whipping of the girl (above). She said before DCF came asking questions, she was coached by the stout, fiery preacher. "He would play that sort of thing from a classic cult angle," she said. "Related them (investigators) to Satan.... 'These people don't know what we do here. The world

doesn't support God's way'... We were under his authority, as ordained by God."

And today?

Today, the women have a 130-member Facebook group called "Proactive Survivors of

Academy."

And that's just one part of one article. But it sounds so much like all the others I have found in this research, that I need not apologize that I have room for only one.

Loving the sinner

I hope that nothing I have just reported gives rise to the notion that this blogger believes in the new liberalism pervading the church regarding perversions of sexual behavior. Nowhere does Scripture condone such activity. But I think all will agree that there is a better way to approach one who is bound by alternative sexual practices. Behold the Son of God when He was here. Not at all like the preacher named above. Jesus could be firm without being cruel.

Anyway, in 2007, after just six years, it was time for the home in question to leave again. The property was taken over by yet another girls' home. One could only hope that the "grace" in the new organization's name reminded one more closely of the Bible's grace. But not so...

Next time, we shall follow "the home" to yet another state.

June 13. Another New Beginning

I must start by apologizing once more for not mentioning names of people or places, and for the most part, dates. One-who-shall-not-be-named has challenged my right to speak the truth about the Teen Gulag and its defenders. Squashing the truth I cannot do, but the elimination of names actually enhances the truths I am proclaiming. Now my readers see that the disease is more widespread than one little house in....

So, we were following the 60's preacher's "home for girls" from its founding state to another one and now, a third. Hounded by charges of abuse, it has to keep moving on. Reminds me a little of the Mormon wanderings... but I digress.

The third home in the third state has a third director, a feisty preacher who, like the others, has no name on my site.

First, about that second director. Because of a welding accident, he suffered burns

over much of his body. He passed away on Christmas Day of that year, via the pulling of a plug by the family. He had been on life support, and the family decided there was no hope for him. Another tragic ending.

The move is made to state #3 with leader #3 totally in charge. He makes the astounding decision right away to add boys to the mix at the formerly all-girls home.

And what was it like in the new state?

A parent tells her story to the media. I have greatly condensed it, bringing out those parts of the narrative that should ring a bell and turn on a light for anyone who has read thus far.

Here is another cousin to the homes of today.

And here is the story:

Some girls come to a local church with the director (#3) of their home. They sing and give tearful testimonies. [I am not doubting the power of the Gospel to change these girls' lives. Testimonies may have been real or otherwise.] The Director bills his "home" as a character- building facility for "troubled teens" and this parent thinks that it could be a safe place for her daughter to go a while and find God. Why not? The implication is that it is only a two- week program anyway.

Her daughter is admitted and allegedly begins receiving brutal punishments. The treatment is so bad that the girls begin sneaking notes in the hymnbooks of the church they are forced to attend, begging church members to get these notes to their parents. Her daughter is discovered in this nefarious activity and is placed in isolation. One week. Ten hours a day.

Bathroom and worship, her only breaks.

Broken

She is monitored night and day. No conversation except from 6-9 p.m....on Fridays. No family contact, one month. The girls who receive treatment like this are thus "broken". And told they must not leave, since the world is so dangerous a place. Some are told their families have abandoned them.

Perhaps that is true in some cases?

Behavior is micromanaged to the number of squares of toilet paper.

Punished for eye contact or not finishing a meal. UTI and menstrual

problems are common. Letters censored. The girl in question waits two months before a parent conference can be arranged.

Staff asks the inmate, "Do you want to go home?" in front of her parents. Surrounded by intimidating staff and brainwashed into believing this home is her savior, she denies. "No, I'll stay."

But Mom is able to get her out anyway.

After leaving, the daughter is robotic in character, asking permission to speak or go to the bathroom. She confides to Mom that at one point she has attempted suicide.

In the next post, we discuss a meeting similar to the one described above, in a church in Tennessee. You will hear the same director make some very clear statements about staff behavior and the philosophy of his home for troubled teens. Then we will look at the record of this man's dealings with young people in other states.

You will be able to make your own conclusions.

June 14. Another Preacher for the Home

Easy for him to say...

Top man at the home that is now in its third state of the U.S., was saved later in life than most, according to his testimony. He seems

to be very grateful for that salvation. I will not question his experience or any of his testimony. Rather I will allow you to listen to what he says regarding the care of teenage “troubled” girls, that I found on a 2013 video. Then we will look at stories being told by those who have encountered him through the years, to see if his words match his actions.

That will leave you with options in your thoughts about his ministry.

Either, He is lying in the video of this fundraising meeting , and holds on to the home for more sinister reasons? That is the assessment of some.

Or, he has changed since the allegations of former inmates/residents of his homes? We can change, you know, in Christ. Perhaps he saw the error of his former ways, repented, and had a new beginning himself? I wasn’t able to find such a testimony, but it could have happened.

Or, he is a weak man who loves God but struggles still, as he always has, with anger and abusive tendencies? Can many of us relate to this? Sure, we all have our “strongholds”, right?

I understand anger. I for one can’t judge...

(But if the anger and abuse documented about him is the case, should he be running homes for young people? I’m only asking.)

As we documented in the last post, it wasn’t long into his leadership before abuse allegations surfaced once more. Many. Serious. Before I share more of them with you, let’s take a listen to that video.

A meeting in Tennessee

We are at a KJV only, independent Baptist church. The kind of church that supports the kind of homes we have been tracing.

On the video, you will hear the preacher tell his audience that he does not believe in hurting girls...

“You don’t have to hurt nobody. I don’t try to break the kids down. I’m not for that kind of stuff. I don’t have to do anything. Just let Him. The Lord knows how to break ‘em up and build ‘em up.”

True, Brother. And that belief might even argue against the need for such an institution as you supervise, altogether. That’s another issue.

But the record? Is that message you gave in Tennessee, what you have lived, Brother Preacher? Is that the legacy of the home you have taken over? Let’s start with those who watched this video of you and your team at that Baptist church.

One can read the comments below the video. Like one from a girl who is actually shown singing in the team with the preacher in that meeting! She writes: “I can’t describe the abuse that went on there...”

And another comment: “I was abused so bad in that place. Never send your children there pleeease!!”

Watching the video, you will notice that during the testimonies, most of the girls’ eyes are looking downward. Few smiles, little response. Especially from the adult pictured. Very sad. Where is the joy of the Lord?

“You don’t have to hurt nobody...”

Now hear from some others who have been with this preacher, in

clear disagreement with the words he has given us:

One girl said she was told by him that the rape [she had experienced] was her fault and [she] was subjected to harsh discipline — ridiculed, restrained and deprived of proper nutrition and adequate clothing.

And a parent writes:

“We asked the director if he would be able to help our daughter recover from a serious trauma that was tormenting her daily. He assured us that she would receive counseling, encouragement, and discipleship and that with their help she would get ‘academically back on track...’ “The only thing our daughter did receive was severe and cruel abusive treatment.”

Red-shirt torture

When a Mom picked her girl up , “She was in a large red T-shirt, a thin black summer skirt, in the freezing cold. Our state had just had a snow storm, and the weather was 26 degrees. She was being punished for the 3rd week in a row ‘on the wall,’ which means standing there at the wall for 8-10 hrs a day. Before that she had been on the wall for 4 weeks straight of continual standing with hands behind back, facing wall, no talking, no bathroom break when desperately needed, but had to wait for someone to take you, and that could range up to 5-6 hrs. She was sickly, with blood in her urine...”

The “red-shirt” torture is well known by survivors of this home.

“We were told that she would start counseling, up to two days a week, right away...after two months, she received one processing counseling interview...when I asked about the counseling and the lack of education, the Director became angry with my questioning

his authority, telling me that he did not have to listen to this, and slammed the phone down...a man with a lack of control, exploding on the phone in a temper tantrum fashion, is also in charge of hundreds of thousands of dollars, and 30 little girls who needed a safe place to be, and protection...very concerning...we called to ask our daughter if she were ready to come home, and she had already been in the preacher's office earlier, and agreed under duress, to stay 6 more months...

"This man locked some girls in makeshift isolation cells, tiled closets without furniture or windows..."

And more

There's more. Much more. Now, can you square the words said on that video with these, and all the other, stories? Hello?

We're told that institutions like these seek out seriously rural areas where government control is not as possible. I read that this town is so far out that even the postmaster doesn't know the area. No-regulation homes attract predators and abusers of all kinds. This area of the state is a hotbed for such homes, Christian and otherwise. I do not affirm that the preacher is of that sort. But I do suggest that such people and such places exist. Some among us.

And that's why the church needs to come together to expose these places and demand reform or extinction.

June 17. A call to sorrow and prayer

In the posts so far we have seen a little of what is going on in “troubled teen homes” in America. We’ve looked at how it all began, but we don’t know yet why. Not totally.

It will be time soon to examine the sources of information available to would-be “troubled teen” directors. But first, some thoughts. Some things need to be said. It’s time for a call to sorrow and prayer among us.

Thought 1. Sorrow for the teens

Reading and reporting these things may flow out of a passion, but should never be enjoyable. There must be sorrow for all involved. For example, the teens who have already been labeled as “troubled” by parents who have thrown their hands up and said, “I can’t do this.” Abandoned youth.

How “troubled” does a teen have to be to be sent away from home to a fate like we are describing on these posts? Pregnant out of wedlock? Drug problem? Absolute rebellion against everything and everyone? Rape victim?

We must sorrow for such. And pray for better solutions than parents found.

Thought 2. Sorrow for the staff

We must also be sorry for the staff who are caught up in “ministering” to these young ones in ways that hurt their own consciences. There are stories of those who had to get out and tell others what was going on. I’ve recorded some of them.

Thought 3. Sorrow for the Directors

And let's not forget the Directors. If their hearts are toward God, we must be sorry that they listened to the wrong sources of information. Most of the negative things that happen in these homes have no Scriptural backing. On the other hand, if the leaders' hearts are not towards God, and are perverted and evil, we must ask God for their salvation, but also find a way to get them removed from their posts, or the young people removed from them.

Lots of tears to go around. And never should we enjoy judging those who have been caught up in evil. Remember Assyria in the Scriptures. God asked them to judge His people Israel. They did. But they enjoyed it a little too much. The things they did to Israel were uncalled for. God in turn judged them. I spoke earlier about how we must judge ourselves first.

Thought 4. Constant Prayer

There once was on my wall a home-made map of North Korea, showing the locations of the main concentration camps. I prayed over this map from time to time. It was a great visual to remind me of the suffering there. I recently have turned that map over. No, I have not abandoned the North Koreans. For two years I documented their sufferings, and put together a book about them, available at Amazon.com. I pray regularly for them and support Korean missions.

But the case of the abused Christian young person has grabbed me too. I placed on the other side of that NK map, a map of the United States. I located homes of abuse in my nation, and made them prayer targets. Perhaps you will want to do something like this. Oh so much prayer is needed!

Thought 5. Warning to abusers!

Why can't the church regulate itself? Why does the government have to step in?

If these "homes" which dot our land don't stop adopting non-Biblical child-raising standards, they are going to invite more and more state control of the church. Doctrines will be examined. Personnel will be scrutinized. The world's values will be placed on the church.

We have seen in the Catholic priesthood the abuse of children, sexually, and the government's intervention. Now the specter of Protestant physical and emotional abuse, leads us to believe that even more of such interference is on the way.

Thought 6. About "Independence"

May I say that "independent" Christians have no right to be independent of the full Body of Christ. Just as there was formed a financial accountability organization to which Christians of many stripes subscribe (EFCA) , the true church needs to put in place an abuse accountability office, and reach out to all Christian homes to report regularly to it.

When "independent" means I can do anything I want behind closed doors, the church has gone too far.

"Tear down this wall," independent churches! Let the Body of Christ assist you with wisdom collected over the centuries, and especially with the wisdom of God's Word.

Until that wall is down, true Christians from every group need to "interfere" with the compounds, and lovingly make a "fuss" in Jesus' name.

Thought 7: The Broad Brush

One last thought, for me and other abuse-exposers, before returning to the main trail. The “broad-brush” syndrome can take over if we are not careful. Not all troubled teen homes are necessarily the same. I suppose there are sexual perverts out there, and sadists, and the money-hungry.

But there are “good guys” too. Let’s don’t forget: the leaders of these homes have read the same books, or maybe followed the “originals” mechanically, and saw some things that seemed to “work” . Don’t leave out the possibility that some of these men and women have a heart to help the young people of our twisted time, but need only a bit of guidance.

We must decide if any of what I just said excuses the practices that have caused the cries you have heard.

June 18. How not to train up a child

I depart from my hiding of names and titles etc. for now. I know of no other way to give you a book report without telling you the name of the book and its author.

And, contrary to the opinion of those-who-would-silence-us, to disagree with someone is not to slander him. It is only when one’s comments turn out to be deliberately false with the purpose of demeaning or belittling or defaming, that the “s!” word can be used. I have never met the authors, and know nothing of their

personal life or testimony. I have no desire to hurt them in any way. My desire is to protect God's people from the extremism communicated in this publication.

So, here are Michael and Debi Pearl, and their book, *To Train Up a Child*.

This book is a 2015 creation, but there have been others like it. It's available most everywhere. I won't help sell it. A quick search will bring it to your desktop if you are so inclined. But some [who, me?] would warn you to stay clear of it. Some would go so far as to say it is lethal.

It is a book by a Christian to the Christian community about the "Biblical" way to raise a child. But Bible-believing people have read it, and are not convinced that the authors are interpreting the Bible correctly.

At everyone's favorite buying place these days, I found that over 3,000 people had reviewed this book! Amazingly, 95% of the reviewers gave the book either 5 stars (33%) or 1 star (62%). You either love it, or hate it. Just like responses to the various troubled teen industry sites.

The church is divided over this issue, to be sure, as in many issues. We need to admit there are two sides to the "troubled teen" debacle. There really are people who will defend these teen gulag homes, for example, even in full knowledge of what goes on there. Why, yes, we are told, these directors just may be acting in good conscience!

That is the strange truth. But you will note that said directors will change their policies when forced to do so by public outcries. So let's keep crying. Publicly.

Anyway, both sides in this debate point to results and personal experiences. Both sides claim

to point to the Bible. But of course, both sides can't be telling the whole (Biblical) truth. Someone's missing it. Or lying.

Some reviews

I give you now some of those reviews I mentioned above, and call you into the struggle. I think we will all be praying more, when we have faced the realities of Christian abuse of children, brought out so well, some say, by these Pearls and their book. Whether you agree with them or not.

Note. No book is perfectly good or bad. All commenters are showing their prejudices. But the quotes used by angry moms give us insights into how certain "homes" are run.

One more note: I made no attempt to correct all the grammatical problems found in these comments.

The first three reviews were put up front, and no negative reviews were found until serious scrolling to the official review section. The implication being that this was a book favorable to the public. But in fact, nearly two thirds of the readers despised the book, often calling for it to be burned or banned. A full 1,200 reviews used the words "child abuse." [No slander here. Just factually telling you what people factually said.]

The up-front favorable reviews, meant to sell the book:

I highly suspect that the majority of the people reviewing this book haven't even read it ... or because their parents were abusive, they think that everyone who spansks their child is abusive as well (striking a child out of anger is abuse – spanking a child for

disobedience is not – the difference is thoroughly discussed in the book). I purchased this book expecting to find a manual on how to beat a child with rubber tubing -maybe even the inspiration for A Child Called “It”, based on reviews. Well, I was disappointed but also pleasantly surprised. What I bought as a joke and novelty actually turned out to be an enlightening and valuable advice on disciplining young children. I applied some of the practices in this book immediately, and saw positive changes in my son’s behavior the first day. –B. Moore

Wonderful True Advice

I know you probably get way too much mail, but I just had to write and say THANK YOU, thank you for the updated To Train Up A Child. Wow!! I started reading yesterday and am already half way through. I’ve read the original at least 10 or 15 times in the past 3 years, but this new version has SO MUCH that clarifies and encourages me as I train my two small children. I love how, in the new book, you consistently emphasize training before the need to discipline arises and speak so often about how parents MUST be involved before they can properly apply the rod. A parent who does not show up to read a book...should not show up to administer a spanking.(pg 94) Wonderful, true, biblical advice. Thank you so much for writing this book. It is SO good and your principles have made such a difference in our family, I just had to write and tell you. I share your materials with every parent I know!

–A big thank you from a very appreciative, training mom!

Your new chapter in To Train Up a Child is the BEST defense I have ever read on proper training. I have a few favorite quotes from it that I use often. Well done! “All praise to Him who reigns above in majesty supreme.” Can’t wait until we can all be together at our

eternal Shindig! What a Day that Will Be! –A devoted reader

Wait! Listen to the rest of the story!

Makes me want to go out and buy a copy. I could use this on my grandkids! But just a minute... the other side...

I am a Christian and a mother who wants to raise my children to be productive members of society and also to love the Lord. This book presents the exact opposite way of doing that. I was given this book when my daughter was a baby and I couldn't even finish it. I have since, and it appalls me that this is touted as a book of Christian principals. The tactics are cruel, humiliating, and downright harmful. DO NOT BUY THIS. There are so many other books and authors that can help you!

I was raised on the teachings of this book and it has devastated me as I have tried for the past several years to correct the psychological damage it has caused. If you want a healthy, happy child and not just a damaged robot, avoid this book.

Horrifying read. Only sifted through before deciding to burn this. Do not purchase this. Appalled anyone highly rated this, and more appalled a "friend" suggested this to me.

DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK!

DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK, DO NOT DO THIS TO YOUR KIDS. Trust me, both my parents followed these teachings and I was beat every day for 18 years along with my six siblings. What they did to us did not make us love god, but hate him. I feared my parents, hated and resented them. My siblings and I raised each other. We had no one, not even God. Because God was on their side. Because God said it was okay for them to do these things. I read this book and I heard this messages my whole young life. And there is only one thing to

say to people who follow this. "DROP YOUR PANTS AND GIVE ME THAT SWITCH, BELT, ROD, HANGER." Until you are bent over half naked, and "spanked" with any of those things he mentions you will never know the humiliation, pain and hatred that forms within you. If you are already "spanking" your child. You should ask yourself if you would like it if your husband, friend, mother, sister, brother or child would use one of those things on you?

Their book has many spots of child abuse: here are my parents favorite passages and they used them often [often].

The mother goes on to quote from the book:

"If he continues to show defiance by jerking around and defending himself, or by expressing anger, wait a moment, lecture again, and again spank him until it's obvious he's totally broken." (TTUAC, p59)

"Switch him 8-10 times on his bare legs or bottom. While waiting for the pain to subside, speak calm words of rebuke. If his crying turns to a true, wounded, submissive whimper, you have conquered; he has submitted his will. If his crying is still defiant, protesting, and other than a response to pain, spank him again. If this is the first time he's come up against someone tougher than he is, it may take awhile...if you stop before he is voluntarily submissive, you have confirmed to him the value and effectiveness of a screaming protest!" (TTUAC p80)

"If you have to sit on him to spank him, then do not hesitate. And hold him there until he has surrendered. Prove that you are bigger, tougher, more patiently enduring, and are unmoved by his wailing. Defeat him totally...A general rule is to continue the disciplinary action until the child has surrendered." (TTUAC p46).

Why is this book allowed to be sold? It is a guide book for the abuse

and bullying of children.

And one final word from a particularly angry parent:

WHY WOULD ANYONE DO THIS TO A CHILD!?!?@

Enough said. Passion speaks for itself.

It is principles such as the ones in this book that have helped guide some troubled teen homes, their directors, and the parents who have relinquished their young ones to their care. I say “helped guide” because there are things that go on in these homes that go back to the founding father, other books, or misinterpreted Scripture.

We’ll talk about the Bible way in posts to come. But wanted you to know of at least one item that has been added to Scripture and used as a source of authority. There are others.

June 19. The churches behind the homes

There is a particular denomination that is behind the teen gulag industry. As many groups of this nature, it claims to be a “movement”, not a denomination. So be it. A movement. I shall not name the denomination/movement but you will probably recognize

it by the description I give.

Some of their beliefs.

1. They claim that the New Testament is their authority in all matters of faith and practice. [Unfortunately, Solomon is an Old Testament figure, and his teachings figure large in the teen homes.]
2. They claim the church is made up of saved, baptized believers.
3. Church and state are to be strictly separated.
4. The priesthood of all believers.
5. The autonomy of the local church. [The “leave us alone” mentality.]

I was brought up in a totally different denomination that adheres to all five of these things. I can think of many more that do, also. So we haven't defined the movement yet. Got to be a little more specific.

Fundamentalist. Beliefs like these:

1. Faith alone for salvation.
2. Belief in the Trinity.
3. Once saved, always saved. [But anti-Calvin!]
4. Congregational government. But pastor divinely appointed and accountable to no one. Aha...
5. Soul-winning and hard preaching.
6. Anti-worldliness.
7. Anti-zionism [which smells like anti-semitism in some of these churches.]

8. Basis for all: the King James Version of the Bible, and only that version!

And if folks like these are in churches that don't agree with them, it must be because they don't agree with God, and they are "outa there". In other words, independent:

Independent. Separatist.

A law unto ourselves, based on our particular interpretations of the Bible.

It is this craving to be free of the greater church that has given rise to the issues with which we must deal in this blog. Independent churches need no outside help, even from other Christians. Independent pastors answer only to God. They are little popes and are not to be messed with. God has spoken! Through me!

The problems

We are not called to hate these churches. There are believers inside their ranks. But many do hate them. Why? Because of their stand for truth? No, because, mainly, of their – often – self-righteous spirit.

I'll stand with them on many issues. Some of my readers would be shocked to find how much I actually do agree with them, when they stick to the Scriptures. But poison has invaded their ranks, as the ranks of many who separate so far from the body as to be separated from the protection of the Spirit, who Masters all the church, not just one isolated denomination of it.

I said poison. Not just the poison of false teaching. But the poison of pride. Hypocrisy. The arrogance of a Pharisee. The desire for truth over the desire for God Himself to be in their midst.

I am not ecumenist. I don't believe getting all the churches together is a good idea. Way too many false concepts have been introduced. But true Christians can identify true Christians in whatever church they happen to have landed. It is the Body of Christ that this denomination has separated itself from, refusing to reach out for advice and help that others could give.

So church-based, troubled teen homes have originated from troubled churches, and troubled teachings, and troubled teachers.

This denomination/movement is yet another group calling itself Christian, but called by others, including many other Christians, a cult. And it is these congregations that by and large have given us the practices sworn by, at the teen homes . Only by law and pressure have the homes given up some of their cherished ways, ways learned often at one of these churches.

Not Protestants!

These churches [have you figured out who they are yet?] started showing up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries . One of their amusing traits (can you laugh at yourselves a little?) is that they refuse to be called Protestants. Protestants, they affirm, came out of Rome, protested the Roman Church, and were given that name by the world, or by Rome itself. Ah, but we were around before, and during, and independently after the Protestants did their thing.

Granted. And to this day, you protest, not only Rome, but also other Protestants. You are Protestant Protestants! You protest the rest of the church! We will keep calling you by the same name Romanists dubbed the Reformers!

Oh, and there has arisen a counter movement to the movement.

Have you heard? Really! The new group says that the old group is drifting! They are going back to the way the movement was when it first started. In other words, they are... Protesters of the movement, that was protesting Protestants, who protested Rome. Get it?

That is just one reason I cannot trust everything these people say. No two of their little groups say the same thing. And If I cannot trust you in these things, how do I know you are telling me the truth when you say the Bible tells you to beat babies? Or to set up isolation rooms for troubled teenagers? To have children kidnapped in the name of Jesus?

They don't all do these things, and think this way. But the ones behind the homes do. Add that to the growing list of reasons for the teen gulag.

June 20. The children of the movement

If you read my last post, you recall that were talking about a seriously conservative denomination which calls itself a "movement", and their connection to the homes in question at this blog site. Unfortunately the unbelieving media (and not all media persons are unbelievers) has picked up on this story and made the very connection of which I speak.

Here is a writer of HuffPost offering condolences to a survivor of that church. Yes, that was the word he used, the same word we will

use in this blog as needed, “survivor.” As in, ex-cult member:

He first mentions their strong stand on the King James Bible, and moral stands, some of which are taken from Scripture, some not. Then he talks of their child-raising theories. These ideas are not part of their doctrinal statements, but are woven into the fabric of everyday life for many members. Here are his comments.

[These people]... believe that the will of a child must be broken before it ever has a chance to develop: a fussing or crying baby is exerting its selfish will. That will needs to be eliminated, since wherever human will is, God’s will cannot be.

Solomon the wise

By way of justifying infant training and the continued “submission of the will” of children, parents point to these lines in The Book of Proverbs:

Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. (23:14)

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. (29:15)

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. (22:15)

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes . (13:24)

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. (19:18) The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil. (20:30)

Later I will attend to these verses one at a time, as we view the

supposed Scriptural backing

of the teen gulag movement. For now I prefer to yield my time to the writer:

Revisiting the “Pearls”

Says the author:

“To Train Up a Child,” by fundamentalist Christian minister Michael Pearl and his wife Debi, is very popular within these churches.

This guide to “consistently rewarding every transgression with a switching” (from the book’s introduction) has sold more than 670,000 copies. Here are some quotes from the book:

“[after a particular offense] She then administers [to a three-year-old] about ten slow, patient licks on his bare legs. He cries in pain. If he continues to show defiance by jerking around and defending himself, or by expressing anger, then she will wait a moment and again lecture him and again spank him. When it is obvious he is totally broken, she will hand him the rag and very calmly say, ‘Johnny, clean up your mess.’”

“[speaking of another offense] On the bare legs or bottom, switch him eight or ten licks; then, while waiting for the pain to subside, speak calm words of rebuke. If the crying turns to a true, wounded, submissive whimper, you have conquered; he has submitted his will. If the crying is still defiant, protesting, and other than a response to pain, spank him again.”

Of babies that bite

“One particularly painful experience of nursing mothers is the biting baby. My wife did not waste time finding a cure. When the baby bit,

she pulled hair (an alternative has to be sought for baldheaded babies).”

“Select your instrument according to the child’s size. For the under one year old, a little, ten- to twelve-inch long, willow branch (stripped of any knots that might break the skin) about one- eighth inch diameter is sufficient. Sometimes alternatives have to be sought. A one-foot ruler, or its equivalent in a paddle, is a sufficient alternative. For the larger child, a belt or larger tree branch is effective.”

When unbelievers must teach us

This unbeliever – and unfortunately many unbelievers are seeing through hypocrisy in certain forms of Christianity – goes on to comfort those who have endured the nightmare of a cult.

If the denomination in question is a cult, are not its offspring, “homes” around the country, likewise cultish, doing their best to follow in the footsteps of their pastor-masters? The testimonies of people leaving this church are, not so strangely, like those of the ones leaving teen homes and other such places.

No one is standing against Biblical principles for raising children here. We’re saying that Solomon, who is most often quoted, may not be the last word for the born-again Christian. We’ll speak more of the Scriptures soon.

The Scriptures versus the denomination

I consider myself to be very conservative. To me, conservative means not straying past the pages of Scripture when looking for doctrinal positions and ways of living. I believe the Holy Spirit gave the Scriptures to us and therefore to disobey them is to dishonor God personally.

So I understand the group in question... a little. But as with all groups who claim to be “conservative”, and “Bible believing”, there are a myriad of divergent views on many topics, with the resultant fighting and separating. In fact, after a while, separating is seen as the cardinal virtue among such folks.

This movement has taken conservatism to a different level, but not a higher one. Some of their ways and teachings simply don't measure up to the Word, yet they will die fighting for their positions. That's why they are labeled a cult by some, even though their teachings about Jesus and serious doctrines of the traditional Christian faith are right on.

The main argument

Next we deal with the Testimony that is the heart of the argument against teen homes. What God has said must prevail. What He has not said must never be our source. Enter the very Word of God .

Please return as we begin to look at what God has said about “troubled teens...”

June 21. My sheep hear My Voice.

First, a word from Charles Dickens. And I make no judgment about the state of Charles Dickens' soul. I do know that he spoke much truth in his writings, reminding us of the word of God. This is in the introduction to Pickwick Papers:

[There is a difference between] religion and the cant [or sanctimonious talk] of religion, piety and the pretence [sic] of piety, a humble reverence for the great truths of scripture and an audacious and offensive obtrusion of its letter and not its spirit... it is never out of season to protest against that coarse familiarity with sacred things which is busy on the lip, and idle in the heart; or against the confounding of Christianity with any class of persons who, in the words of Swift, have just enough religion to make them hate, and not enough to make them love, one another.

If I tell you that the interpretations of Scripture that I am about to espouse, are the true and only ways to look at them, I become like the independent church leaders who have it all figured out and despise the rest of us.

You can read the Scriptures and pray. You be the judge. If I am in error, pray for me. But when all is said and done, it is God's Word, and not ours, that must guide.

Attention please!

If we were in a courtroom, I would ask that no one leave until this Scripture portion of the site is complete. It will not be obvious at first to what purpose the Apostles and Prophets are being brought to bear on this topic. But stick around. The light will dawn. God help us understand.

We will begin with Moses. And already I hear someone screaming out in protest! "Moses!? That's Old Testament! We are a New Testament people!"

Oh? Then we must scrap Solomon? He is very Old Testament, isn't he? One thousand years before Jesus came to earth, yes? It's either Moses and Solomon, both, or Moses and Solomon, neither.

Both? Great! Here then is the great lawgiver, in his own set of five wonderful books. The last one, Deuteronomy.

The word of God: Deuteronomy 21:18-21

“If a man has a rebellious son who will not obey... when they have chastened him,... then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones.”

Beat him as an example to the people. Then kill him. That’s Moses.

Oh no! What are you saying? I’m not saying it. Moses did. And Moses spoke for God. If the troubled teen people are going to be consistent, Moses, who was Solomon’s lawgiver, must take precedence even over Solomon, who is praised by so many as the supreme authority in childcare! If beating doesn’t work, and the clear implication here is that sometimes it does not, call the executioner, and then the undertaker.

The law of God is holy, pure. We all broke it. None of us can keep it, neither the teen residents who get the beatings, or the ones dishing them out. But that does not change Moses’ law. Justice must prevail. Right?

For the Christian and his family, justice has already prevailed at Calvary. Mercy triumphs over justice. Compassion and guidance and teaching, and if need be, a strong push in the right direction that might involve pain. But led by the Spirit.

Look at Jesus if you want to see how to deal with sin in others. Look at yourself if you want to see the sin needing to be dealt with internally. Only then should the stones start flying, or the paddles, boards, sticks, or rods. Yes, they “deserve” it. So do we.

The Word of God: From Psalm 23:6

“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

We have here no continuing city, no permanent abode. One day we shall. I like Isaac Watts’ adaptation of the Psalm:

“Here would I find a settled rest, while others go and come; “No more a stranger, nor a guest, but like a child at home.”

A child at home. What beautiful pictures that phrase should bring to mind and memory. What tragic scenes instead for the past (and present) residents of troubled teen homes. Quite often temporarily abandoned by their own families, then abused for months on end in a home that officially represents Heaven’s Kingdom on earth. Home? Would someone like to live in a teen gulag home? Forever?

How about Psalm 103:13?

“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.” This is about followers of the Lord, but in the process, David casually mentions that good fathers pity. The Hebrew just means love, have mercy on, have compassion on. Yes, yes, love must be tough, I get it. But love must come first from a broken heart. That’s what this verse says.

When you raise that board above your son or daughter, is your heart broken or are you just angry that you didn’t get your way? Are you really trying to correct, or just dominate? And what kind of lesson is that for your growing son or daughter? The strong should dominate the weak. That is what they are learning.

Solomon said of his dad (Proverbs 4:3) “When I was my father’s son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me.”

He beat me? We don’t know. But David’s love was tender, edifying. It’s hard to imagine the scenes of the teen homes, happening in

David's palace while Solomon was growing up.

Perhaps Solomon, when he became a father, was a little tougher. And Rehoboam, his son, was about to get tougher still when his toughness divided a kingdom. Love must be tough, but toughness has been overrated in our day. You can take it too far. The contention of this blog site is that, that is exactly what happened back in the 60's when one man had a brilliant idea.

Our next post will bring the great King Solomon himself before us . Let's see what he really said, but always keeping in the back of our minds that "a greater than Solomon is here"!

June 23. Wise King Solomon

King Solomon.

We have heard allegations. Cries. There is only one Cry that counts when all is said and done. God Himself has spoken on these issues. But He has spoken through many men. Let's look at one of them more closely before we bring his words among us: the wise King Solomon.

I bring this man before you with trepidation. This son of David has been used and abused and forced to say things he never said about raising children. And I suggest to the court that "a greater than Solomon"

sits among us here, and will have the final say .

The aberrant views on child-rearing and discipline that are being challenged on this blog are nearly all seemingly based on this leading child specialist and teen psychologist Solomon Ben-David. King Solomon to most of us.

God endowed this man with wisdom beyond his years, beyond his kingdom, beyond his own father! True enough. A wise and great man. But as we said, and will prove at a later time, a greater than Solomon is here.

Do we advocate this?

First we must affirm that Solomon was a good Jew. He represented, at least in his early years, the best of Judaism, along with his famous dad. So, what would a good Jew of that time period have advocated that might give us pause today?

Solomon, a good Jew, would have advocated circumcision for all males.

In honor of his warrior father, he would have looked approvingly on the slaughter of entire non-Jewish nations, as they had become corrupt and worthy of judgment.

Solomon would have advocated the entire Torah, including animal sacrifice, feast days, food choices, the Aaronic priesthood...

Solomon built, and regularly worshiped in, a Temple.

He honored the seventh day as the Sabbath. Faithfully gave his tithe.

Solomon, the good Jew, believed in eye for an eye. Corporal and capital punishment. Cities of refuge. The rule of a monarch, in a

dynastic succession.

Solomon killed his brother with no rebuke from God, because his brother tried to take the Throne promised by God to Solomon. The brother deserved to be killed. Wise King Solomon was right, though today we are told to love these enemies.

Everything he believed and taught and did, until his fall, was good and holy and from God.

But we can accept almost none of it, it seems, except his way of disciplining children!

Book, or Spirit, or both?

We are a people of the Book in that we believe every word of that Book. But we are a people of the Spirit in that we allow the Spirit to bring to our heart that word [from the Book] that applies to our present situation. Most of Solomon's life and beliefs do not apply to New Testament Spirit-led Christians.

Soon we will examine the passages that so many Christians have used as justification for savagery, but let us keep in mind that for His New Covenant people, the Greater-Than-Wise- King-Solomon may have better ways.

Solomon, like Moses, told the truth about human nature and what to do with it. But neither man had had revealed to Him a full account of the nature of the Spirit of God that can do things differently and better than the Old Covenant ways. We must listen to Jesus.

Disclaimers

1. I have no claim to having been the perfect parent. There was

anger, a loud voice, some “spanking”, all in an effort to control the sometimes uncontrollable. I did not think too highly of myself after some of these episodes. Nor should I have.

2. I do not intend to take Solomon out of the mix, for godly parents today. That would not be wise. I only suggest, with Scripture backing, that there is a mix. That every child is different. That every situation of every child is

different. A formula will not work, unless blind obedience and compliance is all we are after. God leads one day, one event, at a time.

3. You might want to note that Solomon’s masterpiece, Proverbs, is addressed to his own son.

4. One more thing. quotations will be from the King James Version, not because that is the only version I allow in my reading, but because I want to make it clear that what I am saying carries authorized weight. Authority. Some will read no other translation. We may talk about that someday also.

Next time. The actual words of King Solomon.

June 24. Solomon. Fathers and Sons.

Solomon speaks

Fathers and sons. The topic is huge and encompasses the entire

salvation story. But we are looking at the subject in the context of troubled teen homes. We will look at Solomon's words about fathering and discipline and see what is the connection.

I shall add italicized comments to these words of the wise king of Israel that hopefully apply to the situation at hand. Yes, I believe the Proverbs are the word of the living God, as well as Solomon's words. I also believe that Moses spoke the very words of God, and that Jesus had some things to add to both of these men, for His people of the New Covenant. We shall hear "the greater than Solomon" another day, as the Lord leads and provides.

Now, just what is that situation at hand for which these words of Solomon give us wisdom? It is this:

There has arisen among the people of God a class of teachers and practitioners in the field of child care, that seem to have gone way too far when it comes to applying Solomon. As Paul said of the Jews who could not understand God's righteousness, they have a zeal, but not according to knowledge.

Saying that troubled teen home directors have a godly zeal is the best spin I can place on all I am hearing from the past residents – who call themselves "survivors" – of these homes.

There can be no doubt that some other directors are sadistic men, and women. Still others are perverts who prey on young women and young men who, unfortunately, find themselves in desperate need of a place to stay.

May the church rise up and act!

May the words of Solomon, and later the words of Jesus, bring order to these homes. May these words even shut down some of them. God's people need to get busy finding which homes and

which directors are which, and act accordingly.

How can they so act? Regardless of the doctrine among some churches that “Pastor is Lord,” the churches that run these homes are part of the Body of Christ, and therefore are subject to that Body, wherever it is found. No pastor or church board or home director has ultimate authority over these young lives. The church does!

Rise up church.

Now listen to the King. Not King James, but King Jesus via King Solomon. My apologies for old English, but it is a language that many believe is holy. My hope is that these folks will read and be convicted in their mother tongue.

Proverbs 1:8

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

The emphasis throughout the book of Proverbs is instruction, teaching, not beating.

Proverbs 1:10-17

“If sinners entice thee, consent thou not... they lay wait for their own blood.”

Another stressed topic in Proverbs is the fact that life itself is the way most men and women will be punished, if they refuse the correction given at home by the godly.

Proverbs 3:11, 12

“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary

of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”

This verse is quoted in Hebrews. There is no getting around the fact that discipline is meant to be a necessary part of every Christian’s life, and the life of every child of every Christian, via the parent.

But notice here the words. “Chastening” is not defined as beating. Chastening can be by any means appropriate. And “Correction”, not “punishment” or “vengeance”, is what God is after.

See how the father who administers such corrections does it because he truly delights in the child, not to gain control over him at the moment.

Proverbs 4:3, 4

“For I [Solomon] was my father’s [David’s] son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also...”

What a precious insight into Solomon’s childhood days. Was little Solomon afraid of Dad? Did he expect cruel punishment for minor infractions? The relationship was “tender,” and developed into a learning experience Solomon now passes on to his own son.

What? No rod every time he cried? No two-hour sessions with switch in hand, beating the skin until wounds formed, and/or until the crying stopped? Where did that come from? I showed you a few posts ago...

The David-Solomon relationship doesn’t sound at all like the testimonies out of “troubled teen homes” of our day, does it?

Proverbs 6:12-15

“A naughty person, a wicked man walketh with a froward mouth...

therefore shall his calamity come suddenly... he shall be broken without remedy.”

Again, stress on the fact that evil produces its own judgment. No parent is involved in the breaking of this man’s evil heart.

Proverbs 9:8

“Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee.”

One size does not fit all. Rebuke alone can be enough for some.

Proverbs 10:13

“A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.”

When rods are mentioned in Solomon, backs are mentioned too. Not “behinds”. Perfect literal interpretation means a switch – rod – across the back, probably leaving scars. In this case, it would seem the punishment is for grown men. Not teenage girls. No parent is mentioned here.

Proverbs 10:27

“The years of the wicked shall be shortened.”

By parents? No, by God. Most of Solomon’s warnings are about God’s judgment on men, not the work of parents.

Proverbs 11:17

“...he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.”

A word to the wise. Cruel punishments on children and youth have a boomerang effect. Not sure how these might come back on a man or woman, but come back, they will!

Proverbs 11:29

“He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind.”

He gets nothing for all that abusive behavior, though he worked long and hard at it. Nothing. Nothing but guilt and regret and wasted years and the disrespect of all around him. Nothing but a family that in later years considers him irrelevant to their needs. Because he is.

Notice the use of “troubled” to refer to adults, not teenagers.

Fathers and sons in the Proverbs of Solomon.

Yes, Solomon said all of the above. Oh, we’ll talk about the favorite verses of child-beaters. But we lay the foundation as the book of Proverbs lays it, with some important principles:

Fathering is to be tender.

Chastening is undefined and can take the form of a sound rebuke. Cruelty has a cruel reward.

Parents are not God.

Life eventually destroys the wicked. Parents don’t have to. Vengeance belongs to the Lord.

Next time: “Spare the rod, spoil the child.”

June 25. Spare the rod

As Solomon is the go-to source for much of Christian child-rearing, his Proverbs 13:24, admonishing us not to spare the rod, is the go-to verse to sum up all his teachings, and build a foundation for the child’s life.

So they say.

It is a serious group of words. It deserves our attention. We don't "explain away" hard verses, we try to find their meaning, and take heed.

Do some parents hate their children? Let's take a close look at Proverbs 13:24.

Proverbs 13:24 (KJV)

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

We've heard it all our lives, "Spare the rod, spoil the child."

Now, are we literal or are we liberal? Those are the only two choices that some allow for us. You say, Literal, since Liberal would mean you can interpret this any way you want. Then, to be literal, we must use a rod. A real rod. Like from a tree. And obviously we do not aim for the lower-lower backside, the place where you sit. Nowhere is that recommended in Scripture. A rod, as we found elsewhere, is for the back...

Is that how the new zealots punish their children? No, more likely it is with a paddle to the sitting place. In places where such practices were allowed, those beatings – and yes I hate the word, but it is a justifiable one, as you will see in reading the testimonies – those beatings left blisters and blood on said sitting place.

If you really love him...

So, following Solomon, if I really love my son – and the gulag people, correctly or incorrectly, expand the meaning to include daughters – I will beat him with a rod to the back, early (betimes) in

his life.

That's where they get the justification for walloping crying babies. Hit them hard enough and long enough and you will break their little will before they have any idea what will is. Before they have consciously broken God's law. Before they know how to sit on a toilet or hold a fork. Nab 'em early!

Can you see Solomon as a baby-beater? Advocating that his people be the same? Was his advice ever repeated by another Bible-writer? Are children made to bear such torment early in their lives?

Early or promptly?

Wisdom, Solomon's wisdom, demands a closer look. For sure, "early" is a relative thing. Twenty years of age is considered very early and young by an oldster like myself. Oh, he's an adult, but he's still a son. He's still teachable, though he may need physical pain to go along with it.

I do not say that physical pain, lovingly administered in small amounts and rarely, will not do some good for a younger child. It will. But that sort of pain is not what the victims of these homes are relating. They are talking about savage blows given for any number of reasons, mostly none of which were serious.

At best, then, everyone's favorite text on child-rearing is perhaps not as usable as we thought. Solomon could well have been talking of a grown son, as in a male, who was indeed turning out wrong and needed a wake-up call. Babies do not need such calls. yet the past residents of gulag homes testify they saw staff members beating their little infants.

Betimes?

What does “betimes” [in the Hebrew] mean, anyway? Does it mean “early”? Or does it mean “diligently” or “promptly”, as later translations corrected it to?

Actually, the latter makes more sense, taken with other verses in Proverbs. It would mean, “Don’t let this infraction’s correction linger on. Address it. If you deal with it three days later, the child has forgotten all about it. You don’t schedule sessions with him. You stop what you are doing and address it right now! That doesn’t mean a knee-jerk slap in the face or unkind word. It means eye-to-eye and prayer-to-God, you take care of it right now.

The idea of slapping babies around was invented from one possible translation of the Hebrew. But the English “betimes” is even spelled out in Webster as an archaic word that means “speedily”, or “in a short time.” It does not mean six months old.

This is one place where KJV takes us off the rails and invents new doctrines. Sorry, but it does.

Parents who hate their children?

What about this “hating” thing? Is it true that a negligent parent, one who will always spare the rod, hates his own children? None would admit to such. But I think Jesus made the idea clear when He talked about having two masters.

He said that no man can serve two leaders. Either one or the other is going to take the place of honor in his life. The other will be “hated”. Despised. Jesus’ words. We do hate some people.

Hatred is an intense dislike or ill will. It involves loving something else better.

In parenting, hatred means, “I don’t value you. You are not important to me. I have no time for you. You are in my way. I have more important fish to fry. Leave me alone. I’ll do what I have to do to take care of you in the eyes of the law, but then you are on your own!”

Is not this the attitude of a parent whose child is unwanted? Whose life is too busy to take care of the many needs of a growing child, especially the need for structure and discipline? Wouldn’t you call it hatred?

Solomon did. And he was a wise man.

Too much, is hatred, also

Ignoring discipline is one thing. Constant beating of a child can be the same thing. Hatred expressed in a different way. Here’s what that looks like:

“Okay, I see you aren’t behaving properly. You have a bad mouth. Filthy habits. You annoy me. Where’s my rod? No time to talk this over, pray with you, counsel you. The stick says it all.”

Solomon didn’t address that here, but if he were here, I’m sure he would agree you can go too far with the rod. Way too far. When physical discipline seems to be the answer often, it is probably the parent or guardian that has need of it, not the child.

For the record, most of the rod-bearing in Proverbs is for foolish adults. Spare the rod for them? Not a good idea.

Summary

We don’t doubt Solomon. He spoke for God. We must not withhold even physical correction when it is appropriate and given in love. It

is to be given out as close to the offense as possible. It is not scheduled, brutal, or routine.

But as we have seen and will see again, rod correction is only a part of a potpourri of corrections that God's wise parents and the Father Himself, give out to their children. The Spirit of God guides those who are looking for such guidance, into the proper form and amount of correction.

A trigger-happy sharp-shootin' paddle-wielder is not God's most effective servant in this matter. He can do, has done, a life-time of damage. Smug satisfaction that he has "loved" his child will crumble on the day as the hate burning in the soul of his son or daughter lashes out at Dad, or anyone in his or her path, when liberation from "home" finally comes.

Just take a look at the hundreds of past residents of the teen gulag.

More words of Solomon next time...

June 26. Broken

Broken

We continue our journey through Proverbs, looking at the verses used by abusive disciplinarians. Yes, I am making a judgment here, and some will think it unfair. But I have listened to the staff, in person and online. Then I have listened to a chorus of voices spread

across the country, victims of many homes for troubled teens. A lot of broken people.

Given a few rotten apples that like to “pile on” when the church is being accused, given a number of “sick” people who imagine things that never happened, even given the perceived injustices that some teenagers tend to thrive on (“that’s not fair!!!”, they will tell you often) I still cannot avoid the conclusion: Christian young people are being abused all over this country, and some of them are victims of people calling themselves men and women of God. Oh may the abusers hear the rest of the story from the Solomon they love so well...

Proverbs 15:10

“Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.”

So there are alternatives to beatings. Correction and reproof are two prevalent subjects in Proverbs. Nothing in those two words (correction and reproof) demands physical abuse, isolation rooms, or starvation, as many testimonials from the gulag, indicate.

Proverbs 16:24

“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

I wasn’t there, understand. But the victims tell us that “pleasant words” did not come to them very often. Some were aching for such a word or even a hug. And they starved waiting. Rules were the order of the day, and the week, and the year.

Proverbs 16:32

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

In pointing out the serious physical measures taken by homes like this one, are we talking about their policy, or just some angry out-of-control adults? Either alternative is scary.

Other lines of work might be more profitable for the troubled home directors, although intemperance will make it hard to keep a job anywhere. We all understand weakness and sympathize.

But if policy is the problem, the book of Proverbs can be used to correct that policy, added to heavy doses of the words of the One Greater than Solomon.

Proverbs 17:22 and 18:14

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?”

It is here where I lose it. Modern disciplinary “doctrine” demands that a child must be “broken” while still a baby! Break his will!

I know that horses and dogs are trained that way. With a dog, a rolled up newspaper on the hind-side, and a treat, will do the trick. But humans need more, and better.

Break the will?

You should break the will? Break the spirit? If one crushes the spirit while trying to “break the will”, one creates a robot. A zombie. Depressed. Anxious. Compliant. That is the fruit of man’s breaking. On the other hand, when God breaks the heart, it produces David’s repentance, “a broken and contrite heart you will not despise.”

This human-style breaking happens in North Korea, every Communist country, Islamic strongholds. Through deprivation and violence, we will crush you until you cannot ever rise up against us...

Not broken forever

... at least, that's the idea. But the human spirit will rise up anyway. Witness Romania, 1989. The entire Soviet bloc. Men will not be held down forever. They will rise up, and if they do not know Christ, they will hurt you.

Individuals? Not so sure. It's lonely and scary to oppose big strong men, especially when the men say they are God's big strong men. "Whistleblowers" exist, but they still fear what you did to them and might try to do to them again..

Give them enough support from fellow victims, though...that is what is happening even now. These places will have to close their doors eventually, unless things truly have changed. As many have closed already! As will others who will have victims courageous enough to step forward. So far in my search, I have found more of these homes that have been closed than that are still open! Take heart!

When your will has been broken, if only temporarily, courage is in short supply. Shame, pain, oh they are great teachers indeed! But they teach things you didn't want them to learn. You taught them that brute force is the key. What happens when they bring to bear the brute forces available to them in the government and police forces? Saved ones will want to forgive, and will ask for your repentance and confession.

But not all your past residents are saved...

Healer of broken hearts

Those who had their wills – and hearts and spirits – broken at a teen gulag house, can come to Jesus for healing. Yes, that’s a promise. Jesus said in Isaiah and Luke that He came to heal the brokenhearted.

Brokenhearted is more than sad. It is crushed. Defeated. But they don’t have to live like that. And there are really churches that will support them in their healing. Christ has a church and he Himself lives in it.

Brokenness is a good thing when God does it. It is an awful thing when man tries to duplicate it. God’s breaking produces joy and love and peace.

We continue our trek through Solomon’s words next time....

June 27. Wounded

The wounded are all around us.

Solomon suggested serious measures be taken against criminals. He speaks of abusive parents. He also believed that children needed correction. Take a listen:

Proverbs 19:18

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying,” (KJV)

interestingly followed in the next verse by, “A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment.”

Which leads us, I believe, to follow the translations of by far the greater number of scholars, who have the last part of verse 18 saying,

Do not be a willing party to his death.

In your zeal to “reform” or “correct” a child, do not give such vent to your wrath that you actually kill him! And of course, there is more than one way to “kill” a child! Sometimes the wounded live among us, dead.

Not by the angry!

Chastening, in whatever form, should not be administered by an angry man. The juxtaposition of these two verses may be only Providential and not purposeful on Solomon’s part. But they certainly belong together.

Chastening must be given out by one who loves, not by one who is angry and vengeful and seeking to control behavior by the only means that seems to be available.

But let us not forget in all of this, that chastening of some form is to be given, and tears may follow. Both ideas in one package. The true test of good parenting is that it is not extreme.

God/good parenting is neither negligent nor nasty.

I once heard the wife of one of these gulag directors tell people, in response to the husband’s hugely dramatic and vociferous preaching that night, that really “he is quiet at home.” I suggested to her that maybe he gets all his emotions out in the pulpit. She

agreed.

And all of that was before I knew what is being alleged by hundreds of past residents of his “home.” Maybe there were other ways he was venting.

He won’t die. Usually.

I do not want to move on without speaking the alternative wisdom, as registered by the KJV, that Solomon ends the verse with. Young people will indeed attempt to sound like they are dying when you attempt to inflict punishment. Parents are not to be covered by such antics. Do what is right.

But abuse is not right. Pain is helpful. Excessive pain is not helpful. Some children have actually died at the hands of parents who had been told that more is better. No. More is worse, and will come back to hurt you. Often. Control yourself, adult.

Proverbs 19:29

“Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.”

The rod again. Leaving marks, on the back. Wounded. This is Solomonic correction. Probably for adult criminals. Is this what is intended for the children of Christians?

Proverbs 20:20

“Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.”

The death penalty. Where did Solomon get this idea? From Moses! From God! Leviticus 20:9. I wonder. Did any of the victims of teen homes have disrespectful comments about their parents? If we are

going to use Old Covenant precepts, how about this one?

Remember that the Law spoke truth and justice... but knew not of mercy. Nothing is wrong with the Law. But much is wrong with us. We can't live Moses. Too holy. Too godly. God must work a work on our hearts and change us before we can ever live like this.

Get your child's attention with some pain if you must. But temper all with mercy, or judgment may return to you. "But he deserves it". So do you. Caution!

Above all, never enjoy striking a child. If you catch yourself with this malady, report to the nearest psychiatric ward.

Proverbs 20:30

"The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly."

What? Solomon, explain yourself! No need to. It is up to the modern interpreters of this verse to do the explaining. Not one commentary I read assigns this soul-cleansing to a parent, especially the parent of a small child!

This verse is not about bringing up children, this is about the punishment of adult criminals, by man, or by God Himself. The truth is real, though. There are those who learn by reading books. Others learn by rebukes. Others need stronger medicine. Possibly a disease. A trip to the battlefield. A disaster of some sort.

Job is an example of one whose wounds healed his soul. He was forced to look inward and discover the deeper meanings of life, revealed directly by God after the time of searching. In our eagerness to outlaw abusive homes, let us not attempt to strip God of His own corrective measures. God does correct. We must

correct. But we don't kill children. We don't beat children until they are literally black and blue. That is sin. Abuse. Punishable even by human laws. Stop it.

This is not to say that a parent will not prayerfully administer a correction that "hurts." And there are things that hurt more than beatings, but that are geared to help. On the other hand, physical abuse will lead to bitterness and rejection, as all victims of the gulag will testify.

Proverbs 22:15

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Literally, then, every child of every age bracket needs a literal rod applied to his or her literal back? Must every parent be standing ready with a rod every time foolishness erupts? How far to take this text?

Is the child perhaps responding to some unjust behavior on the parent's part? Does the child totally understand what he has done? Is the child mentally capable of grasping your adult understandings?

But yes, it must be admitted, that as far as things had progressed to that point in the history of God's people, a rod was an effective power play. Trouble is, if misused, the rod of correction can drive away other things too. Like members of your family.

What's missing here?

So many situations, so many possibilities. Is there something missing in Solomon's formulas? Yes, as in Moses' laws:

Mercy. Compassion. Wisdom.

Solomon was wise, but The Greater-Than-Solomon gave us the rest of the story, He being Wisdom personified. Without Jesus Christ, all the beatings and other extreme punishments will only drag that child further away from God, and make him twice the enemy of God that he is. Let us be sure to temper that zeal with God's love, or all is lost. Forever.

Next time: a child who was beaten to death in the name of God. True story.

June 28. Death by discipline

God's Paradise. The Garden of Eden. Sinless perfection. Heaven.

Paradise, California. Not so much. Its latest tragedy (November 2018), the so-called "Camp" fire named after its place of origin, Camp Creek Road, all but covers up a story of horror that happened nearly nine years earlier (February 2010).

This is not to minimize the Camp Fire, the "deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history." Over eighty people dead. Nearly twenty more injured. Two missing.

18,000 structures destroyed. \$16.5 billion in damages. A true tragedy.

Lydia

But this California town will also be known, a long time, for a single

death in 2010. The death of Lydia. A seven-year-old girl. Killed by her parents. Not purposely. But killed nonetheless. Killed in the name of God and God's discipline. Her sister Zariah was nearly killed on that same day, but lived to tell the story of these parents. In hearing their story we learn the ways of abusive parenting being taught throughout the country, as though it were some new revelation from Heaven.

Three Liberian children were adopted by the California family in 2007. Lydia was then four. She and her sister evidently had trouble adapting to the perfection demanded by their Bible-believing parents.

Those foster parents, head of a family of nine, had been taking in the teachings of a new breed of disciplinarians, for some time. The authors all made sense. Keep up the "discipline session " until it is effective. You train horses and dogs to be obedient this way. Why not kids?

Beaten to death

On a February day in 2010, Dad went over the top, and showed the world what this new training technique is all about. For seven long hours, he administered brutal beatings to the Liberian girls. No break at all? Oh yes. They stopped for prayer occasionally. One can only guess what they were praying. And why there was no answer in Heaven.

Only because someone heard and reported the abuse did rescue personnel finally show up on the scene. But it was too late. Lydia soon died, Zariah nearly.

Soon the family would go four separate ways. Dad and Mom to long prison sentences. Seven children to foster facilities. Zariah to

intensive care. Lydia to the coroner.

Proverbs 18:14

In my last post I gave the preferred translation of the latter portion of Proverbs 19:18, “Do not be a willing party to his [your child’s] death.” Now you see why that text is there. It is possible that zeal will kill, that it is possible to enjoy this punishment thing a little too much. It is possible that in administering “correction” to a “troubled” child, you are covering up your own need for serious help. Help for a troubled mind.

This death is only one, you say. Not to be compared with the eighty plus who died in that same town a few years later. On one level, yes. But the damage to Christian faith done by the offenders continues to reverberate. For you see, the event is attributed to God Himself.

A fire is a fire. Fires do not seem to have a mind of their own. People don’t morally “blame” a fire. But Dad called himself a Christian. As do other child abusers of our day.

How they see us...

Comments below an online video documenting the Paradise incident are instructive. They tell us one more reason that certain homes sponsored by certain churches ought to be shut down! Or monitored. Or watched very carefully. Many of those inside shouting about their rights and their responsibility to “train up a child” Biblically, perhaps need a little of their own medicine, before others die at their hands.

The comments:

One person watching that video, said, “I hate Christians

soooooooooo much.” Another, “This proves God does not exist.”

Yet another, reminding us of comments about gun control every time there is a shooting, “Outlaw spanking!”

Not so fast...

We understand the emotion of these people, though we do not reach their conclusions. My own heart is churning again this morning as I have had to review this video. I don't see how the reporters could talk about it all without breaking down.

But, if I may respond, this video is not about all Christians. We don't all believe in the new philosophies of child-raising being espoused. We just don't!

And this killing of children is not about the existence of God. There has been evil in the world nearly since its beginning. God has allowed it. Man is free to sin. For now. Judgment will come. Justice will be meted out.

This is also not about spanking. A warning, even a painful one, on the backside, mixed in with a variety of other disciplinary measures, is not what happened here. This was seven hours of brutality.

Let's not jump too far...

Traffic accident today. Let's outlaw cars. Plane crash yesterday. Let's outlaw planes. Muslims use vans to run down Christians. Let's outlaw vans, and all Muslims while we are at it. No.

We can't let our emotion rule, but cry we must! And find a solution we must! Discover where these evil things are being taught, and remove the possibility of Christians teaching them again!

One more thing. Mom and Dad in their prison today must hurt with

a constant agony. Can we find mercy enough to pray for the ones who inflict pain? Tough order. But this is who we are.

July 1. Of angry men and “troubled teens”

With this post we wrap up comments from the Proverbs. We are trying to find the justification that “Troubled Teen” homes have found in the words of the wisest King Israel ever knew. So far we have not been able to discover in Proverbs: isolation rooms, sarcastic insults, middle-of-the-night “sessions” of beating, food deprivation, stress-caused menstruation cycle interruption, monitored mail and phone calls...Not thinking any of those things will be in this last bunch of passages either. Hope I didn’t miss something. One thing I have been finding, though . There are a lot of “Troubled Adults” addressed in the book of Proverbs. Like in this first selection: angry men.

Proverbs 22:24-25

“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”

Anger is contagious. Was it an angry man that was /is administering blows to teenage girls, or simply a man trying his best to obey the Word of God as he understood it? Perhaps the courts will have to decide. In some cases, the courts have decided already.

Have an anger problem unresolved, sir? Step down and out from teen ministry.

Proverbs 23:13-14

“Withhold not correction from the child: for if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell.”

Children must be corrected, and loving parents must stand in the way of their child’s freefall into foolishness. Occasional pain, physical or otherwise will not destroy him. Rather, the absence of such will.

Once more we cannot avoid Solomon’s clear language. But we can say that excessive use of this one method- as at many “troubled teen” homes – can indeed lead to serious injury, if not eternal loss. Not to mention imprisonment for the perpetrators.

Proverbs 26:3

“A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.”

Habitual child-beaters are concluding that the child is a fool. Though we are born into the sinful nature, it would seem to me that it takes a little longer to be classified as a fully functioning fool and thus worthy of this sort of abuse.

Oh, and, your horse, your donkey, and your child all know how to get away when the opportunity arises. Is that what you want, sir?

Proverbs 27:4

“Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous...”

I keep seeing – though I was not there – young girls stretched out on the floor, held down by staff members, being beaten by a man three to four times their size, in the name of the loving Jesus. In the middle of the night. While her companions wait below, listening to her screams, knowing they may be next.

Outrageous indeed. Who will stand up for these victims?

Is cruelty ever once recommended as a form of discipline, anywhere in Scripture? How about the Man who could not even throw away a bruised reed? Not to mention that He would never bruise that reed... not the way you are bruising them, you bullies in the “homes.”

Proverbs 29:15

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame.”

Indeed. We cannot go to the extreme of just letting Topsy grow. Letting the garden grow. Letting the crops grow. No structure, no pruning, no care, brings shame all around. This site is not advocating no pain, but oh much less pain, and tempered with God’s counsel and compassion.

Notice that “reproof” is brought in here as an alternative to physical pain, but pain is not excluded. Measures must be taken to stop a child from ruination. But each step must be thought through, prayed through, carefully. One kind of discipline will not do the job every time.

Proverbs 29:17

“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”

It's true that an out-of-control child is an aggravation. You can't eat out. Can't go to Walmart. Can't visit friends.

It's also true that an out-of-control adult breeds serious sickness and may be responsible for the out-of-control child. Is he learning violent behavior from the lowly Jesus or from the strong mean adult in charge?

Proverbs 30:17 (from Agur, not Solomon)

"The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Again, the death penalty for hating parent or guardian. Now why in the world would a child hate a parent? Or any authority figure? Can any of this be traceable to methodology? One can force behavior, but the same wind that blows a person's body to the ground, slams shut the heart's door out of which would normally come appreciation and respect.

The hundreds of teens now speaking out have had that door shut. Some are able to pray for their captors, but none would now send their own child there, or recommend this house to a friend. Their bodies were controlled for a while, but the heart cannot be controlled by the strongest of discipline.

God promises suffering, persecution, for His own. Does that give me the right to be the source of that suffering? Perhaps I should send my child to a concentration camp somewhere so they can see what life is really like? Is that our mentality?

Let the Lord of life and the church bring His children safely through whatever is out there. Let not the parent try to be God in a child's life. Life will get tough enough.

Solomon. Great and wise king. We honor him. God's very wisdom flowed through him. He spoke the truth. But now get ready for the rest of the story. Solomon will be the first to admit that there is One so much greater than himself. One who is called in his own book, Wisdom.

The Greater-Than-Solomon will speak in the next post.

July 2. The Greater than Solomon

So, a couple of disgruntled girls started attacking a "troubled teens" home near me. How awful, I thought. How dare they! I investigated. There weren't a couple.

There were hundreds. Oh my. How can this be? Shouldn't I protect the poor director/pastor who is under siege? I decided I could not. Too many witnesses, when all that is required Biblically is two or three. My church, that supports that home, and I, had to part company.

I did more investigating. There are a few more Christian homes like that one. No. Now I find, there are a multitude more. An entire "troubled teen" industry! (Many of them are already shut down.) Wearing Jesus' name. But abusing young people.

What to do? I began to pray and write and

publish. Letters. Videos (since taken down). A written manuscript.

Audios. And now the blog. In all of this I wanted to see and say what God sees and is saying. That inevitably brought me to Proverbs, now to the words of Jesus Himself. The most important thing I can do is communicate what Jesus says about it all. Hear Him well. For He is

The Greater Than Solomon

Two Jewish monarchs. Both, Seed of David. From one, on a throne, issues forth wisdom Israel has never encountered. The wisest. The greatest. The great Solomon.

And the Other, artistically imagined above, sits on a hillside. But He is Wisdom Itself. The very definition of Wisdom.

We have listened to the wisdom of Solomon on dealing with, and relating to, young people. Now we must listen to the Wisdom Who is Jesus. Current. Eternal. The two kings will not clash or contradict. One will complete the other.

The silence of Jesus and the apostles about Solomon's ways.

Walking through Proverbs is difficult. We see what natural man deserves, and what parents who walk in the "natural" must do to get the desired results. None of these methods are mentioned in the New Testament, though we do run into a "rod" once in another context.

Let us listen now to the "greater than Solomon" and the ones He trained. After all, was it not the Father in Heaven who invited us? "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7)

Matthew 12:42

"...a greater than Solomon is here." (Jesus Christ)

Context. The Pharisees, in this chapter, want a sign from Jesus. No, says Jesus, you have your sign from Jonah. By the way, He goes on, they repented when Jonah preached. You are not repenting even though a greater than Jonah is here!

And don't forget the queen of Sheba, says Jesus further. She listened to Solomon's wisdom and was impressed with it. But I am greater than Solomon. Wisdom. Oh, Solomon was wise. He received his wisdom from God. But my wisdom is greater, as I am greater.

Solomon was right for his time. He spoke truth from Heaven. But so did Moses. And Elijah. And David. All these men spoke truths that were completed by the truth that is in Jesus, the truth that is Jesus. Look at His life and listen to His words if you would know of the wisdom that is greater than Solomon's.

Greater than Proverbs

Proverbs is still in the Bible. But so is Exodus. The unapproachable God. The laws about sacrifices. Capital punishment of all offenders, including bad sons. Circumcision.

Proverbs is still in the Bible but so is Psalms. Ever heard David's invectives against his enemies? They were his enemies because they were God's. Canaanites were to be destroyed, annihilated. Is that Jesus' word to us? Are we not called upon simply to love enemies and strive to bring them to Christ? Vengeance is His and He'll take care of it. David was not wrong. Jesus is greater than David.

Yes, Proverbs is still there, with King Solomon's wisdom. So is the prophet Elijah with the Holy Spirit's power. Fire from Heaven! Kill them all! Remember, the disciples of Jesus wanted to do the same thing! Jesus said, No. Wrong spirit. Elijah was right to do what he

did. But I am greater than Elijah and I have a new program now.
Grace. Mercy.

A new day

The Holy Spirit gave Moses and David and Elijah their cues. They did what they were told, and God blessed them for it. But I promise you, if we try to do today what those men did we will not be blessed for it. Wrong spirit.

Now, Jesus wasn't calling His disciples demon-possessed when He said they were of the "wrong spirit." He was saying you can no longer act as God's men used to act. If you do, you'll just be using your own spirit. God's Spirit is doing something else now.

Jesus was announcing a new covenant. A new way. A new agenda. Life in the Spirit. Proverbs is still the Word of God and may apply in given situations. But listen carefully to Jesus, the greater than Solomon. Your attitude toward beating young people mercilessly, locking them up in isolation to listen to your preaching, belittling them verbally, and all the rest... may just change.

Oh Great God in Heaven, may it be so!

July 3. Jesus and the children.

I get a bit angry when I see how the "troubled teen" industry has caused many to turn away from sound Bible teaching, or even from

the Lord Himself. The directors and their supporting pastors proudly proclaim that they have rediscovered the “truth” about raising children, and then equally proudly point to Solomon as their source. From him they believe they have received authority to abuse young people. But the Greater Than Solomon sees some things that Solomon was not privileged to see. Read with me about Jesus and the children in the following passage, and you’ll see what I mean.

Matthew 18:2-14

In this episode of Jesus’ life, a little child is called front and center. Jesus informs the people that this child is the new model for His kingdom. Humble yourself like this child! Be low in your estimation like this

child! The lowly and weak are now the great ones!

So the child is a model of the believer. But this passage is not just about modeling. The child himself is the focus of Jesus’ words.

If you receive a child like this in My name, you are receiving Me, He says. What could that possibly mean? He goes on to say the opposite truth: If you don’t receive the child, you don’t receive Me. In fact, if by your actions you cause one of these little ones to sin, it would be better if you were drowned. Drowned. Hear it: Drowned.

It’s about the children

The subject does not change in this story. He is still talking about little children. The child is still standing there in the middle of the group. He’s talking about abuse of children! If your actions cause a child to sin...

Jesus knew abuse was going to happen. And it is in this child context that He gives the extreme recommendation to get rid of

hand or foot or eye if that hand or foot or eye would cause you to sin. (verse 8)

Verse 10 confirms that children, the abuse of children, is the continued context of this passage:

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones (Mark adds, “that believe in Me”).”

About despising children...

Don't despise them because of their size, or their vulnerability, or their ignorance, or their foolishness, or their immaturity, or their mistakes, or their issues. Don't take advantage of them. You are bigger than they are.

So you do what you think you have to do? And you think, They'll get over it? You beat them mercilessly. You isolate them. You demand of them far more than of yourself. That's despising them, isn't it?

Jesus makes it plain that the very angels of God are watching every move, Mr. and Mrs. Director, Mr. and Mrs. Parent!

Amazingly enough, even though Jesus next goes into His famous passage about the ninety and nine sheep and the one lost sheep (verses 12-13), He comes back immediately to children:

“Even so it is not the will of your Father Who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” (verse 14)

God wants people to be saved. Even little people. The smallest of all, the young child who comes to Jesus, must be welcomed in, even as He says in the very next chapter.

Mark 9:36-42, in relating these same truths, places the offenders in the context of eternal hell fire. It is a serious offense to come

against a little one. Whoever has already done it, it is time to repent, confess, and be forgiven, by God and those who were offended.

Matthew 19:14 continues the story...

Parents who had been listening to Jesus' gracious words, seeing Jesus was all for the children, brought them to Him for a blessing. The disciples, who it seems had not been listening to His recent warnings, tried to stop them.

But Jesus said, (per the KJV) , "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come to Me."

That's old English. You would think that the teen homes took that old word "suffer" to be literally like the word of today. No, it means only "allow." Let them come to Me. Don't do anything to keep a child from coming to Jesus.

Again, we're not talking about a pain-free existence. We're talking about a loving invitation for children to meet Jesus, and if that doesn't work right away, being Jesus to the child and allowing them to come to you.

Come to Me, and I'll beat you!

I don't picture Jesus, in this context, holding a rod in His hand and saying, "Come here child!" Do you? Who would respond to such an invitation? Who would get near a man like that? Unless forced to, of course...

Jesus took these children into His arms and blessed them. He is our example and the power we need to live like this.

Is Jesus' view of children the same as that described in a tract

written by troubled teen staff? Read for yourself about

Selfish little beasts!

A child very quickly demonstrates his fallen, depraved nature and reveals himself to be a selfish little beast.

You may be disappointed to know that I, like the man who wrote this tract, believe in original sin. I believe that people have a free will but that they use it consistently against God, from their youngest years.

Jesus believed that too, for He is the One who revealed it to us. The Psalmists knew this was true. In spite of that, Jesus never called a baby a "selfish little beast." Nor would He call you that. Or even me. Jesus saw the problem and had compassion on us. He died in our place so we can be forgiven of all sin.

The condemnation He left for the Devil to use.

Sinners by birth? Yes. But loved by God, and desired of Him with a burning heart we cannot comprehend? Also, yes.

This is a part of the Wisdom that is greater than Solomon. There's more.

July 5. Jesus and Sinners

Jesus, the faithful Witness, now speaks. His words are truth. He is Truth. None of us can sit in judgment on what He has said.

One part of His message: Jesus and sinners got along quite well. Jesus loved sinners.

Who but Jesus can speak the truth we need about human relations? The scarcity of New Testament passages about specifically young relationships tells us that whatever Jesus taught, He taught for people of all ages, young to ancient.

It is not at all difficult to apply the following stories to the “troubled teen” industry that this blog site is challenging.

John 8:3-12, a woman caught in adultery.

A woman caught in the very act of adultery was placed before Jesus. No mention of the man. We have to let that go.

“Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery. She needs to be stoned to death, according to Moses’ law. What do you say?”

“He who is without sin... let him throw the first stone.” Then to the woman: “Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

Let’s be clear here before we jump solidly on the Pharisees. They had a point. The woman was guilty. Jesus did not say, “Hey, we all have issues. Don’t worry about it.”

She knew she had sinned. It was right for her to be afraid. She was guilty before God. But then she was forgiven. That’s the order for all of us saved people. Sin. Conviction.

Confession. Forgiveness.

Condemned indeed!

Anyway, the Pharisees were right. Moses did condemn such as

these. Further, Moses was right to condemn sin. And God was right to call adultery a sin. It is an awful sin. All sin is awful, for that matter.

But a greater than Moses is on the scene. And He was right, too, for He was and is God. He was right to call it sin and to forgive the sin.

That's one ticket for raising children. I tell you freely and sadly that I did not meet this standard, but I see its worth and commend it to all. Forgiveness, grace, mercy, mixed in with your loving, even painful, chastening.

Forgiveness

In my last post I mentioned the awful results of offending a little one.

I hear there are at least two hundred fifty little ones who were offended at one home not far from my home town. Countless others at Christian institutions across the country, join the chorus and need to be heard. Some have recovered but some have not. Some are finished with this Christian thing altogether and lay the blame at the feet of Christian people, rightly or wrongly.

This site sends out an appeal for investigation, repentance, stepping down, starting over. Closing down, in many cases. Jesus is merciful and will forgive the most heinous of sins and sinners, if they will only confess their sins. Many victims want to forgive what their captors have done to them, if only they can hear them confess.

You see in this story that Jesus Himself is ready to put all sin in the past, as long as true repentance is seen. That means the sins of the teens and the sins of their captors.

Luke 15:11-32. The prodigal son

Perhaps this Luke 15 guy was past his teen years, perhaps not, but the young rebel had had enough. He left home. The father did not lock him up or call the police, though we can imagine tears of pain, as the Heavenly Father experiences with His own. But no rebukes, no fists, no kicks. No rod. He gave the son his inheritance money and let him go. He overcame this awful evil with bountiful good.

We know the middle part of the story, we who have similarly left and played the fool.

Did I say “the fool”? Sounds familiar. Oh yes, the fool of Proverbs! Solomon’s fool. The one who needs a rod across the back. Just like the woman in adultery that should have been stoned. But a greater than Solomon and Moses is here.

Go to the end of the story. See the young man coming up the road? Dad sure does! See him grab a club or a whip, or a rope to hang this villain of a son, this selfish little beast? No, that’s not what we see.

Extravagant Father

No, he throws a party. The boy knew he could come back whenever he wanted to, but he didn’t know just how deep was the father’s love and acceptance.

Those who are thinking, “Hey, he got away with it! That’s bad discipline!” would have enjoyed the other party that was going on that day, a pity-party by the elder brother, who wanted the boy punished and not praised.

A troubling story indeed. Here is Jesus vs Solomon. Solomon and Moses would have said, kill that boy! At the very least, lash him until the blood pours. He’ll learn a lesson and later he will thank you for it! Maybe so. But the Greater than Solomon doesn’t see it that way.

You say, that story is about lost souls! That's not about raising kids! What? Aren't kids lost souls until they know the Father's love and yield to it, not by force of a rod, but by the inner force of God's grace, working through parents or some loving friend who shows him the way?

It ain't easy

I make it look easy. Forgive me. Teen years are troubling. I was one, and I raised or helped to raise five. All teens, not just a select few, are troubled teens!

But in many cases, the application of methods used by Jesus on those He met, will produce great results. Often it is the parent, and not the child, who is troubled the most.

Parents, get help if you need it, for sure. Pastors. Other parents. Close Friends. Church folks who just want to help.

But send your child to a home where a so-called troubled teen can be introduced to trouble he never dreamed of? Where he will learn the ways of other troubled teens and multiply his issues? Where either evil, or just weary, personnel will heap verbal and physical abuse? I think not.

As a Christian to a Christian, I plead with you: Don't give away your children! The risk is serious. And the abusers in some of these homes will not bear alone the blame for what happens to your son or daughter. If you send them there, you must share the blame. It's all forgivable, but...

There's a better way. Wait on the Lord to show it to you.

July 8. A trip to the Zoo

Needing a break

A trip to the zoo was just what the doctor ordered. I thought.

Writing stories about the suffering gets a bit wearing. Ten years ago I had been writing stories of North Korean escapees for two years. Then a trip to the NK border for more conversations, more stories. It got to me. A very sick man returned to the States that year.

You would think I had learned my lesson about getting too involved with others' aches and pains. Not so. This child abuse thing, at the hands of people who say they love Jesus, has gotten to me. Every once in a while I need a break.

It was with that in mind that I trekked to Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo a few weeks back. I love nature. Zoos aren't totally natural, but they try. As a schoolteacher and grandparent I had been to the Zoo often, but what a delight to spend a day there by myself. Escape. Freedom.

But it was not to be. I've been infected. Not complaining. But it's true. The Zoo only reminded me of the subject that has been at hand for these months.

Cages!

First there were the caged animals. I mean, that's a pretty direct connection, right? Animals picked up somewhere in the wild. Wild animals. But in some way defective and needing some loving care. And at the Zoo, that's what they get.

Well, the analogy is not perfect. Some wild teenagers. Picked up, sometimes actually kidnapped, with full parental approval.

(Someday I will have to share how a person can be “kidnapped” with parents looking on, but yes, it happens.) Placed inside of a center for such persons. Promised tender loving care.

That’s where the comparison meets some problems. Though some of the “troubled teen” directors swear that the beatings and lockups and insults are just “tough love”, the teens themselves, now grown with teens of their own, call it something else.

Yeah, caged animals.

The stuff inside the cages

Then my mind went to the environment inside these cages. The zookeepers have gone to great lengths to make the setting “natural” for the animals they take in. They have succeeded to greater or lesser degrees, but no one can fault their efforts. In some cases, the similarity to the real world is striking.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case at teen homes. Don’t get me wrong here. Some of these teens come out of horrific settings that would be awful to try to replicate. But not all. Some come out of godly homes and churches, and nothing has “worked.” The answer is rigid compliance to a brand-new lifestyle. And those who can’t comply... I’ve documented that enough. It’s not pretty.

Animals who are made to live in a certain environment in the wild, will grow sick and possibly die if that environment is changed too radically. Teens also share testimony after testimony of how very difficult it is to be something that you are not.

Some of the girls were simply not saved when they showed up. Church members maybe. But they had never surrendered their lives to Jesus. How can such a person lead the Christian life? To be a Christian is difficult work, even with the Spirit of God striving within.

Imagine trying to be holy without the Holy Spirit.

Caged. Environments changed.

The creatures in the cages

And then there was this sign I saw in the Ape House. Something to the effect that the bruises etc. we were beholding were simply the natural result of communal living! That we should not be concerned about it.

That set off some thinking, to be sure. So the teens go home, bruised and battered after several months or even years at a group home that was meant to resolve issues. Now, there are stories of residents for whom this was indeed the case. They came in a mess. They went home whole and happy.

There are, it seems, many more stories that tell the opposite result.

Imagine. Young people from every imaginable background and attitude brought together and forced to get along. Some Christian, some not. Some "good" some very "bad." The habits, the experiences, the personalities. Is it possible to come out of a situation like that without scars? In attempting to resolve my issues, do I learn some other issues that I had never even heard of before?

Not to mention the issues that some angry adults might have. And how many adults, even Christians, can keep from being angry with some of the things teens can cook up? (Only those who were once teens can answer this question.)

Cages. Environments. Other wild ones.

It is a small miracle, I imagine, for any such individuals to survive for very long.

Anyway, that was my trip to the Zoo. Not exactly a restful day. Maybe I should go for a drive next time.

July 9. The angry child

The angry child

Solomon is not to be pulled down from his throne. But his throne must be placed under the throne of Jesus, and under the words of all who spoke on behalf of Jesus. As the apostles, for example.

Solomon is not to be abandoned. He is to be used when the Greater than Solomon says he is to be used. And that is not as often as the child abusers imagine.

Here is another Voice of the New

Covenant, the apostle Paul. He heard from Jesus directly. We will do well to round out our teaching of troubled children by heeding him.

The Apostle Paul and the family

So, the Scriptures most definitely talk about child-raising. We have seen Solomon and the Old Covenant, and we tremble as at Sinai. Is there nothing else?

Yes. We have heard now of Jesus' love for children but also the serious warnings about offending them. Is that what has tempered the Spirit's remarks through the great apostle, Paul? For, in Paul,

there is no rod. No beating, no shaming, no constant harangue, no lock- up. No rigidity, no disrespectful words.

Ephesians 6:4/Colossians 3:21. Wrath!

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Now there’s a mouthful. Are you saying, Paul, that it is possible for the man in charge to push a child so far that the child’s natural feelings of anger and wrath and bitterness and desire for revenge and more, can erupt? Paul says, Oh yeah!

Never push them that far. Never.

Commentator Albert Barnes brings out several good points here:

As wives are to obey husbands who in turn love them, so the child cannot be expected to obey if there is a father who keeps provoking them with harshness.

Provoking can happen when commands are unreasonable or when correction is too severe.

If children believe they are being ruled by anger, they will become angry too, and “discouraged” as in Colossians 3:21, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”

If a child “submits” to angry discipline, it will often be only because the adult is stronger, not because the adult is right, and slowly bitterness builds in that child, a bitterness that turns into hatred!

Disciplining a child must never become a contest to see who will win this episode. The adult will always win, and that means nothing. The aim is correction. And love.

Dear me! Was Mr. Barnes a resident of a “troubled teen” home? He seems to know exactly what is going on there!

“Nurture and Admonition” ?

Rather than angry wrath-producing beatings at every opportunity, the good parent goes after nurture and admonition of the Lord.

“Nurture” here, and “chastening”, in the famous Hebrews 12 passage, are the same idea. Paideia in the Greek. Simply the training of a child. It involves education, instruction, discipline, godly principles. It means words that form minds that form character that form bodies, lessening drastically, though not necessarily eliminating, the need for anything physical (as in Solomon).

As for “admonition”, nouthesia, we’re talking about putting something in the mind, not on the backside. Put the Lord in the mind. Put His ways in the mind. The word can be translated “warning” as it is elsewhere. Life is dangerous and difficult. Children need to be supplied with a set of principles that will help them navigate the waves that will certainly come their way.

And Barnes points out that “to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in religion, is about the same as to suffer a garden to lie without any culture.”

Do you feel threatened by any of this, reader? Of course not. Your hearts are warmed by such tender advice. A loving parent feeding hearts and minds with God’s ideas, is no threat at all, even when that parent’s hand must be heavy at times.

You will forgive me if I do not sense that I am describing the atmosphere of the Teen Gulag spread out across this nation.

The New Covenant has more to say on this matter. Next time, Lord willing.

July 10. The shepherd's rod

1 Timothy 3:3-5

Men [as in males] have abused headship for so long, that the whole idea of "ruling" the household doesn't sound quite right to us. But "rule" is still the word. The man who wants to be a part of "ruling" the church must first have shown he is able to do this at home. And in both places, harshness is not a part of the equation.

He must first (v. 3) be a non-violent, gentle man, and in this way "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission..." Must we always see a rod when we see the word "submission"? There is a way to take responsibility without forcing oneself upon another.

Jesus ruled His disciples with love. The rod, or the whip, was reserved for evil men in the house of God. You remember the scene in the Temple. Twice. But with His own, and especially with children, our Lord was nothing but kindness, though shown with some stinging rebukes at times.

The "rod" of the New Testament. Words that sting.

So is there no rod at all in the New Covenant way of looking at things? Well, the apostle Paul carried one, after a fashion. He could get very frustrated with the churches he founded, the people who, to him, were as his own children. There was immorality in the church at Corinth. Paul warned them in 1 Corinthians 4:21 that they had a choice between a gentle spirit or a "rod" on his next visit.

So, do you picture the apostle as a violent man who would bloody

the backs of his people if they did not shape up? I don't. But the words of rebuke he could bring would certainly cause many to repent.

Now, rods come in many forms, the most extreme of which are still reserved for fools as in Solomon's day. But the raising of a teenage girl – for example – demands rods of a different sort than the physical ones that teen homes finally were forced by law to put away. The present "rods" in those homes may not be much better, but surely there is an effective way to deal with teenage rebellion. Until these "homes" can figure this out, pray over it, strategize, it is probably best that the doors close.

Our Father chastises us

In hearing all the cries of the teen gulag, the temptation is to run away from discipline altogether, especially the physical sort. While there is real cause to run from the gulag sort of abuse, we can't be ignoring Solomon totally, even in the light of Jesus and Paul.

Chastisement is in, until we are perfect! Notice the varieties of its workings in your own life. But first, this word from the writer of Hebrews, quoting Proverbs 3:11, 12:

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and whips every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons."

Yes, tough words. The toughest in the New Testament on this subject. Notice they are spoken about the Lord's dealings with us. But in our dealings with children, we must pray about which

chastening on which son or daughter. And we must in fact walk in the Spirit of the Greater Solomon, and ask His specific direction for that specific child and that specific issue.

The Modus Operandi

But, from what I can tell, based on so many testimonials from across the country, this is exactly what did not happen when rules (oh so many of them!) were broken in “troubled teen” institutions.

Rather, “Infraction? Go get the rod!” meaning, the two-foot board hanging in the office (which is not even a Biblical “rod” to begin with!)

“Bend over kid. Hold ‘em down, staff.” Whack, whack...

Really, does that in any way match anything Biblical or spiritual? A ritual carried out with no forethought, no compassion, no insight into alternatives?

Next time, a closer look at the “breaking of the will.”

July 11. The breaking of the will

The breaking of the will?

I am not sure of the aim of a Christian “home for troubled teens”. If it is to build up the saved, then saved methods must apply. The discipling of young girls, as with boys, must model the ways of Jesus

with His disciples.

But if we are talking about converting the unsaved, as a certain percentage of the students who arrive over the years must have been in that category, by what stretch of the imagination can we see the past and/or present methods of the abusive teen homes applying to any form of evangelism mentioned or implied in Scripture?

What? Shame them into coming to Christ? What? Beat them into submission to the lowly Jesus meek and mild? What? Starve them into obedience to the One who fed multitudes with a graciousness unimaginable? Is this the way we bring people to Christ in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century? Have you nothing else to offer the lost?

The Word of God penetrates those who are coming to Him. Those who are not so reached, cannot be won over by brute force or human manipulation. They may “comply” but they will hate Christ forever for the shame that He (and these homes do claim to represent Him) brought to them.

On the “breaking of the will”

The aim of some modern family gurus is to break a child’s will, preferably by age one year. Gets one thinking...

Suppose I own horses. My horses want to ride free. But I need them to obey. I want to ride them peaceably, with no rebellion. How do I break the will of that horse?

Or suppose I am a Communist dictator. My people do not love me or my rules. They want to be free. How will I break their will so that they will serve me without question? And in fact, so that they will come to think they really love serving me?

Or suppose I am a parent. I have given birth to some strong-willed children. How can I break their will in such a way that they will do exactly what I say, when I say it, for as long as I say it? And even love me for it?

I ask you, is the answer to all three questions the same one? Brute force?

If the horse never does comply, we can shoot him. Same in Communist countries, for that matter. Can't do that at home, unless we are to go back under Moses, when stoning was allowed.

Of horses...

While we're talking about horses, I read recently that the breaking of a horse, that is, the training of a horse to be obedient, is not necessarily what I have just suggested. His future loyalty will depend on the type of breaking he receives. The idea is to get him to follow you out of respect, not fear.

So you create a personal relationship. Spend time with him every day. Talk calmly to him. Never get angry or scream or hit or be aggressive. All of that behavior breaks the trust, though you may get the desired effect for a while. Yes, occasionally, later on, a little tap on the buttocks or shoulder is helpful if disrespect seems to creep in. Reward his successes. Be patient. Be slow.

My goodness. Is that how horses learn?

"You can't get there from here"

I think the total breaking of the will is impossible, and undesirable, humanly speaking. Even God does not break the will. When the will is totally broken, a living creature can do nothing. The will is the essence of behavior. No will, no life.

What the Teen Home directors are looking for is the changed allegiance of the will, not the breaking of it altogether. After all the beating and restrictions and isolation and what-not, the child is asked to follow the master. And he weakly cries, "I will." His will is not broken. It is reassigned. Theoretically from that day on he will do what he is told.

Trouble is, that child won't remain a child with that master forever. Several possibilities will follow. Perhaps he will long for the day when he can be the master. He will become a bully and a misfit. Or, he will be so compliant as to be pushed around by everyone.

But his will will not die. It will be changed, but not broken.

When the methods don't work

We know of children who were never "broken" in this way at home. Never did really obey. And now they serve God as strongly as they were disobedient. Their will has been realigned. Christ came and whispered His love to them. They fell at His feet willing to serve Him forever.

And we know of compliant children who never needed much coaxing to be good, because they saw older brother or sister getting whacked so often they did not dare go out of line. Yet they never obeyed from the heart and were easily led away from the Lord.

So if compliance is all you are after, whack away. Only a complete fool will keep resisting your will with his own. This seems to have been the goal of many troubled teen home directors. Whack them into submission, have them write their testimony about how changed they were, send them home a "brand new person."

But don't count on any lasting effect unless Christ gets hold of that person, who is really just the same person with a new master.

The songwriter put it this way, with a little help from Jeremiah 17:9:

The heart is a rebel, and cannot be trusted, It always is seeking its own will to do, It has no allegiance, so desperate and wicked, The heart is a rebel, it's true.

Its love is brief as springtime, quickly growing old, Its hate is like the winter, desolate and cold, But someday the rebel will bow and surrender, Then God's love will make his heart new.

When God breaks the heart, a man turns his will around.

July 12. It's all about the heart

We pick up today where we left off at the last post.

The heart is the issue. God "breaks" the will and forms beautiful people from their heart. He actually writes His law on the new heart He creates. God's people want to serve Him.

Examples

The Philippian jailor of the Bible's book of Acts (16) saw Jesus in the apostles and wanted Him. Jesus had reached to His heart through quiet example.

The apostle Paul, Acts 9, had been "goaded" from within for some time when that light shone on his road. He knew he was wrong, but didn't know how to correct himself. God did.

Cornelius, Acts 10, was led to Christ by a personal visit of some believers. His heart was totally changed that day.

No Violence in New Testament

Under the New Covenant, the work of “reformation” becomes God’s work, with our work being merely to introduce people to Jesus. I do not see one human “breaking the will” of one other human in all the New Covenant time. I do not see violence or force advocated or practiced by a New Testament saint on another saint.

When the disciples wanted to use violence, He reminded them they were in the wrong spirit, doing things the old way.

Governments still have to bear a sword. We do not.

How did Jesus capture your will, Christian? By beating you? No, you heard the old, old story of Jesus’ dying on Calvary in your place, your heart was touched. You believed. and then you freely gave your will to Him. You are His because He won you. He drew you with cords of love.

In this, Jesus is our example for how to draw young people to an obedient life.

The Gentle Christ

Remember Isaiah? Jesus will not extinguish a “smoking flax” or discard a “bruised reed”. Go and learn what that means! He is so gentle, so accepting.

Are our children about to burn out, like that flax, already? Are they so damaged, like that reed, that you want to turn them over to a “home” to do the job you have been created to do?

Some unthinking person told me that the victims of a certain home were not “angels” and so they deserved the treatment they got. Yeah, they were damaged goods alright. What do you do with damaged goods?

Why, you damage them more, right? Throw them out! Discard. Disrespect. Punish them continually. Not Jesus. He doesn’t discard the bruised one. He heals her. Let Jesus have a chance first.

Easy for me to say? Yes. In raising my own troubled teens, I could have prayed more, strategized more (with the Lord), gotten some assistance from books and believers. But I wanted control, now!

Why do parents want control immediately? Because they feel they, the parents, are out of control? Is it their pride? Are they really worried about the children’s growth or their own face-saving?

There is a better way than the way we are seeing in “troubled-teen” homes.

Why no extra rules for child-raising?

Ever wondered why there are not so many commands in the New Testament regarding disciplining of children? I believe it is because we as believers are to live the Christian life with the children as we would with anyone else, based on the fruit of the Spirit outlined in Galatians 5.

Love. Must be tough, you say? The love described in 1 Corinthians 13 is not “tough love” in the sense it is often demonstrated in teen homes. Love must be consistent and firm. But never forceful or demanding. It’s a new world in Christ. We are to demonstrate that new world.

Notice the little “extra” at the end of the list of the fruit of the Spirit

in Galatians 5: "Against such there is no law!" If Christian homes leaders were walking in the Spirit promised by Jesus, not the old spirit of Moses, there would be no investigations, no lawsuits, no CNN reports. In America, there is no law against true love.

So, no separate rules for kids! Do I need a Solomon to tell me how to do this when King Jesus Himself, Wisdom Incarnate, is available?

July 15. Spirit-filled, Biblical parenting

First, they really are all different.

There are many unwanted children in the world. The church in its compassion has often reached out to them. All over the world, orphanages have sprung up to bless the unloved.

Unfortunately some of the compassionate ones entered the field with little or no training. It is not easy to put scores or hundreds of unrelated youth into a home situation.

Whether or not, in prosperous America, there is a call for such a ministry as this, one rule must apply, and that is the rule of individualism. To put it another way, the first rule is "No rules", when trying to determine how we shall deal with student X. Prayer. Conversation. Being led of the Spirit. Team discussions. We are all of one blood and all under sin, but there the similarities end.

Very Different

In a teen home for girls, for example. Young women are shy. Or not. They are creative. Or not. They are open. Or not. A hundred other listings could be made. And you will address all those differences with the same approach? Not good.

Will you punish a special needs child for learning slowly? Will you punish a blind student for not seeing? These are not actual charges, I am speaking theoretically. But will you force a shy child to emerge from a temporary cocoon before she is ready? Can you make a sickly child be well by coercion? Can you add your own brand of shame to the list of abuses she has already endured? And all in the name of Jesus?

Some came to you because of sexual sin, for the most part unintended by them. Will you blame them for this? Will you walk on their feelings forever? Some were unruly. And some of them were unloved. Can you overcome this evil with good, the best good, the love of God in your heart? Or will you try to defeat it with more evil?

Second, two ways to fail as a parent or parent substitute

There are two paths to defeat in parenting. First way, do too little. Let them just grow. Put the seed in the ground, provide basic necessities for life, and let the plant alone. This is abuse. It is unfortunately not covered in the lawbooks of local governments. You can get away with it. But your children will be a menace to all around them unless someone comes along to take your place.

Second way, do too much with the wrong methods. This is where places like the troubled teen homes come in. No one can accuse them of the former abuse. They certainly are trying to do something. And maybe in their heart of hearts they believe that they are somehow obeying the commands of Scripture. How that

could be in some cases , I know not, but it could be.

But most of us would agree they are dead wrong on so many of their methodologies. Yes, it must be hard to deal with “troubled teens.” But surely there are places where better solutions have been found. Shame on God’s people if it is only the non-Christians who have figured this out.

Third, the last words of the Old Covenant

Malachi 4:6 closes out with a solemn promise regarding an Elijah who is to come. The immediate reference is to John the Baptist, with a possible dual reference to an Elijah who shall come before Christ’s final return. The promise is that the prophet will turn the hearts of fathers and children to each other.

There was much confusion in Israel, much apostasy, even as in the church of our own day. Churches split. Families split. Alienation. But the prophet prepared the way for Christ, making ready a people for His kingdom.

Our job as parents is to prepare the way for Christ’s coming into the heart.

When Christ comes into a family unit, hearts are melted. Many are the testimonies of children and/or parents coming to the Lord in a preaching service, and melting into each other’s arms. No amount of discipline is responsible for that action. The Spirit of the Lord brings it about. Anyone who claims responsibility for the new birth by any other means is a liar and must be avoided.

We can teach. We can lead by example. But only Christ can change a wicked heart.

Fourth, a different Spirit

David unleashed curses upon his enemies. We are of a different spirit. Elijah prayed down fire. That is not us. Solomon recommended the rod. That is not necessarily our finest method. The judgments of the Old Covenant are true and good. Warfare and violence reigned, and God was in it! But that is not our day, Christian. Our homes must reflect that the Spirit of God and prayer and fasting and waiting are better tools than any Old Covenant saint used. From the Old Testament we get the knowledge of God, the examples of faith, much inspiration, but not day-to-day instructions on how to have a godly home and church.

Is it possible to raise children by the Spirit, as we are called to do everything else, vs raising them in the strong hand of flesh? Would we be told to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) if we could not do it?

July 23. What is a cult?

It's always a little tricky for Christians to try to define words and ideas that the Scriptures don't define. For example, I can take the word "cult" and make it mean whatever I want it to mean. The Bible won't stop me. It is silent on this particular word. So if I want to call some church a "cult" and its leader a "cultist", who's to stop me?

"But I have a definition," the accuser will say. Fine. From Webster, no doubt? But not all the peoples of the world use Webster, and some define this word terribly different. Is Webster to be the

source of my theology now? We've already established that "cult" is not in the Bible.

But, that's the system we are in today. My calling of your group a cult, you throwing the same term back in my face. And who can pronounce which side is correct? Your friend? Mine? You see, there is no real basis for using such a word, if God has not defined it.

Definitions

Murder we understand. Adultery we understand. Liar, we understand. Good Bible words with established definitions. But cult and cultist? Up for grabs. A person defines it for himself, then proceeds to place all those groups and individuals within those groups, that he doesn't particularly care for, in his newly created bag. Then he ties the bag securely with his reasonings, and throws it into the sea of public opinion where all are drowned immediately. Unfortunate, don't you think?

Nevertheless, to play by the rules established among us in the West, I will use Merriam- Webster, 11th edition, to define cult. I will give the five definitions mentioned, but abbreviate for space's sake.

1. Formal religious veneration.
2. System of religious beliefs.
3. Religion or group regarded as unorthodox.
4. System for the cure of disease.
5. Group showing great devotion to a person, idea, object, movement.

We must confine ourselves, mustn't we, to items 3 and 5, I presume? Questions of orthodoxy or fanaticism?

To the point. (You knew I would get there, right?)

Are “troubled teen” homes and their sponsoring churches cultic?

I was surprised, but I should not have been, when I heard a particular “troubled teen” reformatory and its foster mother denomination, labeled a “cult.”

When I was in Communist Romania in the 1980’s, I remember noticing that all non- Orthodox (as in Eastern Orthodox Church) churches were referred to as a cult.

Rome has viewed all Protestants that way, too, though you will not hear it so much today.

Some Christians must think of cults along doctrinal lines. That is, groups that deny the “fundamentals” of the faith would be cultic. (Number 3 above) “Liberal” churches that have no head but the smooth-talking pastor they have hired to do smooth-talking every week, Webster would call a cult. Totally unorthodox by historic standards. Hence, cultic.

Groups that are too fundamental, if that is a possibility, would not be classified as cultic, by our authorities, Messrs. Merriam and Webster. Being fundamental is not the problem at the teen homes and their assistant organizations. They’re pretty strong on the fundamentals.

Gotta find another way to classify them as cultist, if we must.

Maybe that personality idea. The personal magnetism of a leader draws fanatics around him. Scriptural truths are there, to keep a Christian appearance up and running. But behind the scenes is an agenda. As with Jim Jones. Jones’ agenda wound up in the death of many.

You remember. If not, Google will take you there. Jim Jones, Jonestown. Sad time.

The denomination in question on this site has raised some pretty strong leaders in the past. Not sure they would classify as “charismatic” (small “c” of course), or dynamic. We’ll reconsider that later. But strong solid teachers of God’s Word.

My own cult experience

I was in a cult once. Oh my. Fresh out of a failed ministry. Fresh out of my home denomination, from which I had been fired because I suddenly believed in the gifts of the Spirit. Just fresh. Couldn’t find or afford a place to live, but heard about some Christians who were living together in a house near the church I attended at the time. Great. Great people. We all lived in the same building but separately. Nothing communal.

Then came the knock on the door. The children of God [cult] had heard about us, and wanted to know if we needed fellowship. They were true believers, seemed to us. Taught us out of our own Bible. Fired us up to go the street with the Gospel. And with more than the Gospel.

Before it was all over, they had convinced us that America was dying, our pastor and his church were evil, and a whole lot more. I found out later that if I had just kept my mouth shut, I could have risen to the top some day, and had all the women I wanted, and so on and so on.

You get the picture. A Christian group. Teaching the truths of the Bible, and teaching them faithfully. But then teaching things that aren’t in the Bible, hence,

“unorthodox” per number 3 again (above). To the fundamentals

they add things that “just need to be said to this generation” etc. Their “distinctive”. Their “cause”.

If that is the way we must define cult – fundamental “plus” – for present purposes, we must also define a host of other churches in the same way.

Unfair labelings

My church as a child was the nearby “church of Christ”. Because of their insistence on water baptism, they were called a “cult” by many. I have long since left that group, but never once then or since have I considered that group of churches, cultic. Even the ones (unlike my childhood group) that insist that instrumental music is not to be used in worship...

I disagree with the music thing and the baptism thing. But I shall not use the “c” word against them. They told me their position. They told me many other things, very good things. I could take them or leave them. I left. No pressure. No guilt. In my opinion, no cult.

But one more shot at the personality cult. Some would say that that preacher down South, whose life and work we have covered earlier, was the beginner of a cultic movement when he started his teen home with all its rules and unBiblical practices.

It’s hard not to agree with that. Why do I even hesitate? Well, we old men sense our frailty. Our wrong assessments of the past. Our pending appointment with the Judge of all the earth. We want to be careful. Nevertheless we must speak what we see.

Seems like a cult by some definition...

That preacher was a strong and powerful and likable speaker and leader. Some would say, intimidating. You don’t cross men like

these. You follow, or you bail. But bailing is not that easy, when your parents have sold you to the cult – yes, I will use the word tentatively for these homes – for a multi-month or year sentence.

There is no question you will hear Biblical/Gospel truths at these homes.

But you will hear much more, at some of them. And what you will hear will slowly turn you against the rest of the Body of Christ. You will become proud and content that your new group has found the truth when no one else did. That is cultic, I believe. Your group above mine. Your group excluding mine, ignoring mine, writing mine off.

The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons produce the same feelings. They are cults by definition 3 also. May God's people beware.

But again, may we also remember that when humans define "cult" they are on shaky ground. As I established, there is no such thing in Scripture. Only false teachers. False prophets. False teachings. False ways. False methods.

Better to correct the falseness than put a label on an entire group of believers, throw them in that virtual bag of which I spoke, and cast them all, men, women, and children, alive into the sea. With such judgmental ways we open ourselves to God's righteous judgment on our own sins. Yes? Oh yes!

Let us go after the problem. Let's not burn the church down in our zeal. We will find as the apostles did that we are of the wrong spirit. And we may just find the spirit of a cultist looking at us in the mirror.

Cultists recognize cultists, after all.

July 24. What is a fundamentalist?

Too many people using too many words in too many ways breeds confusion and division. Last time we looked at one of those words: “cult.”

Now, take “fundamentalist” (somebody, please). Or fundamentalism. Or fundamental, if that is as far as you want to go. A whole array of possibilities appears before you, and what you do is mentally choose the one you think best fits. Depending on your choice, you may think the word a wonderful description, or a diabolic one. Diabolic seems to have the edge in our day.

It is, as “cult”, a word that has no real meaning, that is, no Biblical one. We church folks created it, or at least adopted it, and must endure its vicissitudes. It actually was a very good word in its youth, but old age has soured it, as old age sours many of its users.

Homeless Christians

I find myself in the unhappy place of church homelessness. Now, I do attend the services of a nearby congregation, thankfully. I am not an outcast. My meaning is that I love parts of nearly every church, and object, sometimes strenuously – though these days in my inner man, mostly – to doctrines and practices that have penetrated our fellowships.

But I do truly love fundamentalism. I must provide, with Mr. Webster and company, my own definition. I am allowed to do that, you see, because as I say, this church word is without father or mother linguistically and Scripturally, so I define at will. (Ready, Mr. Webster?) Here is our combined response:

Definition

Fundamentalism: A movement, with its beliefs, that stresses the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching.

But, I would add, using the base word “fundamental” as my key element: One of the minimum constituents without which a thing or a system would not be what it is.

Start with a literally true Bible, except in cases where parable or allegory demand otherwise. Believe it all. The creation. Israel’s history and prophecies pointing to Christ. The glories of Jesus, His life, teaching, death, resurrection. Then, the explanations of the Gospel and the applications to our lives in the letters of Paul, Peter, and the rest. The wonders of our future explained in difficult but slowly understandable language in the book of Revelation.

That’s fundamentalism to me. I love it. I have loved it for over sixty years. By God’s grace I will love it until I am called out of here to see the fulfillment in person of all I have taken by faith.

That definition of fundamentalism I should be willing to die for. Unfortunately, a new fundamentalism has arisen. It is more precise. More demanding. Looking much like the Pharisaical way of Jesus’ time. It makes discoveries that are sometimes true, sometimes not, then binds those conclusions on others who have not advanced to the spiritual level of the discoverer. Modern fundamentalism casts out and separates and hates, and is zealous, though often without knowledge. It is proud and exclusive.

And eventually it is death.

False fundamentals

I told my wife, nearly in tears, when I heard about the goings-on at a nearby “troubled teen” home , that I no longer wished to be

called a fundamentalist; that I no longer wanted to relate to people who believed they were following God's revelation, but were not.

I have included Scripture on this site to explain how far afield some of these "fundamentalist" homes and churches have come. Their attitudes and practices, the testimonies of their victims, all give my kind of fundamentalism a huge black eye. To the point where the term no longer means what I mean, a love of the Truth of God.

Instead fundamentalism today means, "Agree with me, or go away." It means, "I am right, and you will never be right. We are the chosen, you are the damned." It means, "I have power over you because of the knowledge I have gained. You have no power at all because you are ignorant and will never be able to match what we have been given. You are a bigot. " (there's a word we must examine one day!)

Accused!

Me a fundamentalist? I want to hide under the bed when you accuse me of such. Who me? I just love this Book and have found all the answers to my life in It. If that is fundamentalist, yes, I guess I am one.

I shared originally on this site a series of five posts on the Synanon cult [since removed], because some of their totally non-Christian methods look scarily like some of the methods used in fundamentalist reformatories. I challenge the Christians running these homes to back up most of their disciplinary methodology with any Scripture.

No. What they practice is not Biblical fundamentalism. It is control. It's an old game known by every Communist and Islamic regime. It is hard for big people not to try to control little people when they

can, so easily.

Of course the Lord calls adults to control their families! But He has put in place more powerful methods than the brutality that this world, and these homes, suggest. The Spirit. Love. Compassion. Self-control. Wisdom. Prayer....

So give me the fundamentals. Give me Jesus. His apostles. His prophets. Everything they wrote. Nothing more. Nothing less. And, please, don't call me a fundamentalist unless you see all these things in my arsenal, and none of the other.

July 26. Independent. Separated. (Better than you!)

Independent Americans

Independent is a word that teenagers love. Young, young children cling to their parents. Young adults quite often return to some sanity about the family.

But teens want independence. The kind of independence they want is not a mature sort. It is a "leave me alone" sort.

Americans love that word. So do some Bible-believing Christians. Independent! Free! Free from Rome, as said the Protestants. Free from the liberals, as said the conservatives (and "liberal" & "conservative" are a couple of words worth examining too).

Independent Christians

Some churches have taken “independent” to another level, though they are not the only Christian group that does that. To them, “independent” means, “no one is going to tell us what to do. I will believe only what the Bible says [meaning, my interpretation of what the Bible says]. You will not control me, whether you be priest or confession or creed. We will not officially fellowship with anyone. Our local church, started by us, will be ruled by us, and specifically by our pastor. Our pastor is God’s called man. Leave us alone. If we do fellowship with you, remember you are not going to influence us. We will not band together. We Are Free!”

Sounds nice, to some. But I see no such churches in Scripture, do you? Even those seven churches of Asia addressed by Jesus in the book of Revelation were not cut off from the others. There were true believers in each one, and they were told to be faithful, not to be separate.

But in the “independent” church, separation is a mandate. Not only are they to separate from the world, but from each other when necessary. And it always seems necessary.

Separate

So “independence” which, as “cult” and “fundamentalist”, is not a Scriptural term, bleeds right into “separation”, which is a Bible word. Let’s see if the modern separatists have it right with that word.

You’ll recall Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 5, perhaps. Paul had told the people to stay away from fornicators. They were starting to take him literally and extremely, it seems, and here he has to explain to them that he meant for them to withhold fellowship from believers inside the church involved in that sin. He lightly remarks that a person who is going to separate from all sinners will

have to leave this planet!

This separation from believers was intended only as a temporary measure, to cause the brother –and he still was a brother – to repent, at which point he was to be taken back with open arms, as the father in the prodigal son story welcomed back his erring son.

Jesus was separate from sinners, Hebrews 7:26, yet was accused rightly of being a friend of publicans and sinners, Luke 7:34. Which is it? Both of course. Separation has two meanings.

When Christ fills us with Himself and His word, we are sanctified, set apart. But also sent into the world. Separated inwardly, totally involved outwardly.

Sensual separation

Physical separation, especially for non-serious things, is looked at as a sensual Spirit-less activity by men whose motives are fleshly and dangerous, Jude 1:19. Why do people lead rebellions against leadership? Ask Korah about that, if he can hear your voice, buried alive in the Camp of Israel. He thought he knew more than Moses. Pride leads to separation and a desire to be in charge.

What about conscience, what about genuine sincere people who cannot abide hearing false teachings from the pulpit?

Why not pray? Talk with the pastor. Be a light in the congregation. As a final last resort, quietly move to another location, being sure the attitude is humble and not condemnatory and competitive.

Separation is painful and causes harm to the Body. Remember that the Reformers, by and large, did not separate. They were kicked out! They spoke the truth steadfastly and the powers that be cast them away.

Unnecessary separation

The separatists of our day have separated for the wrong reasons. They have taken a militant arrogant stance for the King James Bible that is not warranted, for example.

They not only want to have a simple life-style, they want to enforce that style on all.

Also, they have come up with serious errors regarding child-rearing and made that a distinctive of their group.

Some have entered into what they think is Biblically-justified racism regarding Black people, upon whom they say the "Mark of Cain" rests.

This is not about Biblical separation. This is something else.

There is another "Biblical" separation, now that I think about it. The word

Pharisee means "separated." This Bible cult did not start out so wrong. There

was much evil going on in Israel, in the centuries before Christ appeared. Greece was now the ruling power, and the Greeks emphasized man as the measure of all things. Totally humanistic ways permeated Israel's culture and the truly holy were concerned.

Their concern turned into separation from the culture. Reminds one of the Puritans, whose initial motives may also have been pure. But Pharisee, Puritan, fundamentalist, regardless of good beginnings, can turn into a distinctive outward religiosity that says nothing more than, "Look at me, and shame on you!"

People have always been in awe of the "holy ones" but not

benefited by them.

How the Communists helped the church

I was in Communist Romania in the 80's. The government had closed down many church buildings and forced believers to unite under one roof! The Communists had no idea they were bringing God's people together, forcing them to give up their pettiness and unite in the name of Jesus. The government shut down many of their buildings, but in the process, packed the remaining ones. I had never seen excited Christianity until then. What a joy to be among them. What the Communists meant for evil...

Unfortunately, when holiness becomes outward and demanding, the essence of true religion slowly evaporates. Such is much of the modern Pharisaism "I don't need you anymore. You go over there, and we'll go over here, and we'll both call ourselves the church and never speak to each other."

Oh great. That's certainly going to bring a lot of people to Jesus...

Worse. Your false ideas about raising children will be allowed to fester as a gangrene. No one will be allowed to come in and offer advice. No one will be able to share other Scriptures. Young people will continue to suffer.

Modern Pharisees: Get over your unBiblical separatism and re-join the Body of Christ! We are not all that bad over here. You might even get to liking us...

July 26. What is spanking? And abuse?

Is Spanking abuse?

We have been looking, in this last series of posts, at some over-used words in connection with Christian child abuse. "Abuse" itself needs a little attention this time. But, as it is often used in connection with "spanking", let's look at those words together.

Neither word, as words we have already examined, is found in Scripture. So we're left with the culture to help us define them. Not always a profitable enterprise, but important to try, anyway. Let's look at abuse first.

Definition

It simply means "the use of something in a way that is wrong or harmful."

One can use marijuana in a medical way, or in a body-destroying abusing, way. One can eat some sugar-food for a light dessert, or one can become addicted to sugar and have severe medical problems.

One can discipline his child in a number of ways, including occasional physical pain. Or one can beat the crap out of a child, even a baby, at every possible infraction. We usually think of the latter as abuse. I certainly hope so.

Other definitions

I hasten to add here, that many victims of Christian institutions are too quick to use the a- word. If they were never corrected physically growing up, they may consider any such application of "the rod" as abuse. Similarly, they may complain of abuse because they were

made to work all day.

We are not using victim definitions here, nor the definitions of those who deny Scripture its place in the raising of children. Nor the definitions of those who have done doctoral theses on the subject and determined that “physical correction is harmful to a child.”

We maintain Scriptural norms, trying to keep in line with the original definition which involves simply “wrong” or “harmful.”

Also, in this discussion, we will omit sexual abuse. I am becoming more and more aware of the pervasive influence of this demon, but have not examined it fully enough to speak properly of it.

I’m talking about those other realms of wrong and harmful use, which some think are good for the raising of a child, but are in fact seriously evil.

So, as I was saying, there are good and bad ways to do a number of things: A couple bad one:

Public Shaming

One can counsel a person privately with love about a sin that is ruining his life. Or one can announce to the child, in front of all his peers, the awfulness of his sinful ways, attach a label to him, and condemn him to hell. That’s abuse. It’s wrong. It’s harmful.

Isolation

One can separate a child who is misbehaving, in a short but meaningful way, to drive home the point that bad behavior will influence others. Or one can lock up a person in a closet, and pipe sermons into that closet for hours at a time, Kim Jong Un style. That’s abuse. Harm. Wrong. But it has happened quite often in

“Christian” homes. May God have mercy on the victims and the victimizers.

One of the evils of teen homes, is that they, with disciplines such as the ones above, have turned hundreds of would-be followers of the Lord against all discipline, all Scriptural mandates regarding correction, and they have graduated residents into the world who breathe out hatred for the church and everything related to it.

About “spanking.”

Let’s get real here. “Spanking” is not in the Bible. “Beating” is. We, in the culture, generally mean by “spanking”, the application of a paddle, or even bare hands, to the posterior of a child, usually one who is, say, four years old until teen-age.

The Biblical/Solomonic “beating”, on the other hand, was with a rod, and was applied to the back, not the bottom. It was reserved for adult fools and incorrigibles for the most part. The death sentence was also suggested by Moses for the worst of cases.

Thankfully, troubled teen “homes” and their parent churches, have not taken the Bible as literally as they think they have . The severity of sin is pointed out by Moses and Solomon and the entire legal Mosaic system. Innocent animals died in the place of sinful men.

Foreskins were whacked off at age eight days. Seems like a different system we are under now. But much of Solomon, they still want to lift up as normative rather than as prescriptive for some cases.

Sin is still sin

Not to say God is any lighter against sin. Sin will be judged. In one sense, it was already judged, at Calvary in His Son, and those who refuse that judgment must pay their own way. An awful thought,

and not the subject of this post.

What we're after here is, what is God's directive to God's New Covenant people regarding the raising of children? And perhaps as a corollary, how does God our Father deal with the sins of His people? Proper answers to these questions, applied to Christian institutions, would work a miracle of change.

So, is spanking abuse?

Is "spanking" "abuse"? Who is to give a definitive answer, a morally, spiritually authoritative answer, to a question whose only nouns are not in the only authority Christians know, the Bible? What we can do is refer every parent, at every situation where discipline arises, to the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit may lead one to apply some pain. That is not abuse. But that same "session" can turn into a power-fest in the hands of a sadistic bully who cares not for the Spirit's leading. Then, spanking truly is abuse, punishable in the courts of our land... and the sooner the better.

July 29. Critics among us.

Enter the critics.

As the opposition to the teen gulag has increased over the years, there have been, and will be, counter-attacks, and defenses.

The other side will want to know why in the world Bible-believing

people are daring to “attack” a Christian group. We can’t “air our dirty laundry” before unbelievers, can we? Why cause shame before the world that is watching us, as they are silently rejoicing that we are so self-destructive?

Why?

You want to know why? Simple: The cries of those who have been wounded is why. As one is walking down an avenue, and suddenly hears screams and cries emanating from a building, does he stop to look at the name on the building before he calls 9-1-1?

Does he say, “Oh that’s a Christian group in there! I’ll just leave them alone. They’re good folks. They’ll solve their own problems.” Is that the mentality? Unfortunately, for some, it is the thinking indeed. And the beatings go on. The screams continue.

Little people lie awake nights wondering when it will be their turn. Young people ask whatever God may be, “How long, Lord? When will my parents come back and rescue me from this torment? Why do I have to be here when all my friends are free?”

Can we believe them?

I have asked before, I will ask again, can we believe these screams? The question does not make sense. How can one dis-believe a scream? How can one ignore a scream?

For one, I believe what I have been told scores of times. Here’s some logic to support that belief, if screams aren’t enough for some people.

Why would all the released victims say the same thing about their months of torture, when asked separately to give their testimonies? Here’s what I mean:

Believing North Koreans

When the escaping North Koreans finally make it through China, then southeast Asian countries, to South Korea, that government takes them aside and listens to their stories. Nothing is taken for granted. Spies do escape, sent out with Kim Jong Un's blessed assignment.

But when it can be discerned that a refugee is telling the same thing they have heard from countless others, eventually the pressure is off and the new arrival is allowed to assimilate. Welcome to South Korea!

I must report that even then, many South Korean nationals do not accept the stories of their (supposed) brethren from the North. Just as many Christians in our own day do not accept the stories of the hundreds of escapees from Christian institutions.

Piling on?

After all, they say, some of these voices may be just "piling on". But their stories are incredibly like other past residents' accounts. Why can't we believe them?

Another serious question: If hundreds have come forward, and they have, I wonder how many more voices are still out there? Why don't they talk? Are they afraid still to face the towering bullies that have beat them into submission for so long, and threatened them about leaving, saying they could never make it alone?

Why don't all the past residents cry out?

Are past residents afraid to come against "the church"? The "man of God"?

Or is it that they are not wanting to relive the horror, by bringing it all up again? Just not wanting to have their life distracted right now? Indeed, for some it has been nearly forty years since all this happened to them!

It must be scary to whistle-blow alone. That's why, added to the reasons above, individuals did not say anything for a long while. Then, one bold one came forward. And another. More come out on a regular basis.

We've seen this drama working itself out before us on national media. In government conspiracies. In sexual abuse cases.

Homework for the Critics

Here's an assignment for a skeptic. Find a Christian "troubled teen" home online. One that is sponsored by that fundamentalist group I've been telling you about. Then Google its name with the word "abuse" following. Quite often, you will find an entire website given over to survivors of that home! I could list many for you, but have decided not to expose these names myself. You'll find them easily enough!

You say, that's just universal teen rebellion. Really? Find a Christian institution

not sponsored by that group. You will most often look in vain for any abuse stories.

I love the church. Even the fundamental church. May we who are members of her, all love her as the doctor loves the patient. But, guided by the Master Physician, let us be used to cut out this cancerous affliction that has settled into the Church Body over the last 60 plus years.

I see the smiles. What a day that will be.

July 30. A curious defense

How do teen homes respond when they are under attack? What happens when the allegations are coming in fast and furious, and have even reached the media, say, CNN, for example?

I ran across a newsletter from one of these homes, addressed of course to those who keep the ministry alive via donations. I think it will serve to exemplify the feelings and attitudes of similar institutions when they “come under attack”.

The newsletter narrates how a small group of former students “from about 20 or 30 years ago” [He says this to lessen the blow of the accusations. But not all were from that long ago] were beginning to defame and attack the home. They were claiming to have been beaten, starved, and abused. Further, they were trying to destroy the ministry.

The Director is shocked!

He says he is surprised about all of this, since some of the attackers had formerly been cordial. He then lists some of the cordial interactions. [But their testimony is that many were coerced into writing favorable exit letters.] He had thought all these folks were “grateful friends”. So, he claims to be totally clueless as to their actions. He theorizes...

Quoting Proverbs 16:28 about how “evil men” sow strife, and how a “whisperer” separates friends, he relates how these former residents soon attracted sympathy for their cause.

He bewails the fact that these now-adults did not want reconciliation for the alleged abuses but wanted instead the total shutdown of his ministry. [Yes, and many of them still desire this end.]

Losing friends

He is saddened that friends of the ministry now began to look at him with suspicion. He reports how others [“good” former residents] then tried to change these attackers’ minds, to cause them to give up their bitterness and anger [truth-tellers are just bitter and angry?] , but they, the “good” ones, were met by hostile responses.

He then tells how one who had been doing some independent research into the lives of some of the accusers, came up with the idea that these unhappy people were simply using the ministry as a scapegoat, a reason for their own personal failures. They simply believed they were victims, blaming others for their faults. [What if they really were victims?]

He is further surprised that some of his accusers are Bible believers. They were emotional, yes. Passionate, yes. Determined, yes. But especially, bitter and resentful. He compares these women to the Pharisees, compassing land and sea to accomplish their objectives. [How odd that a religious leader would call his former followers, Pharisees, yes? Pharisees were religious leaders. None of these past residents led anything when they were there, and very little since, only tried to do what they were told. Pharisees add things to Scripture, then punish those who will not agree with them.]

He states that he began to pray for them.

He goes on in the letter to find another psychological reason for the growing wave he sees coming at him. [It is not often that members of this religious persuasion appeal to psychology to deal with issues in their church.] These folks, he says, are just what is called in football, “piling on”, or in psychology, “social syncretism.” One person, he opines, would never do this alone, but in the company of others...

As stated, past “good” students who tried to speak to these attackers were harassed. This is his reasoning for removing all the names of the “good testimony” residents from the website. [It would also make it more difficult for “attackers” to find their names, warn them, help to heal them. But he does not admit to that].

The director then tells of a picketing session by an assembled group of past residents, where a local TV station became involved. The sheriff was visited by them, along with the newspaper and other officials in the County.

Evil people

To be sure that the “attacking” ex-residents are properly classified in the minds of his supporters, the director lets them know that after the picketing, [some of] the people did some drinking and dancing at a local bar. And that an atheist/pornographer was roused up by this story to shut the home down. Two lesbians came up the ministry driveway. Two others nearly hit a security guard. Filthy talk came out of their mouth. [Sad, indeed. But what of the born-again holy ex-residents living for God, raising godly homes to this day? They were there too? No mention of them. But they were there.]

In spite of it all, though, he is happy to report that no charges of any kind were brought against the home. [That is, no legal charges were officially made. The statute of limitations had long run out. But charges? Oh my, hundreds of them were made and are still being made. I have included some of them on this site.]

Regardless, he says, all the accusations [charges] are false or twisted. [With a wave of the hand, dismiss every crying suffering human? All liars. All crazy.]

He gives out the name then of the State Representative who will vouch for the ministry, with contact information conveniently provided. [And how long has that Rep lived in the home? What does he know?]

Spanking or no spanking?

He states further in his response, that spanking was stopped in 1996, but he doesn't say why. [Some question whether it was stopped, I am told.] Now, he says, he can no longer take violent or defiant students, [admitting that the former response to violence and defiance, was violence].

Now, he can only take students now who are "controllable." Well, we know from my former posts how staff "controlled" students in the past, with or without the physical punishment. And the methods I have documented are not a lot better than the beatings, per the reports that continue to emerge.

And if you are wondering, as I am, how you can find a teenager with no defiance, and still label him/her "troubled" and in need of your services... it's a fair question.

July 31. Teen gulag vs the media

In the last post we looked at some of the rationale given from teen homes to supporters. These homes everywhere are under attack from outraged parents, former staff, and former residents, as we have documented earlier.

They are under attack because of abuse. Their faith is not mentioned. Their denomination is not questioned. Abuse is the theme in wave after wave of communication to these homes. Will they listen?

One home's newsletter begins by sharing the good news that two of the present residents have come to Christ, and another has been "restored". It is this glorious victory, says the Director, that has brought fresh attacks against the ministry.

That's one way to look at it. The wrong way, imho.

Some bad news

He goes on to relate some "unsettling" news. The media is closing in. A & E. Sixty Minutes. News agencies want to know about a settlement with the family of a girl making claims that could destroy the ministry forever. They ask about the rumor that a neighbor was asked not to call the authorities if any of his residents ran away and on to his property.

Just allegations. Smoke. Lots of smoke.

Those disgruntled girls

When under attack, one easy defense is that the whole thing was just started by "disaffected, disgruntled" past students [thus again writing off their litany of tortuous acts .]

Or, just accuse the attackers of distorting facts and questions. Like, why do grown people wet on themselves? Blame them for the oddity, instead of the rigid bathroom schedule of the home.

Sure, some of them were placed in diapers, “not to shame them, but to help them gain control.” They did not want the furniture to be ruined either. [Slowly but surely the truth comes out of past irregularities.]

The one behind it all

Surely there is a leader of these “disgruntled” ones, he opines. [They love the “d” word, it seems, as a catch-all to explain what for them is the unexplainable.] This person has reached out to as many past students as possible.

That is the wonderful truth. For directors, it is totally inexcusable. The person, a grandparent now, would gladly admit to this nefarious activity! But it was to rescue souls, to help in their healing, to keep others from having to be scarred in the same ways.

More psychology on the loose here. Some directors point to attitudes in the accusers that are identifiable in textbooks. Masochism, for one. These rascals love talking about their hurt. They allow people to hurt them.

Masochism or Forgiveness?

There is such a syndrome indeed. Masochism is always a possibility for some. But for others, it is called forgiveness. Some have chosen to overlook the failings of the homes, even the pain to themselves and others, in the name of the One who bore all our sins at Calvary. They forgive and move on with their lives. Yet even some of them are encouraged to get in the struggle to rid the church world of places that hurt others in the name of Jesus.

Media

What about all those stories on the web, CNN, picketing, A & E, 60 Minutes: all of them instigated by “disgruntled” souls. [There it is again. This word, by the way, comes to us from the seventeenth century, from a word meaning to “grunt” or “grumble.” It means today, “ill-humored” or “discontented.” I just can’t imagine why the residents of these homes could be feeling ill-humored when they think of their experiences. Can you?]

Media always the enemy?

When the stories hit the fan, that is, the media, the easy come-back is that the media is corrupt and prejudiced. True enough. Yet you will see defenders of the homes on that same media. Are those persons also corrupt and prejudiced? Or is everyone just telling the story as honestly as possible?

There really is prejudice, more and more, in the media, against the Christian church. So why do we keep feeding them information by abusing children?

And I’m trying to think of a very good and decent ministry that was ever gone after by a TV interviewer, in America? Benny Hinn? Kenneth Copeland? Jimmy Swaggart? Jim Bakker?

Catholic priest pedophiles? Not paragons of excellence, these. Does the American media come around when there is absolutely no story?

Directors worry that “we would be made to appear as cultists...and possible felons.” Indeed? How could they do that? Maybe, the huge fences and walls around the property? Maybe the hundreds of accusations from now-grown men and women?

Apostasy abounds

The persecution angle is popular in the defense of the gulag. This intensification of heat against them is proof of the apostasy of the church and this nation. They go from that thought to the fact that Christians are now being persecuted and ridiculed. We call this a smoke screen. Yet, true enough. There are cases out there that show an anti-God bias. But it is equally true that all the false ministries brought to light, somewhere along the line claim their rights are being trampled on, that they are being persecuted.

One could turn this around to the homes and note that there are a number of grown men and women, victims, who feel they were the persecuted ones, trapped in a prison where they could not defend themselves.

Tears

Many years this back and forth with the media has been going on. Directors claim they shed tears regularly over the awful accusations. But no tears that perhaps many residents have actually been destroyed and were crying at home for other reasons?

Shutdowns!

These men and women who lead the homes are proud of seeing “troubled teens” [I’ve come to look negatively on that phrase] come to the Lord, but they lament that the angry and bitter can use the internet to destroy. As an example, one man points out that a ministry he knows of finally had to close because of the “furor of past students.”

[Amen! Thank you, Lord! Indeed. And a host of others!

So why are “past students” raising “furor” – good word – on the

web, I wonder? Nothing better for these grandparents to do?

August 1. How to correct and save a child, 1

In doing the research for this blog I ran across what might be called a position paper for the Christian teen gulag. It dealt with the dual subject of correcting and saving children.

Of course, there is no Biblical blueprint for a parent saving a child for eternity. But the implication of this paper is that if one will follow the directives that the author believes he found in Scripture, salvation by God is more likely.

It is an interesting discussion, this saving of people. Why does God save some and not others? The debate has

been going on for centuries. One thing is certain. We don't know. While we can agree with the premise of the gentleman's work that there is more likelihood for salvation when a child has had a godly upbringing by godly parents, we all know there is no guarantee. The godliest of homes have produced some ungodly offspring. And true saints have emerged from the ruins of a home that never should have been to begin with.

Leaving that mystery behind, let me approach the work of this modern guru of church discipline, who, like the Pearls mentioned on another post, has quite a following in the fundamentalist community. Some of what he offers is pure gold. Much is not. I will

share his findings, re-worded as to escape plagiarism (!) and critiqued, hopefully from a Biblical perspective.

And contrary to those who love to sniff out slander, I am allowed to disagree with anyone at anytime online or off. But just so no one is offended, the author of, and title of, and link to this work, will be my little secret. Suffice it to say that the original paper was put together as complaints of abuse in Christian-run homes were pouring into media outlets of all sizes and shapes. And let me add that I am not sure whether the author has changed his opinion on some of these things. Let's hope so.

Not all bad

As I stated, much of what the author says is straight from the Bible, and therefore true. Even some of his interpretations seem acceptable. But, I bring his work before you because many of his conclusions bear witness to the fact that children in homes across America are being

abused in the name of Jesus. We call for it to stop. The idea is not to stop discipline. Not even to stop physical discipline. But, abuse. You'll recognize what I'm talking about as the report goes on.

Christian to Christian

I remind readers that this blog is from a Christian to a Christian. I am not blithely expecting unbelievers to buy into Christian understandings.

His paper.

1. Knowing what is expected of you

Point one he draws from Proverbs (KJV). "Withhold not correction

from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 23:13,14

Proverbs 13:24, "He that spareth his rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

His comment here is that, though our natural tendency is to "withhold", we must fight this and obey the Lord. Surely there is truth to this. But is it the whole truth? When the Spirit lives in a man, does He not deal with feelings too, and give us a new "heart", or seat of emotions? Do those new feelings from Heaven that break us, cause us to want to take a rod to break others?

And, did Jesus really cry over Lazarus? Over Jerusalem? Did Jeremiah cry over Israel? Are we always to deny feelings? Won't a broken heart on our part cause us to see our own sin and find other ways to deal with discipline?

2. Men only!

Using Hebrew syntax he determines that only men are addressed in Proverbs. Using context, he assumes Dad is the one, also. He says this agrees with the rest of Scripture. I begin to doubt the author's scholarship early on in his work.

I am a firm believer in the ultimate authority of the man at home, and in the church. But, in my Bible, children are told to obey their parents, plural. We could possibly agree with him in principle, but he brings in only one other Bible author as authority for what he has just said: Paul in Ephesians 6:4, where fathers are to bring up children in the nurture of the Lord.

He ignores the countless homes, even Christian ones, where there simply is no dad. And there is no dad in the teen gulag either, if we

must be technical. Only substitute dads, which he writes off in his work.

3. Who should we be correcting?

Who is a child and who is not? He suggests that the parents need to decide when a child is no longer a child! Here begins his speculation. His own ideas. Notice he does not address immediately the idea of when correction begins. That shocker is left for a few paragraphs down. Rather, when does correction end? I agree that it is up to the parent. Some offspring continue to need reproof and a “rod” of some sort late into their lives. Let’s see what his ideas are.

One possibility he advances is to stop “correction” when the child starts paying his bills, creates his own household, or reaches a certain emotional age. This teaching would have trouble on the mission field, where in many cultures, the head of the clan is always the head of the clan. Grandpas and beyond can still hold sway over the disciplining of an unruly one.

We appreciate his honesty in this section, by stating that these are merely his opinions and not from the Lord. Clearly, we wish other sections of the paper had retained this spirit.

To be continued

August 2. How to correct and save a child, 2

This is part two in the reviewing of a position paper written by a Director of a Christian teen home. Principles found herein are followed by many.

At our last listen, the author was humbly suggesting some of his own opinions on the matter of when discipline should end for a child in the home. But he is suddenly quite dogmatic when talking about when it should begin.

4. Early!

He claims that it is certain, Scripturally that correction with the rod must start very early. Once more he appeals to the great King Solomon:

“Chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Proverbs 19:18).

Proverbs 13:24 is usually the go-to verse. He has already used it. There, the old English word “betimes” (early) is invoked as proof that beatings should begin in early childhood. As we mentioned in another post, the word can mean early, yes. But “soon” is better in context.

Deal with disciplining a situation immediately, rather than putting it off. .

At any rate, the passage he uses here gives no specifics whatever about when to start disciplining. So he has no basis for which to make the rule.

5. Got to break that will

This is a cardinal doctrine of the modern disciplinarians. Logically

the need to break the will, leads to demanding that one should start disciplining while the will can still be broken. Still no time frame.

And , as you see, breaking of the will is not mentioned in either of these passages.

He next appeals to his long experience in the troubled teen industry. He says parents are always calling him, desperate. His take on their plight is that they did not start using the rod while there was still hope, that is, very early. He encourages these parents, letting them know that technically it is never too late, so whack away as soon as possible. (Not his words.)

He then relates a story about a desperate mother whom he advised to go find a stick and start using it on her teenage daughter. Three weeks later, voila! She calls back and reports that victory has been won. Her 16-year-old is changed.

This child has learned only that mother is stronger. That physical power wins the day. The mother has learned that overpowering a child “works”. But is that the goal? We don’t want to write off the need for occasional physical force. But relying on it as God’s only way to change a heart does not seem to be in keeping with who we are.

The author started out talking about two methods of correction. Reproof and the rod. So far, reproof has gone “poof”, disappeared, and the rod has arisen as the savior of the young.

6. Of Beating

He next goes back to that first directive about beating a child,

“For if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die.” (Proverbs 23:14)

He is honest here in saying that the Bible word is not “spank”, but “beat”, and that that word conjures up very nasty pictures.

What he does not admit is that that nastiness has been exacerbated by his and others’ use of Solomon’s Proverbs to give vent to an unnatural and evil sadism pent up in the hearts of some men, and, yes, women.

He does not tell us that his brand of beatings has caused many parents to run from physical discipline altogether, brought the media to look down on the church, and sent many would- be believers packing.

7. Bunch of do-gooders!

He classifies those who come against his brutality (which we will see in a while) as either liberal thinkers or do-gooders. He ridicules those who use only praise, persuasion, and withdrawal of privilege as forms of discipline.

It is true that some are too easy on their children, afraid to hurt them. But perhaps a greater evil is those who take beating too far, and create hatred of all discipline and all church and even God. The stories of those coming from his home and homes all over the country are proof of what I say.

8. Moses

He continues on with his defense of the word “beat” by referring his readers to Moses, Deuteronomy 25:2, 3. Clearly a serious beating is in mind here. Forty stripes for a criminal!

So what are you saying, Sir? And what are you leaving unsaid?

Finish the comparison. Remind your readers that Moses demanded the death penalty for young people who still didn't get it after being beaten.

9. What is the objective?

In the mind of the author, pain is the objective. I would say, correction is the objective.

He uses now the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, verses 6-11, where the Scriptures make it clear that chastisement of a child of God is often painful, and is proof of sonship.

But as we know, physical chastisement is not the only kind in view. Surely His dealings with us are not always physical

10. The Mystical Rod

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

He uses this verse to speak of the mystery of physical correction. If you keep hitting the child enough, bad things mysteriously go away. Really? I think if you hit enough, other things go away also: Self-respect and respect of the child for you. The child himself, just as soon as he is able. Personality. Joy. A lot of things are lacking in an overly-beaten child.

We must not argue against the Scriptures. He speaks a measure of truth here. But we of the New Covenant have a more mysterious form of correction. We are not being spooky. If parents will go to God when each need arises, I believe they will find God's arsenal has in it much more than a pile of sticks. Especially so if the young person has entered into Christ.

Physical punishment grows callouses. It gets old. Children learn how to endure a few minutes, then go on with their lives. Is there no other way to allow God's own "hurt" to enter a child's heart, as it enters our own, so that God will get the glory for a changed life, and the child will not grow up hating all that parents stand for?

Next time he and I will talk about frequency and consistency in the use of the rod.

August 5. How to Correct and Save a Child, 3

We have been reviewing a paper put out years ago by the director of a "troubled teens" home. That home was structured after the famous/infamous pattern of homes begun by a 60's radio preacher, of whom we have spoken earlier on this blog. The majority of other such homes have long since perished from the earth. Former residents, hundreds of them, are hoping for some resolution to their broken lives by a confession from those who, wittingly or un-, abused them years ago.

No man is qualified to condemn another. Some of the homes had their good points. Staff was not all evil. But there were some policies that prevailed,

some poison that had crept into their otherwise Biblical platform of belief. It is the poison we decry, and even ask that some of these

homes be shut down, if not brought to court.

To the paper:

11. Consistent, repetitive

The author insists that correction must be consistent, and repeated. He says that the Hebrew demands that a one-time beating is not in view in the Solomon passages of Proverbs, but rather an “ongoing activity of beating.” As with much of his Hebrew musings, not sure of the validity of this point.

Parents will be delighted to find that a lot of beating at first will lead to a lesser need for beatings as time goes by.

Surely any child with a lick of sense will put two and two together. “Bad stuff equals pain on the behind.” There is a control factor here that does “work” on some children, but not all. We ask the learned director, “Is outward compliance the goal?”

And how does one account for the many children willing to bear the pain, working around the pain, and going on with their sinfulness a little more discreetly? Does beating stop the cravings of the human heart with which we were born?

12. I tried this already!

Parents tell him, I tried it, it doesn’t work. The director chides them, letting them know that they have essentially called God a liar. Solomon said it would work. You’re just not being consistent and repetitive enough. Parent, it is all your fault if the child does not respond.

Maybe you aren’t hitting hard enough. You’re not determined enough. You’ve let too much time pass between beatings. You’re

really making the child worse. Now he disrespects you and your beatings.

Not mentioned are the parents who go the other way, bruising their children regularly, making them live in fear, as it is in some of these homes. No other method is being suggested by him now. Only the beating. Where is reproof? Counseling? Hugs?

Understanding? The rod is the one-stop-shopping method for discipline, in his mind, or so it seems.

He once more mentions the breaking of the will as a goal. And the whole idea of the “contest” that the parent must win.

Sadly these concepts fall short of even Proverbs, but especially the New Testament. Beating a child to win a victory or to break a will... simply not there.

13. Again, Early!

He mentions Ecclesiastes 8:11 in this regard: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

As we all know, this is courtroom talk, not family talk. We were speaking of the raising of tender plants called children, not hardened trees in the jungle of their adult life.

It is important to repeat here that the principle he is looking for is found in the word “betimes” in the King James. “Early.” Yes, as we have stated twice, it is true that discipline, in whatever form it is called for, should be carried out immediately. Unfortunately, the author and others use this word to mean that infants should start getting beaten asap. Read on.

14. "Sessions" of correction.

The residents of some teen gulag homes know well what "sessions" are. Screams emanating from the punishment room, signaled to those trying to sleep, that a "session" is going on. My heart weakens here. The tears begin to form. Am I back in Nazi Germany? Is this Wurmband's Romania? Am I trying to sleep in a Kim Jong Un Camp?

He argues that "vigor" must be present in the "session." A child may get up from a whipping still rebelling, still with a bad attitude. Then, the session cannot end. Give him some more until he can rebel no longer. Then you have won.

Why am I seeing a Muhammad Ali boxing match right now? Keep on hitting till the guy falls. Till he is crushed and can't take any more. Then we come over to you, joyous Dad, lift your arm into the air, and declare you the winner! Bravo! Great job, Champ!

The director tells of a child born into their family that was so rebellious, that sessions had to last anywhere from one to two hours.

15. And the tool?

Simply put, says the author, the tool is the rod. On the posterior.

But as I asked before, where is the "posterior", or "buttocks" as he will mention later, spoken of in Proverbs? The "back" is the Solomonic target.

He further describes what is not described in Scripture: The rod must cause pain but does not tear flesh. Not a pencil or a ruler. Not barbed wire. It is probably a wooden paddle.

Probably? “Probably” doesn’t count in discussions like these. “Paddle” also is not mentioned in Scripture. Are we to be literal or not?

A “paddle on the buttocks” is not the same as a “rod on the back.” Many of these directors used the hardwood paddle... until they were stopped by public pressure. But how are they disciplining now, if the “paddle/rod” is God’s only Biblical tool?

Also worthy of note is that the weapon – that is, tool – “does not tear flesh.” Yet in a few paragraphs he will use Solomon once more to advocate bruising and blood. I’m no doctor, but my casual observations over 73 years tell me that blood flows only when flesh has been torn.

Oh there’s more. And it doesn’t get better.

August 6. How to Correct and Save a Child, 4

It is a little of the philosophy in the mind of gulag leaders, that one must “hurt till it helps.” But as we read the testimonies of those who were hurt it is obvious that the philosophy was taken a bit too far. No, a lot too far.

We are looking for the last time at a position paper written by one gulag leader, to help us see what guides the actions of the gulag.

16. Why all this physical discipline?

It is the author's contention that beating a child at home will prepare him mentally for the concept that there is a

penalty for sin, and that sin is an ugly thing. He will be able to grasp the idea of salvation from sin when that is offered to him at an older age. He will learn to obey the Heavenly Father in the same way he has obeyed his earthly one. A child rarely corrected or corrected improperly will not understand chastening of the Heavenly Father later on.

Thankfully, the director allows that there are exceptions to this rule. Many rebels have been tamed by the grace of God, he says.

And we must add that many well-beaten children have evaded the Kingdom of God altogether. Graduates of teen homes are made up of a mix of products. There are some who swear allegiance to this place forever, where some hurl curses on it regularly. Some are saved because of their "home" experience, while others get saved later in spite of it.

Some continue to live in sin because the gulag home turned them off to God and the Church, while others continue to live in sin because no beating of any kind was able to change their mind about anything.

We also have to wonder out loud whether the forms of discipline available at the "home" demonstrated to them the love of a father that somehow mirrors the love of the Heavenly Father.

17. Wrong discipline sends to hell

In the author's thinking, a parent who does not beat his child regularly is sending him to hell. Hence, Proverbs 13:24, which states that that parent actually hates his child.

Sadly, there are parents who do hate their children, who wish their children had not come along and disturbed their happy life. They are indeed culpable in terms of the child's destiny. But Christian parents should not be put under the curse of hating their child if they do not use a hardwood board every time the child shows disrespect or breaks one of the family rules, as was the case at teen homes until the law showed up.

18. Child abuse!

In defense of those who cry "child abuse" when hearing such practices as his own, the author shouts back that it is neglectful parents who are the true abusers.

If I may trade shouts: There is a middle ground. It is the opinion of most people who read the stories of these victims, that child abuse, however one defines it, did indeed take place in troubled teen homes, and may be taking place now. Faulty understanding of, and/or extreme application of, Solomon's principles, plus using little or none of Jesus' principles will cause child abuse to happen even in a "Christian" setting.

19. Go ahead: bruise and tear

The director hears another charge against him, namely that "bruising" may occur in a "session of difficult correction." In his mind, Solomon (God) already knew this charge was coming and so gave us Proverbs 20:30, he says: "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly."

Are you sure, Sir, that this is what Solomon was talking about? Raising children? We are to wound a child so much, even give him "stripes"? It is clear from the survivors' testimonies, that this is indeed what he believes. Bruises. Blood. The victims will testify to

the blueness of their own wounds, and the blood that caused serious problems of undressing. Yes, it happened.

For the record, “bruising” and “stripes” are for criminals. Not small children. Ask Solomon how he was raised...

20. Bitter medicine

Parents who refuse God’s (the author’s) way of correcting a child via the board, are labeled humanist, disobedient, and unthinking. He compares his form of discipline to the giving of bitter medicine to a child dying of a disease that only that medicine will cure. Why, he says, you would even hold the child, yea, get help to hold the child, to get that medicine down the throat. One must do whatever one must do to get that medicine down.

One is poignantly reminded of scenes from within some homes where teen-aged girls were indeed held down by staff and chair. We get the point. But we ask, is severe beating the only medicine you have on your shelf, Sir Director?

The same prescription, dose after dose after dose? Is that how to cure a disease? How about the “radiation therapy” of God’s love? The “surgical” qualities of God’s Word? A bottle of compassion? A slice of understanding.

If you are not careful, that medicine you demand can become addictive. Not to the patient, but to the administrator. Parents can learn to be sadistic yet all the while believing they are saving their child’s soul.

21. When to begin?

Didn’t we answer this already? Oh yes, “early”, we were told, though the Scripture there is talking about dealing with issues

immediately.

When should physical discipline (for that is all we have been talking about) begin in a child's life? Our friend tells us "there is no clear and specific answer to this very good question."

So let the answer end here. You have proposed to give godly counsel on this matter. You believe the Bible. The Bible is silent. Why should God's people listen now to you? But wait. He speaks. His answer, his opinion:

"As soon as the child manifests the need." He tells us that the sweet innocent-like look of a young baby is an illusion. The child is really "a selfish little beast."

22. Sinful beginnings

I believe, as does he, in man's depravity, that is, his inclination to sin, his inability to come to God without Divine grace. I do not believe that that justifies our labeling of children with this description. Imagine Jesus saying, "Let the selfish little beasts come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of God."

No, they are not totally innocent, but more innocent, I think, than one who beats a crying baby because the baby is crying. Keep reading...In his own words:

"My wife and I have a general goal of making sure that each of our children has his will broken by the time he reaches the age of one year."

Ghastly thought. Admittedly not in Scripture, just the rule of "my wife and I." And carried out at the "home" on staff children, per eyewitnesses.

Think of it. The helpless baby has a stomach upset. But it's in the middle of a church service. Not good, child, time for a session! The baby is whacked a few times. But cries more, in rebellion. Not sinful rebellion here, but a stomach that is rebelling. More crying, more whacks. Until the baby gives up, exhausted. What a world this child has entered. No tender mom saying baby-things, kissing its brow, hugging it, burping it if necessary. No. The rule is, you cry, you pay. You selfish little beast!

This is the most awful idea I have ever read. I hope it doesn't spoil your day. And I do hope that whoever cries at your house today, maybe even you, will have loving support from someone who lives there. God help us!

23. Testimonies of the rod

Next he tells the story of a man who thought he was being too hard on his son. His friends around him even said as much. The son went on to be a servant of the Lord, and one day returned with tears to his father, thanking him for what he had done when he was a child.

This story has been repeated often, I am sure. Better the rod than the gutter. Better the rod than the jail. Better the rod than an untimely death by overdose or alcohol. Who can argue this?

Testimonies abound of how a jail sentence turned a man in the right direction. But, to justify every form and amount of punishment on the basis of personal testimony is not wise. Could it have been done a better way? Motivation may have been correct, but was the method God's first choice? Who gets the glory out of the child's success? You and your paddle? Or the grace of God?

24. Persecution

Next, the position paper contends that parents who follow his

prescription are going to be persecuted. How ironic. So many victims of the homes felt that they were the ones being persecuted.

So they must be very careful how they execute God's commands. Meaning, spank them privately. Don't let anyone know about what you have done.

25. You're all wrong!

In closing he tells us that those who disagree with him are definitely in the majority, but that they are definitely in the wrong. Very wrong.

But one must ask him, Why are so many of his products living nightmarish existences now? They were surely beaten enough. Something is seriously missing in his equation, though some of what he has told us is certainly true. Pray for him.

And finally,

A Response to this paper

Once more, please allow that passion often replaces the best of grammar...

This is horrible teaching and I cannot believe our system has allowed to keep his doors open with all of this evidence of abuse before there (sic) eyes...WE former students of

have been doing everything we can to get someone to LISTEN....are our voices not GOOD enough ?? WE experienced the ROD OF GOD first hand and were horribly abused by first hand,...and yet the home is still open....TERRIBLE MISJUSTICE !!!!! WHO WILL BELIEVE US.....?

Actually, a little look around the internet will let you know that many are listening. I believe that more are on the way.

August 8. The media, revisited

We spoke of the media not long ago. One more visit, with your permission.

We are not North Korea. Or China. Or a Muslim nation. In those places, the media is told by the government what to say about the Christian Church and its ministries.

Looking for a story

In America, though there be a bias against much of Christianity, the media by and large stays away from the “Church”, whatever that word might mean, unless it senses a great news story and an abuse of human rights.

Such has it been with American media and the Catholic Church. In this generation at least, there seems to be a more or less favorable approach to Rome and its illustrious leader. Its pageants, the visits, her holidays generally get a thumbs-up.

But not always. Consider the recent scandals regarding men abusing children. That men are abusing each other in the Roman priesthood can no longer be considered a “story.” It’s politically correct and normalized now that men can love men in this sordid way. But let

them touch a child, and the political correctness spirit invades the newsrooms.

Shocking Protestants

The Protestant part of things has been an easier target. If we are not accused – rightly – of things illegal, at least we are brought to task for things considered shocking, and against our stated principles. Think Swaggart. Bakker. And some prominent men of this very decade.

These men need to be forgiven, certainly, but their exposure seems just also. None of them would have come forward to confess this tragic behavior had not the media gotten involved.

Can you see exactly where I am headed here? Of course you can. The “teen gulag” is hiding behind the world’s “apostasy”, the media’s “prejudice”, and all the normal places to hide.

Granted, the apostasy is on, in full force. Granted that some of the media delights in what they are finding. But do we not believe there are any Christians at CNN and the rest? None who view integrity and morality as do we? I will not write off any class, any network. Though I must add, CNN is not my favorite place to get the news.

In spite of all the hiding, is it not likely that when places like CNN, A & E, “Sixty Minutes”, and local broadcasters, all report the same findings, that there is something going on?

There’s a teen home not far from where I live that attracted attention from its local media outlets. One of the earliest reports came shortly after a task force had been formed by many survivors. At that time, eighty such persons (not a couple disgruntled ones) had been discovered who were willing now to speak out. Many had shown up at the local courthouse. They meant business.

I paraphrase their story.

The report, very fairly done, suggests that adults waited ten, twenty years to come out, because of shame perhaps, or thinking that no one would believe them. Their stories are indeed hard to believe. But why come out with such things?

was there, hoping publicly that the home would be shut down. She claims that for nine months she was starved and paddled and kept from parents.

says she was forced to take a vaginal exam in her dress, no hospital gown, no hospital! She felt violated.

labeled then a “Victims Assistance Coordinator”, informed the public about the legal status of such homes, especially when affiliated with churches. They are not regulated in any way by the government, she said, and the task force wanted to change that.

Sadly, the statute of limitations had run out on all their allegations. An appeal to the state legislator for the region was not responded to by his office. This we understand, as

states in a 2011 newsletter, that this man had visited the home often, and vouched for its integrity and credibility.

I heard just recently from one who was there, that if that legislator had been allowed to see the truth, things would be different today!

But the protest was off and running. And hasn't stopped since.

CNN

A leading CNN figure, in a series, weighs in on several abuse allegations in America, but gives most of his time to that same home, about which a dozen young people had confided to them,

that it was a place of abuse. He shows a staff member unwilling to give any sort of comment on the charges.

Here we first meet (on film) , 45 at the time, who spent two and a half years there in the 80's. She is the one who put together the website that features most of the charges of the victims, and who reaches out to more and more people all the time.

claims that her parents sent her to the home, originally, to help heal some issues that had arisen at home. Healing did not happen. What had been described to her family, did not come to pass.

While cleaning the ceiling soon after her move-in, she was accused of having a bad attitude, bodily "man-handled" to the floor, and "whacked" with a board by a "very big man" using what she felt was his full strength. Though she had been paddled all her life, she had never been hit like that.

She fantasized about suicide several times during her first years out of the home.

A Better Baptist

Then is shown , twenty years old, out of the home only a few years at this interview. She was sent there to become "a better Baptist" among other things. She was twelve. Taken into a "closet" where a man forced a vaginal exam on her with no explanation. She was screaming.

also claims that in her fifteen months at the home, she never once left the grounds. And that she has nightmares about this place all the time. She dreams of being trapped in a house where she cannot get out.

Strange discipline policies

Twenty-eight youth , one bathroom, says the reporter next. But you cannot go to the bathroom until you are told.

wet the bed every single night she was there. Made to feel shamed because of it. Forced to wear “pull-ups” every night and show them to staff every morning.

The home at that time claimed there were no spankings. By the interview time, that was true. But no explanation was offered for twenty-five years of them.

Also claimed by the home was, “no out-of the-way” punishments. You can believe that or the testimonies available.

In the wrap-up of the interview, he asks his reporters about the problem kids at this home. The answer: not all these kids are “problem kids.” In many cases there were “problem parents” who didn’t want to take care of their kids. Well put.

So, Media Folks, you may not always be with us, you may not always tell the truth. You have political biases for sure. But you seem to have handled this case with fairness.

I challenge anyone to suggest otherwise.

August 9. At the Court House

Following is an article from the a newspaper that covers the area of the teen home of which I am aware. It speaks of how women came from several different places one week, to voice their concerns about abuse.

The article:

The three women came from different states. They hadn't met in person before, but they stood together Wednesday in front of the County Courthouse to raise awareness of the abuse they allege they and others suffered when they were students at a boarding school ...

First day in the Gulag

"The first day I was there, I was brutally beaten," said _____, _____ of Virginia. _____ said she was a student at the home when she was a teenager. She said her first day there was one of the worst.

"They made me lie face down on the floor," said _____. "A lady sat on my arms, and another lady sat on my legs, and someone else beat me with a big piece of board. They were quoting Bible verses and beating me." [The home claims that brutality of this sort was stopped sometime in 1996. How they continued their Mandate from heaven to beat children, we are not sure. Or the Mandate has changed?]

Other hardships the women said they and other students experienced at this home included verbal bullying by staff, being forbidden to talk to or look at any other students for months at a time, students being forced to eat their own vomit, and shaming punishments such as making teenage girls wear diapers.

Former students praise the home!

The teen home officials, while refusing to comment, did provide a number of testimonial letters from former students who found their programs to be a positive experience. All the students' letters denied that physical, emotional or mental abuse took place at the school.

Those women said their days there were spent doing chores in and around the school campus , memorizing Bible verses and doing schoolwork. They said all their activities were closely monitored by school staff.

Then the other side again:

"There were alarms on the windows and doors so we couldn't get out," said.

said she and met [years later, after release] through several Web sites run by former students. She said, on the sites, students share their stories and support each other.

Testimonies solicited

said she found the Web sites, ironically, through contact with [staff at the time]. " called me and asked me to write the home a letter to say I was never abused at the home and that I hadn't seen anyone else abused there," said. "Staff told me some former students had started an evil Web site against the home."

Why the protests?

Wednesday, the women held signs with slogans like "Help Stop Abuse" and "Abusing girls since 1974", and handed out fliers

detailing the abuses they said they and others suffered at this place.

“I feel like we’re campaigning for awareness,” said . “We know it will be hard to close it, but we want to bring awareness of what’s going on in this locked-up facility. Most people who live here probably don’t know that place exists.”

said Wednesday’s demonstration was aimed at bringing change.

“Our demonstration is in protest of the abuse that has been taking place at this home for the past 30 years,” she said. “We want to bring attention to the fact that this facility has been operating over 30 years and it has yet to be held accountable to anyone. This facility is not licensed and it has never been regulated by the state. There needs to be a change in state law, and hopefully our demonstration can draw attention to that fact.”

“Should have done our homework”

“We didn’t realize the home was like that,” said. “We didn’t do our homework.”

said, looking back, she and her husband can see hints that something was wrong when their daughter was at the school.

“There was an extreme lack of communication,” she said. “We would ask her questions and her answers would be evasive.”

said, after her daughter returned from the home , it took a while before she began to talk about her experience.

“When she got home, she was very quiet and much more ‘quote’ obedient,” said. “It really took a few years before she was able to tell us. It was devastating to us as a family to find out what had

happened. That's why I'm here, because I don't want other parents to make the same mistakes."

The Home Responds

The home staff declined to be interviewed Wednesday, but provided a press release and 15 letters from parents and former students voicing support for the school.

In the release, staff wrote, "Because of the nature of our work, which includes working with minors and the resulting needs for privacy of the girls and their parents, tours of the facility, interviews with staff members or students and other normal needs of the news media cannot be honored. While all of us at the home certainly embrace and support a free press, we hope you can understand that the nature of our work here demands such a position."

The Home: It's all good here.

According to the release, this facility is routinely inspected for safety by fire and health department officials, students are involved in regular schooling, and parents and pastors may make regular phone calls and personal visits during their girls' stay there.

All the letters denied that physical, emotional or mental abuse took place at the school. One letter is signed by , of Alaska, who claims to have been a student at the school...

wrote, "After my experience at this home as a student, I would highly recommend it to parents for their struggling teenage girls. The effect it had on my life was very dramatic and completely positive."

In a letter from Smith's niece's parents, , wrote, "The results we

have seen from

's stay at this home are higher moral standard, respect for authority, self- confidence, self-motivation to complete her education, very high moral standards of cleanliness, appreciation for her family and an undeniable cheerful attitude.”

Several of the letters expressed disapproval of the accusations being brought against the school.

Grow up, complainers!

“I think some of you just need to grow up and stop complaining about the past,” wrote

, parent of a former student, “and start being thankful you’re still alive and well and not into what you were saved from.”

So what’s the truth?

Someone isn’t telling the truth, at least the whole truth. Maybe the lie is not intentional. Please recall that this home often coerced/solicited positive testimonial letters from departing or already departed residents.

And, someone might indeed look at the home’s ways, as a step up in their life. That still does not justify the adult behavior that former residents allege.

Reminder. If you have been following this blog, you realize that this home is one of many such places in the country. State and county governments have long ago shut down most of those other places, by court order, following allegations quite similar to the ones you hear from this one.

So what is it? A vast conspiracy of the media and the “left” which

the Devil himself is leading, to come against all things Christian? Or some seriously foul behavior [of adults, not children] that needs to come to the light and be dealt with before more lives are hurt?

August 12. The protests continue

Why do some praise the gulag to the skies while others wish the homes would all disappear?

Try this out: Let's say I panic when I see my refrigerator not cooling properly. I go to the nearest store and buy the shiniest new model. Mucho dolares.

I'm visiting another store the next day and see the very same item on sale for two hundred less. I cancel the first order and go with the sale frig.

The product comes, is installed. Papers signed. Then I'm surfing the net one day and see that my very refrigerator is available for half that price, with free shipping !Oh the pain! Consider...

When parents panic

Parents panic when Junior or Missie isn't turning out right. They do a brief search. Find someone willing to take him/her off their hands for a reasonable price. Months later the worn teenager comes home, "corrected" but with some new symptoms. The thought: oh well, at least she's not on drugs anymore. The teen is forever

thankful that she was forced to see the evil of her ways.

Hmmm. A little shopping, then a little more, and lots of prayer, could have turned up a home that has a stellar reputation for dealing with teens, with no after-effects. The same child would have returned home with the same corrections, but no added symptoms. No life-long nightmares.

Testimonies of “It works!” are not enough. My brand new frig works, but I’m seriously in debt and didn’t need to be. Anyway, it’s

Back to the Court House

On a spring day a few years back, protestors returned to the same Court House referenced in the last post. Once more the newspaper of that area picked up the story. I use their article with permission, but revised to hide any identities.

The article:

Protesters Return To Courthouse

Approximately 60 former students, citizens and family members were on hand to voice their concerns about the private boarding school for teenage girls that is associated with a local Baptist Church.

Survivors!

In a handout given to passersby, the group calling themselves “survivors” of the school describe the program there as “abusive.”

“My experience was pretty much like everyone else’s,” said protester who detailed instances of abuse and forced physical exams.

Women from throughout the country were here Monday.

“When asked about (the allegations of abuse) they claim they don’t remember,” said

about the staff of the home. came from Virginia to join the protest.

While this isn’t the first time the group has protested, a law awaiting a vote on the U.S. Senate floor may help their cause.

A law proposed

The Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2009 will require both public and private programs to meet minimum standards in terms of student care.

A recent reunion of former students saw 70 women attend. The students included those who attended the school in the 1980s, 1990s and one woman who attended as late as 2004.

“We call ourselves survivors,” said . “We all shared the same experience. We were isolated, indoctrinated, and cut off from the world and our families.”

Yet another outing

Another protest, in Ohio, from a Fox online report.

A protest against child abuse today in front of a Lima church.

Three women holding signs were out in front of a Church to protest the alleged abuse of children at a boarding school for troubled girls.

One of the women, , was sent there when she was 15.

, the founder of the boarding school, was speaking at the

church today. says other survivors of the home have told her about all sorts of abusive practices that are still going on, like strip searches and forced vaginal exams as well as spankings administered with a long wooden paddle.

“I’m protesting the fact that kids, teenagers, were being abused there, physically, mentally, emotionally and it’s something stuck in our heads, in our

hearts for the rest of our lives”, recounted .

Staff was not at the church while our cameras were there.

Pastor defends the home!

The pastor of the Church, did speak to us about their support of the teen home.

“Yes, we have supported them...I have known people from here that have gone there, young ladies that would say that they were helped by that program” said the Pastor.

[Again, we are forced to choose between the hundreds who claim abuse and those who support the program. Recall my refrigerator. Research is the key.]

August 13. HR 5876, 110th Congress. Defeated

A short history of a short-lived bill placed before Congress ten years

ago. From a newspaper article, in an area near one of the teen homes, revised somewhat to allow for privacy:

HR 5876, an attempt at restraining the homes

The bill is called HR 5876 (110th congress, 2009). It passed the House of Representatives June 25 , and went on to the Senate. HR 5876 calls for more public accountability. If the bill had been passed in its original form, the school that former students protested against [see last posts], and similar organizations, may have fallen under its jurisdiction.

According to the bill, covered programs would include public or private organizations, which operate residential environments including boot camps, therapeutic boarding schools and behavior

modification programs, which operate with a focus on serving children with emotional, behavioral or mental problems or disorders or problems with alcohol or substance abuse. The bill would not cover hospitals licensed by the state or foster family homes which are licensed and regulated by the state and in which children are placed by the state.

The bill would prohibit disciplinary techniques or other practices that involve the withholding of essential food, water, clothing, shelter or medical care necessary to maintain physical health, mental health and general safety; physical and mechanical restraints and seclusion. The bill also would prohibit acts designed to humiliate, degrade or undermine a child's self-respect. Residential facilities covered by the bill would be required to provide "reasonable access for making and receiving phone calls with as much privacy as possible and shall have access to the appropriate state or local child abuse reporting hotline number and the national hotline number."

The bill would establish penalties for facilities cited with violations, including fines. Enforcement measures would be established including unannounced inspections, licensing requirements and new databases.

HR 5876 Passes through the House!

HR 6358 passed through the House with a vote of 318 ayes to 103 nays, with 13 present not voting. Of the nine State Representatives who voted on the bill, six voted for it and three against it. The Local Dist. 3 Representative voted against the bill.

“I believe these things should be worked through at the state and local level,” said the Representative. “I voted for the Republican alternative both in committee and elsewhere that would increase state regulation.”

Local District 3’s Rep a “nay” vote

The Representative stated that the alternative proposal did not include increased federal oversight.

“Obviously, I believe there needs to be some additional controls, particularly for those who abuse kids, it’s a terrible tragedy,” he said. “We need also better enforcement. But, I do not favor the federal government taking over something I believe can be regulated at the state and local level.”

He said he could get behind increasing federal oversight if state regulations could not be stiffened or in cases dealing with multiple states, but he said increasing federal regulations is a last resort. “I don’t think we’re there yet,” he said.

A “Yea” vote

, victim's assistance advocate with the local Police Department, organized the local task force seeking change in State law. said she supports HR 6358.

"I think this bill is an excellent step toward preventing child abuse and bringing about some accountability that is otherwise lacking," she said. "Child abuse is a national problem.

Anything that could be done to prevent this problem everywhere would be the best-case scenario."

Failed bill

As I shared in my last post, this bill failed later. I record this history to let the church know just how grievous some of our institutions have become in the eyes of the world. As Jacob said to his two violent sons, "You have made me stink in the eyes of the people of the land."

The world is no friend to grace. The world hates the Gospel and the true church. I get it. But abusing of children is not the Gospel or the church. The hateful sadistic policies of certain homes have made the Gospel to be spoken evil of. A child who died in Paradise, California due to the discipline advocated by some of these homes – was she a testimony to the loving Savior that we proclaim throughout the earth? How many have fallen away from even seeking the Lord at all, when they have heard of ugly stories coming out of these homes? Or worse, lived in these homes.

America still has some Christian sap in its branches. Even the American secular press and American secular legal system knows when it is looking in the face of evil.

This was a look at a national attempt to get help. Next, at the State level, more discouragement.

August 15. Dear Mr. Wolkins, Can you help?

I have been seriously attempting to keep names off of this series of posts. But in the present case, I do not see how it is possible. We spoke, in the last post, of an attempt to find help nationally. Now I speak of an effort to influence Indiana legislators to act against abuse. Featuring prominently in this saga is one David Wolkins, still at his job in Indiana. Pictured above is the Indiana House where he serves.

David Alan Wolkins is a Republican member of the Indiana House of Representatives, representing the 18th District since 1988, says Wikipedia. That 18th District includes two towns that are home of a controversial teen gulag site. To explain how Mr. Wolkins got involved in this , we go again to the valuable reporting of the local newspaper. October 16, 2008.

The article:

Local Task Force Formed

Twice within the past five months, former students of a boarding school locally, have stood in front of the Courthouse demonstrating to raise awareness of alleged abuse they claim they suffered while students at the school. Some local residents heard their message and have decided to get involved in the former students' efforts to change Indiana law.

"When (the former students) came to town, they brought a lot of awareness of something that people in town didn't even know we had," said , resident of the town. , victims' assistance coordinator at the Police Department, is organizing a task force for people who are concerned about the claims that students were abused at the home. She said the goal of the task force is to change

what they say is a gap in Indiana's laws. The gap concerns the state's code regarding the duties of the Department of Child Services and child-care institutions operated by private institutions.

Children throughout Indiana, in danger

"It's not churches or adult organizations," she said. "We're talking about where children are involved. If they aren't being held accountable, is that safe for these children?"

When former students came to town in July, they met with Dist. 18 State Representative Dave Wolkins, to try to enlist his support to begin an initiative to examine the state laws in Indianapolis. However, after the meeting, Wolkins said he doesn't support a change that would give the government more supervision of private religious organizations.

The home in question provided a statement reporting that Wolkins toured their facilities July 10. The statement claimed Wolkins has toured the facility "several times over the last several years."

No tours allowed. Except Mr. Wolkins

According to the statement, "Wolkins and others toured the educational and recreation areas, as well as the commercial kitchen, ministry property and maintenance shop."

Wolkins said during his tour , he questioned the school's director about the accusations against the school staff.

"I asked about them, he says there's a grain of truth to all of them , depending on how you interpret it," Wolkins said.

The victims are sincere

As for the women's accusations against the school, Wolkins said, "I

have no doubts that they are sincere. They felt intimidated, I have no doubt. But, that is all part of the program. Behavior modification we would call it.”

He said the women’s impression that what they underwent was abuse is just one interpretation.

The home, and Wolkins: No abuse!

“They believe they were abused and I guarantee you [the director] believes they were not abused,” he said. “To me, abuse has to have some intent of some sort. I am convinced that everything they’re doing out there, they’re doing with the best intentions of changing the behavior of the girls who come there.”

Wolkins said he was happy to meet with the women, but he is not ready to support their initiative, which he does not expect to gain steam in Indianapolis.

Indiana won’t buy it

“This is a pretty conservative state,” he said. “I think they would have a very hard time being successful in doing it.”

[But you would have tried, sir, if you had truly believed the girls’ stories.]

Good story. Bad ending.

End of article. A well-reported, factual, story. And devastating, yes? I’ve been a Republican all my adult life, and probably will remain so. I too believe in limited government interference. But if children are in great turmoil and pain, I believe the small-government excuse does not apply. Get somebody in there! Find out what’s going on! Be allowed to inspect at any time, not just when things are prettied

up around the house.

The response to Mr. Wolkins

The adage is that we can disagree without being disagreeable. That means we can be Christians or conservatives or fundamentalists without a mean self-righteous spirit. Still the anger, some of it, needs to be heard. And there was huge anger in the community over the presence of abuse in their neighborhood. Some of it was vented at Mr. Wolkins.

I use the same newspaper, always with their permission...

Disagrees With Wolkins Thursday, July 24, 2008 11:46 AM Editor

I am disgusted by the opinion of Representative Wolkins presented in the article regarding the teen home.. "I don't like government regulations," Wolkins said. "I think people are responsible for their own actions."It seems rather obvious that people are responsible for their own actions, of course, but who is to hold them accountable when others are too afraid, or unable, to speak?"There is a grain of truth to all of the charges , depending on how you interpret it." No wonder we live in a world where violence and crime runs rampant, look at what people are doing to their own children. How the are you to interpret abuse? How are you to interpret forcing teenagers to wear diapers?

He says that sure, they probably felt intimidated. I wonder how many of you want your children to feel intimidated? It's all just part of the "behavior modification," which sounds like something from 1984.Good intent? Furthermore, I don't care what the good ol' doctor's intent is. You think having a good intent makes your horrible actions any better? A lot of bad people come to mind, who thought they had good intentions.

Wolkins is right about one thing though, this is a conservative state. It's sad that however far we have progressed technologically, people still want to put the "fear of God" in us all. If your son or daughter has issues, why don't you decide to deal with it, rather than relinquishing your duties as a parent? Maybe try counseling? But whoever gives their children away to some Bible-swinging, rod-wielding fundamentalist does not deserve to even have children. I guess it's easier to just give up your responsibility as a parent, setting yet another great example for your children.

I hate government interference as much as the next person, but it's the government's job to protect its citizens, and that includes children. If you want to send your children away to some religious school, that is your choice. But such institutions should be inspected closer than public schools. At least in the public school systems the potential for abuse is greatly diminished.

Name withheld.

Other disagreements with Wolkins did not mention his name but are obviously greatly opposed to his ideas. Did he listen to his constituents?

Monday, June 16, 2008 9:00 AM Editor

Your recent front-page article regarding alleged abuse was very disturbing in many ways. Not only was I troubled by the stories of the former students, but I was appalled that there are no investigations. I want to know why.

Maybe I should call Dateline NBC or a similar show and ask them if they would do an investigation. I urge the community to go to the Web sites and read the testimonials of the former students.

Derbyshire

Tuesday, June 17, 2008 9:38 AM Editor

I was part of the recent protest in front of the courthouse . As a former student, the reason that I participated in the protest was to bring awareness to the community. I wanted the people to know, first of all, that this facility existed. And secondly, I wanted people to know that even though the home is run under the guise of Christianity, it is in actuality an abusive facility. I wanted to thank all of the people I met on June 10-11, while I was in Indiana. So many kind people talked to me and offered their support, and their own stories of dealings with the people from that place. From those stopping to help us hand out fliers, to the one who dropped off a case of cold water, I could not have asked for a better reception and reaction. So, thank you for your support! The response I have gotten since the protest has been overwhelming. I've received numerous emails and blog postings online, and I feel confident that you will all help us in our continued efforts to bring about truth and change!

Thank you. Oconomowoc, WI

This story doesn't seem to be going away. Here I am eleven years later, touched by this fire. Somehow there is no resolution that has taken place. But we press on.

August 19. A newsletter from the gulag

Many times over the course of the weeks that I have spent recording the situation in troubled teen homes, I have been warned internally not to condemn. To be gracious. To call for forgiveness. Yes, to look at my own life critically. To keep names and familiar faces out of the story and to focus on policies and misunderstood Scriptures. To show the pain, not the guilt. I must stand before the Judge of all the Earth.

I am not a church leader, though I am a part of a local church. I have no authority. My only claim to writing these things is inward sensitivity to the suffering among us, a sensitivity gained from personal experiences, and fellowshiping with Romanian and North Korean believers.

What's the connection? Why the pain?

For one thing, I keep seeing this giant of a man with a board in his hand, bringing it down multiple times on a teenage girl whose skirt is being lifted up. That's from multiple testimonies of – hopefully-past practices at one home.

And I see unsuspecting children being dropped off at a “home” while their real home is in Minnesota or Kansas or California. I see parents driving off, leaving the child behind. My heart aches. I cannot help it.

I ran across a newsletter from such a home lately. In it there is a page of pictures taken by staff and cutely labeled by students. One picture is of a window with grating. Sticking out from this supposed prison-like window [posed] are two hands. The clever caption has two possible winners: “What we do with naughty students.” Or “Let

me out.”

My mind went immediately to a post I gave you weeks ago: “Let me out of Here!” And to testimonies from such homes that verify that students, the “naughty” ones, are indeed locked up in rooms where sermons are piped in by the hour after hour after hour...

Can you feel it?

Can no one feel this pain? Will no one but the residents themselves join me in at least praying that homes like this will shut down forever? How much evil has to take place before someone gets the idea that this is not good for a community!

I must comment on one other item in the newsletter. By an assistant pastor of the church that covers the “home” ministry.

(I discovered in my research that ministries not covered by a local church are much more vulnerable to being shut down. The founder early on discovered this little gem of wisdom and promptly “covered” his teen home with the administration of a local church. He thought that would make them untouchable. It actually did. For a while. All his homes were eventually shut down, as have most of the ones which flowed out of his ministry.)

From the pastor

“Online blogs are easy ways to attack people with very few consequences. It is the coward’s way of resolving issues... we should expect to be criticized, ridiculed, and maligned.”

First let me suggest that it is not acceptable to hide behind assumed persecution of Christians. Not here. Not yet. All the false ministries exposed by the media start out with blaming the Devil for their bad reputation. Doesn’t work. The truth will out. In America we can still

tell our children about Jesus. Teach them the Bible. Guide them into the narrow path that leads to life. Most people will leave us alone.

Abuse needs 'splainin

But when abuse of money or bodies or rank or race show up, look out... Christian or not, you have some explaining to do.

I would like to answer the first insinuation of the gentleman pastor. Please suggest to me, sir, and to about two hundred or so former residents of your establishment, what is the proper way of resolving issues? The issue at hand is the pain of former residents. You can say some deserve it. Fine. You can say some are lying. Ok. Now let's deal with the majority of your detractors. Ones who live daily for and with God. Born-again. Serving the Lord with families of their own. Or ones who saw nothing but cruelty in your ways and have written off the Christian faith altogether. All of them in constant pain over their experience with you and yours. How shall we resolve this?

Let's resolve this!

Shall we continue to publish articles that put the protesters down, as I have read in past newsletters? Is that a solution of a "courageous" man? Shall we simply ignore them, and mention in passing to our supporters that there were a "few disgruntled girls" who stirred up trouble? But that would be a lie. Surely that is not the way.

Our "cowardly" blogs, and there are certainly a number of them addressing this issue, are simply trying to make God's people aware of what has happened, so that it will not keep happening. I am sure you would agree that the more spiritual, "courageous" thing to do would be to meet the survivors (that's their term, not mine) face

to face, deal with their issues, allow forgiveness to flow on both sides, and offer assurances that the methods you have used that are not found in Scripture, either have been, or will be soon, totally abandoned.

That would take real courage. Any one of us, as you point out, can write an article on a blog or a magazine or a newsletter. Let's meet face to face?

What say ye, gulag homes? Time for a meeting? Time for some courage?

August 20. The complaint department

We continue now to address the lengthy stack of evidence that has been aggregating, regarding troubled teen homes. We are using newspaper articles of yesteryear by permission, though absent any names, to let you see the story firsthand. The letter-writers tell, in 2008, how it was years before. How is it, now? No clue. One only enters these places by appointment. It may have changed radically. It may not have changed at all.

From the paper: First a report, then some letters to the editor.

Former Students File Complaints With Country Prosecutor's Office

Friday, July 18, 2008 3:00 PM

Former students of a local boarding school for girls, returned to the

County Thursday and officially filed complaints against the school with the county prosecutor.

said it wasn't easy to come back to see the place where she said she was abused during her time as a student from 1988 to 1991.

"I wanted to turn around when I got into town," she said. , who is now a police officer, said sharing her story Thursday with other law enforcement officers wasn't comfortable. She said the details of her time at the school are hard to talk about even 17 years after she left the school.

"It was very humiliating what we went through there," said. "To open up to people on a personal level, to be vulnerable was very difficult."

Maybe I can help others

also said she wanted to put her story on the record in hopes of helping current and future students. "It was easier to go in there knowing I was going to help them," she said. Though the newspaper has archived stories of allegations of abuse at the school dating back more than 20 years, local authorities report, [up to and including the winter of 2018] they have no open investigations concerning the school, which is a not-for-profit organization connected with a local Church.

"Where the department of education leaves off, there's a gap between where the department of child services takes up," said. "This teen home falls in that gap."

The women said the lack of accountability makes it difficult for allegations of abuse to be followed up on. "Even if we had gone two days after got out, it's just a matter of who is responsible," said.

Letters to the editor

Editor:

My name is , and attached is my story . I am sending this mostly in response to a letter to the editor from Rev. Ronald P.

I have to say the question about proof of the 10-, 20-, and 30-year-old charges would be me and . I left there 25 years ago in July. I was there from October or November 1980 to July 1983. That would be your proof, an actual person. It upsets me that these pastors and people can say, "Oh it did not happen and these accusations are not true." Two questions

for you – Did you get to talk to any of the girls or only those that were recommended? Did you live there every day or just visit? Those two questions actually make a big difference.

Out of the approximate three years I was there, we had guest speakers, but were not able to talk to them. I do not recall anyone coming to inspect for fire safety unless, of course, it was while we were at school at the other location.

I guess I am not understanding why it is so hard for some people to believe things like this happened, and it does affect a person tremendously. My concern now is, no one having to keep going through this.

I had a niece that went there as well. I went to visit her. Things had changed so much. They were no longer at the same location. A lot of the rules still applied. When I asked

if paddlings were still being done, her response was, "No, the parents have to come and do it if it needs done."

I ask the question now, There was a girl from Brazil when I was there. Are her parents going to come all that way to paddle her? What parent would drive that far to do that? Even Ohio, Virginia, etc

Please, before you readers just say “I know him and he would not do that,” or “I was a speaker there and that was not happening”, do the research and talk to people, get online. If this home is doing these things we say, then check into it. Let’s make it right. Not just for us, but for others there and others that may pass through. I believe God would expect that from us.

I appreciate you taking the time to listen. I am sorry if I am too abrupt, but it upsets me when I hear someone say we are lying because they visited or know staff. It may not always be what it looks like on the outside.

We had our requirements while we were there, and we had no choice but to go by them. Once you go through that, many paddlings and being treated that way, you learn to go by the program whether you want to or not.

I also do not feel I am wasting a lifetime of anger and fighting. I feel I am standing up for others that cannot, and in my life today – that is what I do. I put myself last and my family and others first to the best of my ability. Once again, this is not about me, it is about those that remain or those that will continue to pass through. Please just check into all the research you can and let’s stop the abuse.

I believe there was a reason that we were not allowed to have a reunion or even get to know the others. Maybe because things would have been shared about the abuse and as long as we are kept apart the better off the home would be.

Editor:

The stories you have recounted, about the survivors of , are quite disturbing. Personally, the lack of investigation into the allegations made by appals me. No person should have the right to emotionally, spiritually and/or physically abuse a child or teenager. We should listen to a victim who is courageous enough to come forward. I realize that there are statutes of limitations and

should have a presumption of innocence under the legal system. Amongst all these allegations, I find it interesting that suddenly the home Web site has deleted many links. Links to many of the tracts by . One of the more unsettling tracts, in which Mr. advocates severe hitting, using a “rod of correction”, on infants under 1 year of age.

The Famed Position Paper also describes a procedure for “Biblically beating” a child. What is advocating in his tract is not a simple spanking that many parents use as discipline, but rather “sessions of correction” or beating the child, potentially “lasting from one to two hours in length.” If acts of abuse are occurring at this House, I hope the community will mobilize to stop this from happening to other girls. have had the bravery to speak out. I hope we are willing to listen and take them seriously.

Editor:

I have been reading with a heavy heart the stories about the young women who endured abuse. Back in the late '70s, up through the mid '80s, and his wife brought the young women to a church I once attended with my in-laws. (I don't want to mention the church name without their permission, but those in attendance during that time period will remember...)

Some of the young women came to my in-laws' home on a few

occasions with _____ and his wife. The thing that struck me most about the young women was that they did not speak and they made no eye contact with anyone. I thought at the time something was going on at the home, but people assured me that they were troubled young women and the ministry was taking good care of them. I wish now I would have gone with my gut feeling and questioned what was actually happening under the care of _____ and his wife.

Here's what I am doing. I am sending e-mails to Governor Daniels and our local representatives asking that they do an intense investigation of the staff and most importantly _____. I encourage everyone reading this letter to please do the same. Our community needs an independent, outside investigation. The state should do this, or, as another e-mail mentioned, Dateline NBC – not an investigation by people and organizations in this county that most likely have been turning a blind eye due to influences of _____ or, God forbid, monies they are receiving, to turn a blind eye. If the accusations are unfounded, then the state should allow the

_____ to continue with their ministry. But if the accusations are found to be true, then this house of torture needs to be shut down immediately. And they must hold _____ accountable for their actions. This is the least we can do for the former students, present students, and future students.

And all the people who have read the testimonies found easily online, and the host of victims, men and women all over the country with them, said, AMEN.

Doesn't all of this ring true to you? Nothing polished. Raw feelings of adults who simply want to set the record straight and bring resolution to an ongoing problem.

August 22. Dark secrets

More writers about troubled teen homes in the form of letters to the editor of a small town newspaper that is located near such a home.

We all have dark secrets

The first writer mentions dark secrets. There are dark secrets in all of our lives. Things that we are, and have done, that we want no one to discover. Sure. So, should I expose the dark secrets of others, knowing my own life is dark in places?

So I am walking through the inner city and I hear a muffled cry. I stop. I go on. There it is again. I must track it down. Through alleys and a fire escape and an open window. I am confronted with a bound and gagged teenager. I have discovered the dark secret of someone who has foul play in mind. This teen may die soon.

But, I have problems of my own. So, no use getting involved in someone else's secrets. I climb back out the window, hurry down the steps, retrace the alley ways to the main road, and go to my comfortable home to watch a ball game and eat heartily and...

Are you kidding? No, that particular scene never happened in my life. But one very close to it did, and I must continue to write and share and pray and hope that something, someone, will cause all homes of abuse to shut down forever.

Now, from that paper:

Editor:

Thank you for writing a story about the dark secret in your community, [here she names a troubled teen home.]

I am writing as a former student at that place. My name is _____, and after being released I eventually was adopted by my loving grandparents who allowed me to contact the [local newspaper] when I noticed a small article about a girl in that home, and a custody battle in which her father was trying to have her removed from the place.

As a result, I released much information about my own abuse there in 1993, to three different newspapers; I also called the Police department, left a "report" with an officer over the phone and was told "we will look into it, you do not need to do anything more, we will contact you if we need more information."

Thank you for re-visiting the matter by publishing in your paper about former students' stories. I also write out of concern that in the past, as a 14-year-old, I did everything I could to make the abusive nature of the place known, and nothing was done.

Thank you for listening to me and hearing about my previous efforts, as I think that my efforts in 1993 and the lack of response by the local police to do anything about this place, or to even call me back for more information, is something the community should know about.

Danbury, Connecticut, via e-mail Wants support letters examined
Editor:

I would like to see copies posted of the 15 letters of support that the home

provided and who they came from. Like myself, these pastors speak from what they hear of, and not the living truth that the protesters have experienced. Letters of support are great for show. Hitler had and still has supporters, Charles Manson was getting fan mail in

prison.

Of course the pastors are writing letters showing support. The church and the home are a part of a network of churches, and not showing support is looked down upon.

Bad memories

Finally, the following article , and include in it all the posts so far, are not being recorded here to bring past residents of an abusive home back into their memories, back into self- pity. These posts are for those of us who did not have to endure what these people endured, and to help assure somehow, that such places will become less and less available in our nation.

We cannot say to past residents, with the world, and the insensitive, among us, Get over it! That's not fair. Yet, we must offer hope that the past can indeed be dealt with victoriously. One really can get beyond what tries to hold us down. Jesus Christ and His Word are the solution. All other attempts at erasing memories will drown out messages for a while. But Christ will take those messages captive.

Anyway, here is our final look at that newspaper's collection of evidence. This is a former student , writing even then (1985) to the paper, about a relatively young teen home. We believe things have changed somewhat, but we are in hopes that the staff of that place will somehow reach out to offended persons like the writer of this article with assurances, like 1) we were wrong! And we are very sorry! Or 2) we have changed radically! And/or 3) come and see for yourself: any time!What JOY such messages would bring to troubled hearts. (Yes, still "troubled".)

The article:Discipleship and Discipline at [Troubled Teen Home].

(Paraphrased and greatly condensed) January 29, 1985

What's going on at ?That's what of Aurora, Illinois, and her family would like to know. She has been trying since October to see her sister, who is being held against her will there....

The rules of the place read like something from a concentration camp, according to [the mother]... the clientele was at one time older women, possibly troubled, who admitted themselves. Now it serves girls 12-18. The current enrollment is 29. (1985)

Failed parent, child dumped

[The student's] Mom admits she had abused [her daughter] and didn't know what else to do with her. Her grandmother cared for her for five years, noticing that she had head injuries from being beaten [at home]. The girl is not well. Both the sister and the grandmother have offered to take responsibility for her if she is released, believing she was just "dumped" at the home. Some of the [1985] items found objectionable by sister and grandmother:

Mail and telephone calls censored. No outside contact. Bathroom scheduled. Children should be broken by age one year, with a paddle. Paddled for trivia, like putting wet clothes in a laundry basket. Eight swats for talking after curfew. Flesh bleeding after paddling.

Paddled for leaving beans unpicked in the garden. Paddled for wrinkled dress. All driven by fear. Smile at visitors but no talking to them. Mind control. Graded on everything. Stopped menstrual periods.

Call off the dogs!

After being refused a visit with her sister, [Mother] was called and

told she could come if an apology to was forthcoming, and if she would “call off the dogs.” [This home’s affectionate term for those who dare come against them]The article concludes by discussing their un-licensed status, and the ways the hands of would be helpers are tied by the unwillingness of the State to come against church-state separation. Everyone is frustrated!

But not defeated. Keep praying. keep working.

August 26. Thoughts on the Case against the Gulag

Those troublesome support letters

It’s like studying a Bible doctrine. You think you’ve got it all figured out. Like, election, pre-trib rapture, etc. Then you stumble onto a verse that throws everything off your theory, right? You have to go back and look at the evidence again, just to be sure, and see why that other verse is there.

I’m trying to be as candid and open as I can with all this. I read the stories and I cry. I read more stories until I finally have to put them away, as my emoter is giving me signals that this is too much to handle.

Then I hear a parent telling these girls, “Grow up!” And I read the “home” newsletters admitting nothing, apologizing not at all, telling us all to believe that these are just bitter angry women who want to blame their ongoing failure on the director.

And I think. Hmm, Everyone has friends who will stand beside them when they are challenged. King Saul had his followers who kept a wary eye on David. James MacDonald, about whom, lately, have been written articles about tyranny and mismanagement, has his supporters, rightly or wrongly. Do I dare mention Trump? No. Better not.

The fact that people support someone cannot be used as a valid defense of that person.

“Just the facts, ma’am,” we established from the beginning. Only the facts. The truth. That is all that matters. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, let everything be established! And if there are twenty or thirty or two hundred and thirty, and more, witnesses? All saying essentially the same thing?

That’s one thought. Here’s another.

About church leadership.

We didn’t discuss it much, since our focus is on the cries of some hurting youth and adults. But it needs to be pointed out that, Biblically, one-man rule of a church is nowhere taught in Scripture. You will not find the words “the pastor” anywhere. Timothy and Titus, for the

record, were not “the pastor” of a congregation. Both were allies of the apostolic team, left behind in this or that city to teach and put together a team of elders (plural) who would take over when Timothy or Titus were gone.

Little kingdoms were not in mind. The Pope is not the only one who needs to be told this. Group leadership is messy and slow but it’s wise. When one man gets his way in the church, things go south pretty quickly. And if that man happens to be a strong man with

strong ideas, that church will go where that man wants to go or else. There will be constant calls for loyalty and obedience. Oppression. Prison mentality. Mind control. It happens over and over.

And another thing,

The team mentality

The Holy Spirit needs to rule the church through a team of men who listen to Him and confer with one another until they are sure they have the mind of God. All else can turn into tyranny.

I said "can." There are obviously many places where a humble one-man leadership does good things in a church. But it will probably be discovered that that man listens carefully to the flock. The flock is Christ's flock after all.

In my opinion, this Gulag story would not be out there if the organization in question had opened up to the greater Body of Christ to begin with. There are over one hundred churches in the region where that home sits. Such wisdom is collected there! And this wisdom is ignored by this church that put together their famous house.

When some of these churches hear about the situation, they are serious and saddened and want to help. But what can they do if the doors remain locked, and the church feels it has a lock on truth?

Second thought ended. Here's another:

Do some homework.

Check out some other homes, or Christian families, where discipline is being done by better methods. "Cursing the darkness" is never as

good as lighting a candle. Tell us how it can be... I'll be glad to publish your findings. Oh, that these homes and their leaders had followed this simple suggestion before beginning, rather than assuming they had heard from God by reading Solomon only, or perhaps a strong dose of the Pearl book.

I checked out a Christian home online myself, and found not one negative comment. That's not proof positive of anything, but it's a good start. Check out any home started by the churches we're dealing with here, and you will find a host of negative comments, and whole websites given over to "survivors."

Brothers and sisters, these things ought not to be. The church is being given a bad name for no reason but the pride of men.

Yet another thought On Forgiveness

Eerily enough, the only substantial preached message I have ever heard from a gulag

director was on forgiveness. I have to keep reminding myself that forgiveness is Christ's way whenever repentance is shown. But when it is not shown?

I asked that director after his message, before I knew anything of these allegations, What do you do when repentance is not shown? His answer, "You must learn to overcome evil with good." Good answer.

Does this man need forgiveness? Perhaps yes, but first there must be admittance of error, and repentance, you say? He must one day see that his policy on child-raising, clinging to Solomon alone, is not Biblically based after all? And, that he has damaged many lives?

It is also my opinion and that of many of the victims, that he should

leave this ministry, at least for the time being. He should probably lock forever the doors. He is a gifted man and can be useful in other ways than child-raising.

Careful about condemning

But “piling on” is not the order of the day after that. We must treat him as we treat all brothers who have been trapped by error, and by his own standards, we must overcome evil thoughts about him with those of truly good will and good wishes. We have all made mistakes, some of them huge. They are all forgivable.

He has reported in a recent newsletter that he is ill with a serious disease common to elderly men. Does that bring great joy to you? I think it should not. This is where Matthew 7:1, “Judge not lest you be judged”, must truly kick in. We expose what is evil, but if we condemn the man and rejoice in his suffering, we have entered into the possibility of our own swift judgment.

I challenge God’s true people to stand firmly in full exposition of the cries of the abused, so that young lives can be spared, but also to stand firmly in forgiveness. That’s got to be the toughest assignment that scores of survivors could be asked to perform.

But that is who we are. Our Lord could call sin, sin. And then go to a cross to cover it with His blood. We must follow Him there.

August 27. Living in sin

Got 43 minutes? Got cable? Missed the A & E presentation regarding a certain troubled teen home? Go to aetv.com/videos. Enter your cable company, and voila, the program, Living in Sin , lives on. But hurry. In 2036, they will take it down.

I'm in my 70's now. We old guys don't get excited or energetic about things. What Moses said about this decade of our life is surely true: It takes a lot of strength to get to 80. But last night energy, desire, umph, returned. You really must see this program!

Back on the air

It has been over a decade, as far as I know, since the secular airwaves have

given place to the story of this home. Local stations, then CNN, took a hard look at what was going on years ago. The protests. The allegations.

Then a silent period. We imagine the folks at the home had decided this thing was over. I personally heard a comment within the last few weeks to that effect. A & E had been here, done interviews, they said. But A & E wasn't going to publish anything, because essentially there was no story.

Well, last night, for all the world to see, there was a story. There still is a story.

Ouch!

No, I am not excited that the church of Jesus Christ has suffered another black eye. I wish the people at that home and all the other such facilities, (whose numbers – thankfully – are steadily

decreasing), would have judged themselves, found themselves in need of repentance and a fresh look at Scripture. I wish they would have listened to the cries. To the wisdom. To the rest of the church.

They did not. It would seem from the A & E special that they have not, even to this day. For that reason, the past residents continue on in their quest. And from what I hear, it's not over yet...

Living in Sin is the name chosen by the A & E people for this story. Those among the staff there who do not know the Lord must be silently rejoicing that another "Christian" organization is being exposed. The phrase they use, "living in sin", is one we heard often growing up in the church. It referred to two people who were unmarried but pretending they had all the privileges of marriage.

Sin?

We don't use the phrase so much any longer. Sin seems to be a troublesome word for the new theologians. What Scriptures continue to condemn, much of the so-called church condones. It's a new world. But not so new that the A & E people didn't understand the darkness of the phrase. They applied it to a place. A place where sinful, hellish torments took place.

Christians who watched the program are this morning hanging their heads in shame. Hopefully though, they are resolved to do something about it.

A short synopsis with a few details added...

This home has been around for a long time , ministering, says its director, to "children of the Light." I think he means that these girls came from Christian backgrounds and were raised in the church. Of course that means nothing. "Church member" and "born again" are two different ideas.

An assistant pastor

An associate at the ministry there is quoted often, and is in total denial of everything you will witness. At the very end of the presentation, he is quoted as saying, "Have we made mistakes? Sure."

Sir, could you be a little more specific, and couple it with an apology? What mistakes? What would you do differently today?

In the next breath of the quote, the minister says, "I don't think we've done anything wrong...[if so] I would apologize."

So there you have it. Made mistakes... Did nothing wrong. No apology forthcoming. The brick wall that held the girls in, now by this statement, keeps them out. No admission of guilt. Only "mistakes." Can you imagine being one of the hundreds of victims and hearing talk like this!?

Oh. He says one more thing. "I feel very bad for them." Really? Why? You did nothing wrong. You feel sorry that they are so deranged as to believe they were victims? What does your pity do if you do not understand what you did to them?

"Bull Crap."

There was another nay-sayer on the program. She seems to have written off hundreds of her fellow-ex- residents with one definition of their testimonies: "Bull crap." Yep. That's what she called it. All the evidence you will see in those 43 minutes of agony on A & E. Bull crap. Forced vaginal exams at age 12. Bull crap. Paddled for everything. Bull crap. Not allowed to talk to certain people at certain times, or all the time. Bull crap. The girls were simply traumatized because they had never been spanked before.

Not fair

Well, you obviously had a better time there than in your previous life. I have read your story. You are to be applauded for having endured such awful things in your life.

But most of the others didn't have a better time at this home . Truth is not measured by your personal experience of life. Look hard into the eyes of these grown women and call them liars. Try it. Feel what they are feeling.

I am 73, an old white male. And I can feel it! Why can't others out there? How can all of you live in denial of others' pain?

That book she wrote about her life suffering... Suppose I would tell her, "You just made it all up!" What if I would say, "Get over it! You were just traumatized, but you have no one to blame for all the abuse you suffered except yourself! It's all bull-crap!"

I couldn't say that! I believe she suffered greatly. But what if I did say that? Would there be accusations of slander? Then what she said on a video that was broadcast across the nation... what is that called? "Truth"?

History

The narrator of "Living in Sin" mentions that the House in question is a direct relative of the homes begun down south in the 60's. I've covered that subject in past posts.

Interesting. Like the founder, who was anti-government-control, this home has gone to the government for protection, linking their ministry to the church, which in many states is off limits to interference from Big Brother. Exemptions. Protections. For people who don't like the State, it's pretty amazing how they depend on it.

I'm not big on State interference or assistance. But let me choose between that and women crying out in the middle of the night for someone to love and care for them. Between that and uncontrolled and forced vaginal exams. Between that and being locked up in a detention room listening to some preacher hours on end.

Could the choice be any more obvious?

Moving on...Three stories

Next are introduced three grown women who were definitely not grown at the time of their incarceration. Just teens. All three of them had a "runaway" story. In short, things weren't going well at home. Happens all over the country, to good Christian people, but most of them do not seek a place to deposit their child.

Teens can be this way. So pray. Struggle. But give away?

The three women tell their stories and we are led with them into some of the worst aspects of their stay at the home. They tell of the beatings. The director is introduced. He claims that the beatings have stopped. He says that beatings are "not in favor" now.

Meaning: Against the law. But the crew there are very much into physical punishment, believing that Solomon demanded it, and so, we should. True Christians have little problem with a true reading of Solomon. I've included that on this blog also. But the extremes. The timing. The reasons. The board. The screams while others try to sleep while asking: Am I next?

Then the pelvic exams.

It's all on my site . Upon entering the home, pushed into what was once a walk-in closet, met by a doctor – who still lives and practices – and with no permission given by this young teen, she is forced

into having certain instruments injected into certain parts of her body. More screams. More cries. Betrayed! Raped! (Their feelings. I make no such accusations.) What are you doing! God help me! Did some even cry for their parents at this juncture, bad as the relationship might have been?

Oh, they were never forced, says the nay-sayer-in-charge. It was necessary. Standard procedure. Required by law. Uh-huh. I hear you. And I still say, Forced. Incredibly insensitive and uncaring. No apologies yet? Oh, in the 90's, these forced exams ended, they say. But they weren't forced. Which is it?

Enter Captain Kennedy

The drama continues. The ladies are encouraged by a Captain Kennedy, a retired police officer from Alabama, where a law was mercifully passed to end independence from legal surveillance. Captain Kennedy states the issue succinctly: When you're going through all this, isolated and young and afraid, you can't press charges, though you know something is very wrong. By the time you get your mind back and realize what happened to you, the "statute of limitations" has already kicked in, and you're too late.

The Captain encourages the ladies before him to do a relentless search for documentation. Proof that paddling continued after the newsletter said it had stopped. Got it! Proof that these young ladies were forced into a private exam totally against their wills, at a tender age. Don't got it. What?

Off to the doctor's office.

The most fascinating part of the program to me was watching the ladies crowd into a car and take a trip to a town near the "home",

where exists a clinic that is still overseen by the doctor who performed these tests. They boldly walk in and claim records of their past. Request denied.

“We don’t have them here.” “Then we will order them.”

Request still denied. And then “he” appears. The man. The scary man. The women are shaken. One of them almost faints later. The doctor, she says, was smirking at her. Defiant as to releasing any records.

Nuremberg Revisited

No, you can’t feel this. I can’t make you understand. But I’m back in Nuremberg all of a sudden. Nazis on trial. Women sitting in the witness chair trembling and crying as they explain what happened to them and their friends, during those awful years. I can’t understand all of that either. But oh, it’s real. Bring my tormenter in front of me and I will freeze. The ladies continue to search for these records to this day. Not successful yet. But I think the documents will surface.

To Church

Bold ladies, yes? Another time, they equip themselves with hidden cameras and mikes, to go to church. That church. That church connected to that place. They want to talk to that man. They are recognized. The video fails, but the audio is clear. There are soft voices, no one is angry that they came. But the denials are real.

“We were doing what we thought was right. We would apologize if we thought we were doing wrong.” I heard of that same line at the Nuremberg trials too.

The video ends with a collage of pictures and names of places

throughout the country that have been accused similarly to this place and then shut down. Not sure how this one made the cut. But the girls – sorry – the women, (and the hurt girls inside of them) are determined to add this home to the ever-growing list of closures.

Jesus heals the broken-hearted, ladies. Go for that, if you have not yet.

August 29. Interview with an Eyewitness

It was while poking around the internet trying to figure out why this “troubled teen” Home was under attack that I came across an incredible website, a place I have gone to often and used to refer you to. I would send you there again if my policy about privacy had not radically changed.

The website documents thoroughly the pain of at least fifty women who are past residents of that particular home.

Though you shall not know her name or the link to her site (from me) you shall have the privilege of listening to her wise counsel and load of information about a certain gulag location.

Those of you who saw the A & E special on the 26th of August, 2019, have already met her. She was one of the five women featured as witnesses against the Home. You saw her encouraging the others from time to time. She has become one of the main voices in a movement that has arisen against Christian-led child

abuse. She herself was a resident of that place in the 1980's.

All it takes, really, is a serious reading of the testimonies she has gathered on her site to realize you need to be in this fight too, if only by prayer. Did I say "only"? Shame! Prayer will do it all, eventually. But there are boots on the ground activated when prayer is being offered.

Over the months in which I have been involved in this struggle, I have been able to keep up an e-mail and Facebook connection with her family. It was only natural then, when I saw some of the unusual responses of the Home on the A & E special, to rush an email to her for explanation. Maybe some of the following questions are yours.

If you have others, please leave them in the comments below. Here is our correspondence.

Who did the paddling?

Bob: I have mentioned often on my site that I am so grossed out by an image of this man holding a board in his hand and doing these merciless beatings. But in the video, you mentioned that it was female staff that did the actual paddling. Am I wrong to continue thinking it was the man, too?

Eyewitness: I was paddled by both male and female staff members. He paddled me dozens of times as did [his assistant], but the women staff paddled me most often: [Here she lists five women, one of which was even younger than she was at the time. And she was a teenager!]

Why so friendly to the home at first, after you left?

Bob: Try to explain the comments about "friendly" interactions that

existed between the victims and the Home, after you left, but only up to a certain time. The director uses this fact a lot and seems to be clueless as to why you all suddenly turned on him . Viewers simply saw their statement that you all were very friendly for a while, and won't know how to synthesize that statement with the rest of what they saw.

Eyewitness: Yes, I did keep minimal contact with them and even went there for a visit one time. It had more to do with facing my fears and working through what had happened there and what was my responsibility now that I was grown and free.

Generally, I sent something when I stopped receiving mailings. The mailings (newsletter and support letters) were how I tried to "keep track" of the Home. I desperately wanted to believe that this man was a good Christian man who had just made mistakes and mended his ways. That philosophy of course was dismantled in 2008 when he called me and asked me to lie for him [to testify that there was no abuse that took place there while she was a resident] and I met former students that came through the Home after me who had suffered terribly cruel abuse of different shades, but wicked nonetheless.

Have you received those documents mentioned on the video, yet?

Bob: What is the latest on the doctor's records search? Have you been able to contest the fact that documents were denied?

Eyewitness: The women in the film and many, many, others who were not featured in the film have made repeated attempts to get a copy of their medical records from that clinic. They have had no response and have not received any medical records.

How did the A & E special come about?

Bob: Was the A & E meeting set up long before you all came to protest the home, or did they just show up at a protest and decide to do some interviews? Eyewitness: We were planning a trip to the state, and a protest, when A&E contacted me. The trip to the doctor's office and police station came about during an interview with A&E when one of the women revealed she had found in her mother's house some important paperwork. It furnished the before unknown name of the doctor and clinic that had charged her mother's insurance for her forced exam.

Armed with this new information we decided to go to the doctor's office and request the records and then to the police to make a report. A&E was not happy with us taking time out of the filming schedule to do things that they could not film, but they recognized the importance of these steps and supported us. They were only allowed to film us coming and going from these places, so they gave up many valuable hours of expensive film time to let us do this.

Why so few on camera?

Bob: Of the many women who were there for the protest, why only a few that were filmed?

Eyewitness: The fear of being on camera. The danger of the road and the last-minute schedule change because we had to go to the doctor's office that morning before the protest. That trip to the doctor's office was supposed to be a quick in and out, but the Clinic called the police and we were significantly delayed in beginning the protest.

Where are the former residents who support the Home?

Bob: Of the many supposed supporters of HH, why did only one come forward, or did A & E just choose her out of many possible?

Eyewitness: This is a question that really only the director can answer. He claims he has scores of supportive and successful former students, but always sends one to speak to media and defend the Home At this point I seriously doubt he has anyone else willing to do it.

Thanks to the “Eyewitness” for taking time to answer these questions. One can only imagine the deluge of communications that have come her way since the airing by A & E.

Something bothering you about the A & E presentation? Let me hear from you.

August 30. I rest my case

I hope no one misunderstands. Christians are not to condemn others. I have judged myself in this blog, more than once, especially in one whole post given to that purpose. I know my failings as a parent and as a man and as a Christian man. Trust me, I do.

But even a failed man can hear the whimper of a child and be broken-hearted over it. That’s all this blog site is about. A broken man that saw some broken teenagers. And the women they became, many of them still broken.

The people of the Home in question will tell us that they too were broken over the condition of youth in our day and wanted to help. Our contention, that is, the scores, if not hundreds, of young people

who experienced this place, is that they went about it the wrong way. They didn't just make mistakes, as we all do. They followed mistaken policies. That's different.

For some of their clients, the policies worked. For the majority they not only didn't work but left a lifelong scar. And a lifetime of denial of the Christian faith, the Bible, even God Himself.

We have shared history, Scripture, testimony. Readers will judge. Ultimately God will judge. Here is a summary of the conclusions we have reached, taken from that "composite" teen, who made the original charges, added to their mothers' charges, and former staff. None of the following words are mine, except where I have exchanged the name of this home for a pronoun or description.

Summary

They are a cult. Without God's assistance I would not have survived. My mother so regrets that she sent me . The home is all about abuse no matter how anyone looks at it. Their ways are not God and not good, period.

It is like a cult. Everything at the home was about control. I would never ever put my child there. I would not recommend anyone else send their daughter there. Things that happen there should simply not be allowed.

My parents are sorry they sent me. I see now that all of the things we suffered are the tactics of a cult. Some staff should not be working with teenagers. It is a horrible place where I spent fifteen months.

It is a cult and my parents did not know... They abused me, screwed up my mind, and broke my spirit. Submission was the main thing. They do nothing to make, train, or teach a woman to be a better

Christian.

Worse than my broken home

I hope that my statement will save one girl from the treatment I received. They enjoyed being sadistic. They manipulated us into embracing their extreme religious agenda. Their isolation and fear tactics may be successful in the short term, but they have a lasting negative effect.

I thought it couldn't be worse than my home, but it was worse. Students here are robots. I would never wish anyone to go there. I live for the day that this place will be shut down.

Laws must be changed regarding religious schools like this one.

This was like a Nazi prison camp. They may mean well but since they treat us all the same, some girls are being hurt more than helped. God never calls on parents to humiliate their children. The staff are Christians but some are not helping girls, they are hurting them emotionally and physically for the rest of their lives.

Shut it down

I really do hope they get shut down. I think they are a cult. It was a MAN that did all this to us, not Jesus Christ! Some staff are sick. It didn't seem like child abuse when I was there, because of the awful abuse I suffered at home.

Not even men in prison get treated that bad. This home started for the right reasons, but power and greed took over. Maybe the staff was just as miserable as we were. Stop and think twice about sending your daughter to this place.

Maybe one or two good testimonies came from this place, but I can

give you a couple dozen more that were not good. If your goal is to intimidate, humiliate, diminish hope for your daughter, send her there.

More bad than good

The home is an extreme that does more damage than good. My parents now know this place is not right and would not send any of my siblings there. To me, it is like a cult, it is horrifying that they are given total control behind closed doors.

I hope to be a part of closing the place in the near future. Young women need to be healed through love and compassion, not torture and hatred. I believe they are deceived. No child should endure what we endured there.

May the right people find out what is going on and put laws in place that will prevent this kind of abuse. Some staff are serving the Lord through ministry, but they should not be working with teenagers. They don't know what they are doing. They are power tripping because they can.

Give me boot camp!

No one cared about us there. I would rather have gone to boot camp than that place! They tear down but do not build up. I pray and beg God to bring this awful place to the ground.

My mother cried and apologized when I told her the things that happened to me. I would never send my girls there, now that I have become a mother. We need to save others from this cult. We needed love, we got abuse.

No argument I can come up with will top what you have just read. My opinion meshes with theirs. This house, and many like it, need

to follow many of their fellow-houses and cease operations asap.

We will try to look at defenses of these homes in future posts. It's only fair.

September 2. How to defend the teen gulag?

Time to look at the other side. If there were no other side, the teen homes would obviously not exist. They all believe they have a reason to be there, and a Biblical mandate to behave the way they do.

If you have read even a small fraction of the scores of posts I have provided, you know I am not personally trying to defend child abuse. I do not retract my tears, nor do I ask you to do such a thing. But is it not fair, standing before the Lord of all Justice, who will judge us all one day according to His Word, to present an alternative view? If mine is the only light available I think we all live in dimness. There is light on both sides.

The assignment

Our job is to convince abusers that there is a better way. Not to condemn them to Hell or stand before them as their superior. Enough of that in the church. Much of the faith and life of these people corresponds to Christianity at large. We must not allow the devil's crowd to keep laughing at our divisions and hatred for one another. Let's correct a serious problem that has brought so many

to emotional devastation... then let's move on.

Holier than thou does not fit well on either side. For a few moments, let me put on their hat and see how it fits. I'll start in the Psalms.

Psalm 31

18: Let the lying lips be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous...

And Preacher Spurgeon:

"What wickedness it is that unworthy characters should always be the loudest in railing at good men!" Spurgeon, Treasury of David.

Now I will try to speak what the gulag believes from their perspective. (I said I will try, but you will note I tend to be a little defensive with their defenses...)

Here we go. Why do these homes exist? Why do some residents and parents love them? Can they justify their harsh tactics? Is it really all that bad?

The "step up" argument

For some of the girls, the home may actually represent a step up. Even in "Christian" home settings, there are parent problems that would shock us. Unbelieving spouses. Hypocrisy. Ignorance. Girls do get abused sexually and otherwise before they come to these homes, and they might look like heaven to them... (does that justify abuse?)

The "compliant girl" argument

Some girls are compliant by nature if enough force is applied. They

actually hunger for someone else to discipline them, structure them. These girls can be “whipped into shape” (literally) rather easily. So they were not hurt all that much and even sang the praises of the home when they left... (does that justify abuse?)

The “improved girl” argument

Let’s be real. Some of these girls may have actually improved during their stay. Some have even stayed on to become staff. And not necessarily because they have no place else to go, although that is the testimony of at least one I heard of... (does that justify abuse?)

The “no-place-to-go” argument

Some had no place to go before they came here. Parents had had enough. So, they could have been in worse places....(does that justify abuse?)

The “difficult teen” argument

Some students brought in some pretty difficult attitudes and habits. It’s not easy to deal with teens in our generation. Never was. (So we give the staff a pass on some of their policies and reactions?)

The “Thus-saith-the-Lord” argument

The staff, those in the highest part of the pyramid, truly do believe they have discovered Biblical principles, and that they are being persecuted when they are told otherwise. They believe they are really re-educating people, making them better members of society, better children of God. (Really? And if they are wrong?)

The “protesters are evil” argument

These protesting girls are just bitter and trying to get even. (So they are all liars?)

The “protesters are failures” argument

These protesting girls/women are trying to find someone to blame for the abject failures they have become. (Failures! Are you kidding? Some greatly successful moms and grandmoms are in this mix.)

The “piling on” argument

Once one girl opened the door to putting down the home, it was easy for the others to join the game and pile on. (Really? 250 grown moms and grandmas who were there in the 80’s and 90’s? All with nothing better to do than “pile on”?)

The “just a couple disgruntled girls” argument

There were really only a very few girls that actually had any gripes, and most of those gripes were not legitimate. (simply not true. Scores if not hundreds of witnesses.)

The “traumatized girl” argument

These people protesting were just typical kids who didn’t like to work, had never had discipline, and were shocked into reality. (Possibly true, but what does that prove and how does that justify the abuse recorded?)

The “apostate girl” argument

These girls had Christian values but for some reason, over the years they have turned against the truth and now see their experience through the eyes of the world’s values. (How is it the world’s values to hurt? To be in daily pain? Maybe their original view of the place was the problem, not their later view...)

The “they deserved it” argument

God used this home to judge the sins of teenagers, committed before they came to the home, and therefore the home should be praised as used by God in their punishment. (Some truth wedged into this excuse. But the nature of the punishments... are they justified by this argument?)

The “things have changed” argument

This was then, now things are different. A radical change has come over the home and staff. Some staff are gone, and the ones who replaced them are gentler, kinder. After all, no one and no home is perfect. We all learn and grow and... (May it be so. But how do we on the other side of the locked doors and huge walls, know for certain? Tear down that wall, and let us in, to see for ourselves.)

So there you have it.

I believe the main objections are before you.

But what do you think? Do any of those bullet points above justify the horror you have read in the testimonies of this blog so far? Not in my opinion.

Maybe your opinion differs. I’m just trying to make some sense of what otherwise is unthinkable for a Christian residence.

One closing thought:

It’s true that raising kids today is not an easy thing. But then, it’s also true that being abandoned, and then being abused, in a home that claims Christ as its center, is not easy either.

September 3. An opposing view

It's true that not all of the testimonies coming out of the "Gulag" are negative.

CNN's story about a particular teen home included the perspective of one who had been a resident during the era before "spanking" was banned (1996). She claims that in her three years there they only "spanked" her two times.

She refused to use the word "beaten", claiming that she certainly knew the

difference between the two words. Unfortunately, the director himself uses the "b" word and must acknowledge it is the language of the Bible.

As all the others claimed, they held her down flat on the floor by hands and feet, with a chair placed over her. The spanking of three swats she described was for cheating on a test. And they delayed it for a few days while permission was received from parents.

(Just for the record: The gaining of permission from parents is a practice that others who were there vehemently deny.)

She seemed to see nothing odd about such a beating [spanking] for cheating on a test.

This lady liked her stay at the home. She had come from a very abusive background, and the home was a step up in many ways. She was safe, secure, and the staff was supportive.

Diaper Denial

As for the diaper thing spoken of by so many past residents: this woman claims that only one girl in her three years there, ever had

to wear one, and that was just for one day. (I can only refer you to the many testimonies that give a very different perspective.)

Her description of that one diaper event, is of a girl who came in all defiant and determined to do what she wanted. She was told of the bathroom schedule and refused to abide by it. When told she could not use the bathroom a little later, she threatened to pee on herself.

Which she did. Hence the diaper. But soon she conformed and voila! no more diaper.

Why only you?

Why then, asks CNN, when they featured this woman, do all the other girls seem to contradict what you are saying? Her response: so many of these girls were traumatized by the fact that they had to actually do what they were told. So, they suffered the consequences of their rebellion.

With that simple explanation, she has defined for all time, and for all the hundreds of girls involved, just what their suffering today is all about.

Anyway, she wrote a book about her life that details her suffering before she came to the "home." Part of the book tells of her stay at that place. It is a book carried and sold by the home's staff when they do presentations in other churches. Except for the testimonies on their website, hers is the only clearly stated defense of the home's practices. As I have pledged anonymity for all persons involved in this story, I cannot release to you her name or the name of her book.

I can say that she had a seriously problem-filled life. I make no attempt to embarrass her. The facts are all public property via her

book.

So one mystery of this home is how hundreds of women will tell you today that the place must be shut down, yet this one strong crusader continues to sing its praises.

She details in her book some of the most awful circumstances a young lady could ever encounter in this nation. My own detailing of them for readers, as I did originally, was for the purpose of showing them why this place may indeed have looked like Nirvana to her. If the testimony recorded in her book is true then the “troubled teen”home was a huge step up.

Though she wants us to believe her narrative so badly that she is willing to invest in the writing and publishing of a book, it saddens us that she then repudiates – calls it “bull crap”

– the testimony of the other scores of women. They also took the time to relate their stories to the public at large.

The stories of abuse I share on this blog site have been seen by literally hundreds of thousands, and believed by most. But not by her.

Threatened

I had placed here, lifted from her book, re-worded, summarized, her claims. But on the 17th of November, 2019, she threatened me with a lawsuit. She said I was slandering her, bullying her, even though I was merely quoting from her book, and indicating that I questioned parts of it. Is this slander?

The testimony of this woman was the only credible testimony that refutes the stories of scores of women who have suffered at the hands of the home’s

personnel. Her opinion was valuable to me, so that I could produce at least the shadow of a defense. But at her request, I now erase her story. I also will stop advertising her book gratuitously.

I am sure there are others who share her viewpoint about the "home." But for some reason, they have not come forward.

September 6. Forced testimonies?

Are "testimonies" on teen home sites, forced?

I truly want to be fair and show you the other side, for there is really another side. Really. But my heart doesn't want to buy it.

You can attribute this nasty fact to the notion that the "heart is deceitful above all things", as says the prophet Jeremiah, and I am just being deceived by my old Adamic nature...

...Or you can read the testimonies of horror for yourself on my site and others, with an open mind, and a box of Kleenex tissues. Then try your best to erase the images you have seen. I can't.

Happy in jail

Oh, there are happy prisoners, as I may have said before. Glad to be off the street and have three square meals fed to them on schedule every day. A cot. Running water. Electricity.

Friends. Just like the home they never had.

But prison was not meant for children, and when I see scenes like that, my heart, Adamic or Spirit-filled – I cannot always tell – breaks.

The stories you read on the websites of these homes don't seem to jive with any other reporting on the homes. I'm not aware of positive spins anywhere else on the internet. They may be there. I just have not run across them. And I've been running quite a bit. Is it possible that the stories you read on the site of a home are...

Forced testimonies?

One ex-resident writes:

I wrote a glowing testimony , but only because I was forced to do so. These were not my feelings. I was forced for my fifteen months there to write happy letters home, telling of my spiritual growth. All my letters home were glowing reports. Anything negative was blacked out or not sent. I wrote a great testimony for their website after getting out. Now I want other girls to be spared going there. Shortly after the first video I put online, I received this tragic note:

Shut it down

Hi. I just watched a video today 12/30/2018 where you introduced your intentions to report on a certain home. I was imprisoned there for 2 years . Thank you so much for bringing awareness to this horrible ministry. I was emotionally abused and brainwashed and lived in constant fear the whole time I was there. I was one of the people you mentioned that wrote a favorable letter for them after I left. I was led to believe that God was unhappy with me and that I deserved how I was getting treated. Since leaving that home , I have suffered over 20 years of nightmares, PTSD symptoms as well as

anxiety and panic attacks. I have been to counseling that has helped greatly and have not had nightmares for several years and my anxiety is at a minimum (though I do still deal with anxiety). I am a Christian and still faithful serving God (in a non-denomination church). I am married and have 4 wonderful children. I am not seeking vengeance but DO want this ministry shut down so no one else has to suffer the way I did while I was there and the way I continue to suffer all these years later.

God Bless You!

So is that what we are seeing on their webpage? Forced testimonies? A long series of fantasies to entice people to keep coming ?

I search my brain still for a reason why scores of grown women, still in pain, have taken the time to make serious charges against the leaders of the home. Nothing better to do after all these years, ladies?

Look also for the syndrome described by Shakespeare in Hamlet:

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

It means that a protest is being raised where none is being asked for. You will see several denials of abuse in these letters as though they were being asked specifically to deny such. Why even bring up the subject if abuse was/is not taking place and staff was/is not trying desperately to cover it?

Not one negative word in any of these testimonies? Anything that seems negative to them they immediately justify as for their own good? All the incidents suggested by survivors, totally written off? Ignored?

Next time we look at some of these possibly forced stories.

September 9. They did not abuse us in any way! (1)

It never happened. What I have recorded over the past seventy-some posts is a figment of someone's imagination. That is what we must now try to believe, per the witnesses on a website created by one of these homes.

In fact, says one lady, this home was "The best thing that ever happened to me..."

I tried to suggest the reasons for this in my lastpost. But it would be totally dishonest of me to say that every kind word is unfounded. Good things happened at this ministry. Even the most abused of the victims will so testify. Fun activities now and then. Good food, now and then. Celebrations. Some good encouraging staff.

It will be painful perhaps for those still bruised to read through this collection of praises. We have just about made up our minds that the place needs to shut down or show some radical changes and an open door to monitoring.

But we must hear these other folks. Some of them may have deceived themselves, yes. They fell in love with their captors, yes. People had bruised them so much before they showed up, that the home looked like Heaven, yes. But there are a few others, can we admit, who genuinely are telling the truth?

Note that there are no names on this report. That's because there are no names on the site from which I borrowed these stories. The director says he wants to protect the girls. Yet, on the victim site, names abound. These survivors want to have their stories out there. They want to take responsibility. They are not afraid.

By the way, look for the bold letters in the stories, and tell me if you see a pattern.

Former Residents of a teen home testify... 1.

I was there for about three and a half years. They sent me to the girls home because my family situation was not very good. My parents were good people, but they knew they did not have what it took for me....a loving and stable home.

Upon arriving, I was nervous, scared, and excited all at the same time. When my dad and I pulled up, several people came out and helped us unload all the luggage. Then they gave my dad a tour of the place and talked to the staff for a little while, and then we said our good-byes and he left. [No mention of traumatic separation as would normally be the case and as others reported often.] I was then introduced to all the girls, and the staff ladies, and later was helped on starting my school work.

I loved everything about the place. It had a big open yard where we could play volley ball and kick ball, or just sit out there on Sundays on these huge bean bags and write letters to our parents [monitored letters]. The staff was so kind! [Not all the staff. Not the experience of many!] They were always there to help you through any problem you had. You learned to trust the Godly counsel that they offered you.

My new family

They became family to me. I can remember going to sleep at night thanking God for how good he was to me [Don't remember the screams upstairs of people being beaten?] . He had given me a second family and another place to call home! The good thing about the girls home was that no one was singled out and treated above anyone else! Those whose parents had money were not given extra privileges than those who did not have money. I would know because I was one of the girls without money. Everyone was treated with such kindness and love. This is not to say that there were no rules or guidelines in the home, but with them came the understanding of why we needed to obey rules. It would make us better people. It would help us later in life when we would work jobs. And if anything, it would just give us character!

I was fifteen years old when I went there. Of course I did not comprehend some of the rules that were given. No one at that age even thinks they need rules! I needed to obey them anyway. We were never beaten into submission. I was never hit or abused in any way, or saw anyone else being abused. [Why did you bring this up?] They never forced anything upon us, not even their religion. They were Christians through and through and we all knew that, but it was never forced upon us. [Not the testimony of so many!]

I wanted their Jesus

But after seeing the daily peace and joy that they had, I knew I wanted the same thing in my life. Their main goal was to teach us to be respectable human beings and to have character to get through the hard times in life.

So many teenagers these days talk about how they want to commit suicide. We never had thoughts like that [Maybe you. But some did. It's a matter of public record now.] We were excited for a new day

because we never knew what it held. It could be a day out for pizza, or working in the garden, or a fun filled day washing cars and spraying water on each other.

They pushed us to be more than we ever thought we could be. We pretty much had everything available at our fingertips. I taught myself to play the piano because they had three of them there. I fell in love with the guitar because one of the staff let me play on hers, and now I have my own guitar and can play it well. They sacrificed so much to try and meet our needs. We were truly loved; truly cared for.

My favorite thing

I can remember crying when it was time for me to go home [I cried when I left the children of God cult. It's a natural phenomenon to feel pain when separated from those who accepted you.] I was going to miss the girls home so much! It was a safe haven. I learned so many great things during my stay and also received an added plus. So I accepted the God who made them the loving and caring people that they were! I now have the same joy and peace that they displayed every day to each one of us girls. I can honestly say that this home was the best thing that ever happened to me!!

2.

I was brought to the school at 16 years of age.

When I entered their doors, I was experiencing deep problems and severe emotional pain. I was incredibly unstable and unable to control my emotions.

Over the two and a half year time span, I truly believe I received a wealth of help. I was given practical tools in helping me to gain control of my emotions. I was taught a strong work ethic and time

management skills. During the time I was there, I earned a college preparatory diploma and took many college classes as well [The A.C.E. program prepares one only for A.C. E. schools. Most colleges will not accept this coursework.]

They made me strong

When I left, I was no longer a scared, unstable, frightened little girl. Instead I was a strong, confident hard working young woman.

As I write this letter, I am nearing my 40th birthday. I have a bachelors degree in education and a business degree as well. For 17 years, I have been married and my husband and I have three children. Although I grew up around alcoholism, alcohol has no part in my life today whatsoever. I truly attribute this great success to the tools so diligently instilled in me as a teenager here.

[If testimonies of positive long-term effects are allowed to stand on this website, why does the home reject the notion that there have been long-term negative effects also?]

Absolutely no abuse!

Never in the two and a half year time span did I ever witness or experience any sort of abuse whatsoever. [Again with the denial. Why bring it up?] I was well-cared for and well- provided for. From everything I could see or hear, my fellow students were given the same fine care. [Then, my friend, you obviously did not see or hear everything.]

I am writing this today both to commend this ministry and also to shed some light on the positive impact they have made on my life and those lives I now touch. I will never be the same for having known them and for having been under their care.

Never be the same

That last line is the ongoing testimony of hundreds of others who were there, some of whom have nightmares about the place ... they'll never be the same.

Before we go to number 3, this comment. Like most of my readers, there are many things you used to like that you don't like any longer. You grew up. You began to see things in a different light. You realize slowly that even things that were evil in themselves turned out for your good. But you do not therefore begin to recommend the evil that you experienced for all others after you. On the contrary, you speak out against it! That is the testimony of some who originally wrote the glowing reports... then realized the awful mistake they had made.

3.

Great staff, lots of fun.

I was a student several years ago. Although I wasn't too excited about being there in the beginning, fortunately, I allowed God to work in my heart and going to school there became one of the BEST things that ever happened to me. At first, I didn't like everything about the school. I thought the uniforms were completely outdated, and my mom was a much better cook. If I would have allowed myself, I could have spent my time there complaining about how they didn't do things like my parents, home church, or youth group.

But I had to ask myself, "Are the uniforms modest?" Yes. "Are they practical?" Yes! Are they long lasting? YES! "Is the food nourishing?" Yes!

If we didn't finish our food from dinner, might we have it for

breakfast? Yes, but that was not cruel, it was simply teaching us not to be wasteful. As a student there, I remember LOTS of fun times. There was the monthly birthday party that WE got to plan, an occasional video night, volleyball games, playing in the snow and making igloos, jump rope, going out to eat at an Amish restaurant, singing around the campfire while roasting marshmallows and drinking hot cocoa, and my personal favorite — listening to Dr. give devotions.

He is the best storyteller I've ever heard. I loved to watch his facial expressions and try to make sense of his huge vocabulary. I always wished that he didn't have to travel so much so that he could do devotions more often.

They prayed for us. Also, I knew that ALL the staff there truly cared about me and just wanted to see me respect my parents and grow to love and serve God. There was even one staff lady that went around to our beds at night and asked us if we had a special prayer request. Sometimes I would prop myself up a little and watch her pray beside her bed for us girls. At times she would pray for up to forty-five minutes.

It was staff like her that helped me realize my need for salvation, and know that there was a God who cared about me and loved me even though I had done nothing to deserve His love.

4.

No abuse, highly recommended.

I was there for 15 months. During my stay, there was never any mistreatment or abuse. [Who said there was? Why do you bring it up?] We were always well fed, on a balanced diet, and all of our needs were met. The staff always treated us with respect and

kindness. There were many times that we would have birthday parties and field days. There was always a structure, but there was always fun as well. I am now the wife of a Pastor and we have recommended your ministry to others. If there was anything questionable, we would have never made that recommendation.

The home was there when my family had nowhere else to turn. It is scary for me to think what my life would be like today had this place not been there when I needed it. I am appreciative of and thankful for the staff and ministry.

5.

I was headed for destruction. Many years have passed since, as a 16 year old "troubled teen", my father brought me here, after I had run away from home. While here, I received loving and patient care and training in the Bible. I realized then how much God loves me and cares for me. I realized I needed a personal relationship with Him, and I repented of my sins and asked Him to be my personal Saviour.

The staff taught me to love and obey my parents, they did not try to steal our hearts away to follow the home's standards, but to point us in the right direction. They helped us to be responsible, good and respectful citizens. I was also able to graduate from high school by the next year.

As I applied the principles they taught me from the Bible, my life began to change. Instead of bitterness and hate and stealing, God helped me, (as it says in Romans 13:10, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor") to love and forgive. Instead of having emotional tantrums because I was not stable and could not handle anything without getting all upset, stability came as I realized God put everything in my life for a purpose and would help me through it.

All the training I received at here only helped me and changed my life for the better. I praise God for His protection on my life and for bringing me here. I know if I would have kept on running with those bad friends, I would have ended up pregnant, on drugs, and breaking the law. My life was headed for destruction.

Hmmm

But how could it be that all of the satisfied customers were blind to the serious mishandling of discipline that scores of grown women would be willing to swear to in a court of law to this day? Not one negative word? Is this forgiveness, ignorance... or coercion?

I admit that no institutional home on earth could be so evil that there are not moments, even days, of fun, laughter, meaning, friendship, etc. Though some wounded women can see only through the eyes of pain, most former residents are willing to tell you of happy times. Given that, we also must demand that there is no place that is so wonderful, that nothing evil ever happens. Though we do not dredge the bottom of the cesspool looking for dirt on this place, we must all agree, even the witnesses, that there were a bunch of things – policies, not just mistakes – that weren't meant by God to be humanly bearable, at the little house in the small town.

True or false witnesses? Either way, we continue.

6.

They loved me. And no abuse!

Parents sent me there at the age of 16 because of my rebellion towards them and the trouble I was getting into with my friends and at school. They felt like they had lost control of me, but cared enough for me to seek help. When I was brought there, I was very

resentful towards my parents and my authority. I was unhappy to be taken away from my surroundings. However, it did not take long for me to realize the family and staff loved and cared for me and desired to help me to do right and to rebuild my relationship with my family and God.

Through preaching, Bible reading and Godly counsel I realized how awful I had been to my family and those who really cared for me. The busy schedule of church, work and school was exactly what I needed to get my mind off of my friends and on to thinking of others.

Through all of this busy schedule, they always treated me with fairness and respect. Never did they subject me to any kind of physical or mental abuse. [Oops. There it is again. Will it be in every testimony? Was it a requested statement?] The overall atmosphere of the home was very uplifting and pleasant. Strict. But they loved me. I can look back and know the family and staff always had the utmost love in their hearts for me and all the girls, although they had to be strict and firm with the rules that were in place. I would not have had such a wonderful life serving the Lord with my husband if it were not for this home. The people there will always have such a special place in my heart.

7.

The clinician speaks: No abuse!

I am a former student at the facility. Currently, I am married and have one child. The function of this home was a healing one. [Why do so many scores of girls need healing from this home?] By no means can anyone repair an individual –both physically and mentally–in a time period as short as fifteen months.

What the home did do was teach us how to be better individuals—being able to make appropriate decisions in the midst of life’s challenges and stressors. In my clinical opinion [your qualifications for such an opinion?], some of the reported circumstances have been glamorized. [Whatever do you mean? Be specific. Can one glamorize pain ? Do you deny the agony?] The rules and regulations [which ones make you talk about them at all?] were set in place to protect us and other fellow students. This home did no more than an inpatient juvenile psychiatric facility would do for their clients [Uh, the State monitors those facilities . Assuredly, they allow no beatings ...] . Unlike a psychiatric facility, the environment at the home was a Christian one and those caring for the girls did so with little pay or reward.

I highly commend the (and staff) for selflessly giving of their time, energy, and resources to help girls change and lead productive lives. My stay there was a turning point in my life. I give much credit to that ministry for contributing to who I am today. The truth of the matter is that the loved each of the girls like their own and clearly remember each one—which is amazing. I look at the as my second family and have kept in contact with them over the years. If the staff were so abusive [answering issues that you do not explain. Why bring this up again?] and the accommodations so terrible, I don’t think that I would have had much to do with them today.

For whoever may be reading this message, please understand that the (and staff) are missionaries who have given so much for a worthy cause. They have received little compensation for their time and efforts. [This is disputed by some.]

8.

My life now is good. And there was no abuse! I came when I was 16, and stayed until I graduated from high school, three months after my 18th birthday. During my stay, I was treated with care and kindness. No one ever mistreated me in any way, nor did I observe the mistreatment of any other student. [gasp!] They fed all students well , the girls received adequate sleep, and they lived in comfortable rooms. We continued our education through the ministry school and received Biblical training through regular Bible study and church services.

I now have 4 wonderful children and am working to finish my degree in elementary education. My family and I attend church regularly, and we are very involved in our church's ministries.

The staff gave of their time to help me get through a very rough time in my life. If I had not attended this place, I would not be living the happy life that I now live. I am very glad for the ministry and staff, and I feel privileged to have been there. I learned many life lessons that have helped me make good decisions as an adult, and I look back at my stay with fond memories.

Testimonies scripted?

With any part of these testimonies that are true, we rejoice and add our amen and thanks to God. But it is clear they wrote them, in part, to counter the stories of abuse that were beginning to circulate and be believed by people who could do something about it. I do know of some who were asked to write such a story. Their response is other websites sharing testimonies that sound absolutely nothing like the above.

So what do you think? Let's do this one more time, then we move on to parents and staff.

September 12. They did NOT abuse us in any way! (2)

They Must Be Liars!

A sinner's report

Two thoughts grip me today. One is my own corrupt nature, manifested in a thousand ways over the many years of my life. The question, What right do you have to speak out against anyone? The answer, No right. But a pained heart keeps speaking out anyway. Oh Lord, forgive us all, and heal the broken-hearted as you promised to do.

Right in my own closet!

The other thought actually hit me last night as I was looking at my walk-in closet. I mentally took all the clothes out. The poles, the shelves. Empty. Then I rolled in a portable bed. I saw a doctor. Staff was crowded in there too. Pretty cramped room. I saw a newly-arrived female resident being stripped of her clothes, and having some sort of gown placed on her. They made her lie, without comment or explanation of any kind, on the bed.

A man, the doctor that she has never seen before began to examine her. He invaded her privacy in the most excruciating way, her screams unheard. They told her this is routine and necessary, and to calm down. But she believed she had been violated in some way. The screams continued.

Then she told her story twenty years later. Too late. She was branded a liar and told to get over it.

These are some of the thoughts that haunt me from day to day. If it is difficult for me to live with these memories as a distant observer who does not even own them, I can only wonder what it is like for

the many young women who actually endured this savagery?

Liars, all? No, I don't think so. Nevertheless,

We continue with stories being brought forth, available in full at a troubled teen home website. I have added my comments by using brackets.

9.

Absolutely no abuse! Only love!

During my three and a half year stay I was never abused physically, mentally, or in any other way. [Right to the point! The point that these testimonies are all about, it seems. A denial of any wrongdoing.] I neither saw, knew of, was a part to, or believe that any other students were subjected to any abuse or mistreatment. [Wow, a serious claim in the light of so many claims that oppose it. You just called hundreds of girls, liars.]

We were taught many things, mainly about the Bible and how to live a Christian life. We also learned things such as cooking and food preparation, gardening, sewing, crocheting, cleaning, and many other valuable skills that have changed and enhanced my life, and now my job as a wife and mother.

For me, this home was a loving family with boundaries that taught me how to repair my relationship with my own family (while I was there and even now- more than a decade later).

10.

Not even a raised voice!

I found security and safety in placing myself under the ' care. I stayed at the home for three and a half years even past the age of

18, by my own choice.

Staff and family were always kind to the students. I never heard staff raise their voice. [Once more a loud gasp!] We always respected their knowledge and wisdom as men of God. After taking long trips to churches and being on the road for days on end, they would always take time to counsel with the students in between trips. They would teach us from God's Word.

I always admired the family, the close-knit large family they have is a heart-warming testimony. We live in a day when the marriage covenant is easily broken and a description of what constitutes a "family" cannot even be agreed upon.

A philosophic add-on

People are ruled by their emotions. When someone who has an authority problem feels that they have been wronged, they will stop at nothing to get their way. Psychologists and pop-culture have taught us not to take responsibility for our actions. For a fee, anyone can go to a doctor or psychologist and get a diagnosis on which to blame a lack of character. In my experience being lied to is commonplace. Many grossly exaggerate circumstances in order to prove a point or get what they want. [Is that your assessment of the scores of stories out there, being written by women who are now moms and grand-moms?]

No one has to be taught how to lie. Disgruntled people, who have never learned to bring themselves under authority, will try to get others on their side by lying and complaining to them. People love to complain about their jobs, spouses, house, car, etc..

[Are you giving a testimony or using your writing space to trash

those who oppose you? Are you really content with calling all those who are in pain today, liars? Why are you, like some staff, talking about “disgruntled” people? Who wrote these stories? Unnamed past residents, or staff? When? Why? The victims of abuse have their names in plain sight on other websites. People can contact them, disagree with them, trash them, but their names remain. Who are these witnesses? Are they really witnesses? Why can’t we talk with them or they with us?]

[Her story continues]: We live in a day and age when people look out for #1, themselves. People don’t do things for one another unless there is something in it for them, fame, recognition, attention, money, etc.. A consequence for breaking a rule at the home was a demerit. I was never physically harmed or felt threatened that I would be. [!!!]

So many good times!

The family is one of the most giving families I’ve known. It’s been several years now since I moved on. Looking back, I remember all the good times I had there. I remember campfires, games, lots of music, volleyball, snow forts, birthday parties, Friday night fun times, encouragement from the _____, the academic and Spiritual focus from school and church. I thrived in that environment; the _____ family spent a lot of time with us. They would spend there [sic] holidays with us; we would be made special meals. One of the _____’ daughters spent hours decorating and making the home lovely and cozy for us. I enjoyed being a part of a ministry that would send Scriptures to many foreign countries.

They helped pay my tuition!

After graduating from college, I learned that the _____ had secretly been sending in an amount of money to my college every month. They

had already done so much for me, and still they continued to help me by applying money to my school bill. Staff members came from out of state to my college graduation. That was one of the kindest acts a non-family member has done for me. This act meant so much to me; they were willing to stand by my side showing how proud they were of me. I'm very happy to know the family and thank God for people who still remain faithful to God despite those who oppose them and the God they serve. [A dig by the author against victims, who in her mind now are opposers of God by telling their own experiences at this place]

No physical contact for a temper tantrum

As an example of their gracious care, I remember a time when a new student was throwing a temper tantrum like a two-year-old. I witnessed her screaming and losing control of herself; Staff spoke calmly and gently to her. There was never once any physical contact. [Never once? Are you sure?] Again, I was overwhelmed by how loving they were. I'm not the only girl that they have helped in this way, but I can only speak for myself.

Who will respond?

And so the mystery continues. The staff and its head were all angels. The ones they angelically hurt were and are all liars.

The allegations I presented at the beginning of this blog journey had to be rolled into one huge story so I could somehow include all the hundreds of statements that rose in opposition. Until now I have used full testimonies of the happy women, as recorded at the website. In fairness, and with respect to time and space, I must condense these last few stories. Same rules apply. Brackets added are my comments.

11.

Understanding, confidentiality... and no abuse!

I was used to spending a lot of time by myself at home and suddenly being surrounded by a bunch of girls was quite an adjustment for me. Here again the staff showed understanding by not requiring me at first to be involved in all the activities. As any organization of this sort must have rules, this home also has a set. Yet I was given a grace period in learning those, and was not held accountable for my beginning, unintentional errors.

Schedule is a definite help and security for struggling children and teens. The staff must have realized this as we were kept on a consistent schedule. It was designed in a way to fit our needs, yet not cause over exhaustion.

I appreciated their confidentiality of medical issues [No posting of menstrual and bowel activity? Many testify to this atrocity] among the students. I'm sure it was difficult in close proximity like that to maintain the privacy that they did. Private showers, a true luxury! We were also provided with private dressing rooms and showers- a luxury many public school students don't even have.

During my 15 month stay there, I was never once treated or touched inappropriately or roughly [There it is again. It is obvious that former residents were asked to say this]. I also never saw any of my fellow students physically abused in any way. [Incredible. I wasn't even there, and I see it all the time.]

There is an incident I clearly remember in which I made a careless mistake and something was wasted because of it. I am so thankful that the staff must have detected my more sensitive nature, and one of the head staff ladies came to me quietly to tell me how it

would be all straightened out. [A merciful staff member to protect you from someone not so merciful?]

Love springs from my heart for that lady when I think of how she very graciously dealt with me and the situation. After my experience as a student, I would highly recommend it to parents for their struggling teenage girls.

If someone falls away later it is not the responsibility of the home . [And why would you say that? Have you been hearing the cries of other former residents?] I fervently hope that, should I ever have daughters who need such a place as this, the doors would still be open. [May you never have such a need.]

12.

Worst problem was demerits

I wanted to take a moment to reflect on my time at this home. I stayed at the Girls Home for about 2 years and I would definitely say those years were the best times of my teenage years. I can state truthfully that I was never hit, spanked or abused during those years. [Why do former residents keep denying this? I think we all get it now.]

They never forced girls to over eat, in fact we had the choice to go on half or full portion depending on how much we wanted to eat. We were not mentally abused in any way. [Who said you were?] Obviously, when you have that many teenage girls living under one roof, there has to be discipline and the only type of discipline that any of us ever received was demerits. [Seriously? Before God you say this?] Most average American homes would have harsher punishments than that and it is ludicrous for one to say that was abusive. [But who said it was? Not one testimony I have ever read

claims that demerits are abusive. Why are you arguing with yourself? Or are you not really who you say you are?]

13.

Those poor bitter souls

The staff is well-equipped with Godly, loving men and women who have the utmost respect for all the young ladies who come into this ministry, some of whom have gone through the program themselves. None of whom, have ever abused a young lady, in or out of the home's are. And more importantly, neither I or anyone else while I was there was abused!! [Got it.]

A very structured program and lots of soul cleansing, along with Bible Scripture memorization and character building opportunities help change the will of the bitter soul bent on destruction. Those who fail to accept the help given often become even more bitter and carry this bitterness with them when they leave. [A message to the wounded souls who now come forward and risk their adult sanity to bring up these issues again.]

14.

Saved. On my way out

I hated it so bad. My mind was made up that this place was not going to change me at all. I was waiting and waiting for the day till I got out. I hated the rules, and most of all I hated that they would always talk to you about salvation. I got so tired of them talking to me about it, so I decided to make a profession so they would stop talking about it. I made a few professions, but they knew it wasn't real. I just did the rules so I wouldn't get in trouble.

Although I wasn't very rebellious on the outside, I was very

rebellious on the inside.

The week that I was to go home, Staff talked to me twice... They wanted to see me happy and live for the Lord. In my mind, I was thinking they were wasting their time talking to me, but their time was not wasted. I kept thinking of what the pastors told me that week.

I knew I didn't want to go to Hell, and I didn't want to go home the same way as I went there. I asked the Lord to save me from my sins, and He did. It hasn't always been easy for me, but I know that God is always by my side, and in trouble I can go to Him. Life begins at Calvary. [Please note that this sister, if she indeed is one, does not lift up the home, but the Lord Himself. Life began at Calvary, not at the home. Well said! She does not condone the rules that made her so sad. She testifies to the fact that a simple presentation of the Gospel is what saved her, not months of impossible rules and abuse. She also admits that under pressure, she was not above a serious falsehood.]

15.

Such fond memories

I very much enjoyed my stay. Yes, there were some rules to which I was not accustomed, but they all were very good for me—they helped to build character in my life. The staff and

family were kind and loving. They treated us girls like they would want to be treated.

I have many fond memories. I'm so thankful for the Bible memory we did and all the sermon tapes to which we listened. It's a perfect place for a young girl to be—"away from the world" and "a time to seek the Lord and draw closer to Him."

So be it. Fifteen happy women. Maybe. Without any way to track these people down, we will never know if any of these stories are true. But that's what the website says.

September 16. Parents in denial

The next witnesses are from a troubled teen home website, allegedly parents of former residents (duly condensed and commented on for the same reasons given in other posts). I say allegedly because I am now suspicious of the truth and origin of all these stories. They all flatly deny what scores of others have said is true. And, they continue to negate the idea of abuse, as though they were told specifically what to say. And thirdly, there are no names attached. No way to respond.

1.

Bad Rules, Good Place

The staff was excellent. They not only provided a great education, their love and understanding reached the heart of our daughter. They stressed and encouraged a good parent-daughter relationship; in writing told us that because she is our daughter, their role is not to replace the parent, but aid the parent and draw the family back together once again. Our daughter did not always agree with the rules, nor did she like staying there at times. But the purpose was to get her back on track for life—regardless whether or not she liked

the rules. [Trying to tell us something?] We prayed very hard during this time, and the staff prayed too.

2.

Questionable Rules, Great Place This was like Noah's Ark...

Some dear friends had been praying with us for wisdom and direction. They had been

supporters of this home for years and suggested it to us. We knew of no other place, and saw it as our only hope. It was a long non-stop [Why no stops?] drive, but it was worth it to find a safe place for our daughter. It was extremely hard sending our daughter so far from home to a place I had never seen. Later the staff kindly sent me a video tour of the ministry, which was a tremendous help [But did it tell you how things really are/were?].

Quite frankly, when we read over some of the rules, we were puzzled and momentarily questioned the need, [Some of the rules still reach out to take my peace away] but God gave us peace when we remembered that these people had been rescuing young women for many years. So whenever we would question some rule, God [This was God?] replaced that concern with trust, trust in Him and in the staff. After all, they had tons more experience working with troubled girls than we had. [Experience is not the issue. Godliness based on Scriptures is the issue.]

As my heart struggled to accept what had happened in our family and our daughter's absence, I came to think of this place as a type of Noah's Ark. Just as the Father had an ark prepared to save Noah and his family from destruction by shutting them in from the evil world, so He had prepared this ministry where our daughter was shut in for her own protection. [In the ark, people and animals were

saved from destruction. No scars afterward. That simply is not the testimony of hundreds, who argue that they were destroyed on the ark.]

Over the many months of her stay, her letters and phone calls were cherished times in our lives. We read the letters out loud time and time again. Her letters sounded so good, [indeed! Other testimonies tell us that the words were ordered by staff. That there was constant monitoring of conversations of any kind with home] but because of her having hid her rebellion for so long, we wondered if these changes were real. Was she just trying to sound “spiritual” so she could come home? Was her sweet repentance really true? These were the thoughts and concerns of hurting parents. [And good, good questions they were.] I believe her stay h was a lot harder on us as a family than on her [not necessarily so!]. We appreciated greatly being able to check with the staff on her progress, and we trusted their counsel.

When the time came for our first visit, we were greatly blessed to see wonderful changes, from the angry young woman of the months before to a tearful, thankful daughter [In many cases the tears hid an overwhelming desire to be out of there, but teenage girls are intimidated with regards to authority figures above them.] We knew that these changes would only be temporary unless time and more truth were cemented into her life. With each successive visit, we were more and more encouraged that the real girl was truly shining through. [So many have testified that these visits were arranged to make parents happy.]

Update

Update on our daughter: In the years that have followed, both her Dad and I have spent endless hours [endless hours? Why so much?]

talking with her about her stay. She has always spoken highly of the staff, and of her great love for them all. Among other things mentioned, were the times when rebellious girls chose not to follow house rules, yet during these times she never witnessed any abuse from the staff toward any student. [Aha! There it is again! Cleverly worked in at the end of the story. So , the girls who now cry out in pain were simply rebellious? End of story, write them off?]

3.

I visited. Positive Feelings.

I visited the home on six occasions and had nothing but positive feelings about the home. [I felt pretty good after my one visit. But what does that prove?] She came to know the Lord there and grew in the Christian faith. She attended high school there and today is very successful in the law field and a wife and mother. I do not even want to think where she may have ended up. [Have you ever thought where she might have been if you had kept her at home? If you had read a little. Prayed a little. Sought help from pastor and friends and family? Did you have to give her way? Teens go through this serious transition time. It is not pretty. But to put them with twenty-five other teens in one house with rules you admit were strange...]

Before our next guest:

Scripted? Original?

True stories or not, we must state again that good things happened at this home. It was not 24/7 evil. But we are trying to track down the truth about abuse. In our first three witnesses there is the ongoing theme that all was well there. In fairness , I will print the rest of these testimonies, but with the knowledge now that many of

them were scripted. First this note:

Parent Stories: a Challenge

Do what I do, troubled teen home. Put both sides up on your site. Go ahead and be critical of their words, but at least put their words up. Do you dare? Let parents see that there are two sides to all of this. Let them investigate, talk with people, weigh all the evidence. All of it. Every cry in the night. Every swat, every enforced silence, every unannounced vaginal exam. I would not suggest that you are cowardly if you don't do this. But someone might.

Back to the parents (if indeed these are real parents) 4.

Recommended by mental health clinic!

A marked change for the better...I first heard about this caring program for teen girls from a social worker at a Mental Health Clinic. [Please be so kind as to tell us which one?] She related that she had known several families who had been helped there. I then spoke with others who were all positive about the program. [Names? Let God's people know who is recommending this place! What a great way this would be to advertise!]

We visited the facility, interviewed the staff, and felt comfortable with the approach . We saw an encouraging balance of love, compassion and the necessary high standards and limits needed to bring hope to our beloved daughter.

5.

A Safe Haven ...not a prison...

[Strange you should bring that up... Many of these letters sound like direct responses to victim letters.]

This letter is to be shared to show our appreciation for the . We've been in the ministry for over 20 years and we have had the privilege of helping many people put their lives back together. We've helped those who have ruined their lives financially, morally, those who have ruined their marriages and lost their children to drugs, alcohol and other vices. Preacher's kid goes South.

But what happens when a pastor's daughter goes astray? What happens when your child is influenced by those you are trying to help? This home is there to help. They understand the heart issues that take place and what needs to take place in the heart to help the child to change her destructive behaviors. Each parent that signs their child in, is given a full understanding of the rules, the manner in which their daughter will be living, the safeguards that are in place for their child's protection and so on. [Then how do you explain the utter shock of some parents who later discovered what was going on?]

It is the parents' choice to enlist their child into the program. For the child, the home may seem like a prison. [Yes. Who told you this?] But for the parent who has placed their child there, it is a safe haven. [But the parent is not living there and may never know the real experience.] It is a place where they can rest and be assured that their daughter will not sneak out of the house at night [and in some cases may never once be allowed out of the house, per some testimonies. And let's don't forget that though security is tight, as in a prison, there have been escapees.]

6.

Watch out for red flags!

This home has been a blessing to my family. We constantly received calls from counselors to give us updates on our daughter. [And from

daughters, with counselors sitting right there, monitoring?] Not everyone may agree with the standards, methods, or security. [Such as??? Most parents and residents bring up this subject. I wonder why?]

The answer to that is, then don't send your daughter there [Good counsel. See a red flag, forget that place!]. Would you rather your daughter to continue in the direction she was going in before you brought her ? Would you rather a judge put her in juvenile detention until she's 18 or even 21? Would not that be worse? [You give only two alternatives: the home or jail. There are other possibilities!]

7.

Eternally thankful for the ministry.....during the next year and a half our daughter was a resident and a part of the school and church ministry. We talked to her every month, received letters every week, and visited the home on five different occasions. During that time we never saw anything that caused us to question the treatment she was receiving and she never complained or alerted us to any form of mistreatment. Of course, she didn't like everything, especially at first but she was always treated with kind, reasonable, and consistent discipline. [Sorry. The evidence is clear. Kind and reasonable are not words that apply here.]

In all the years since she has left, she has spoken of her experiences there on many occasions both publically [sic] and privately. She has never expressed any knowledge of mistreatment to herself or any other girls involved in the ministry. [Over and over and over we hear this, and are convinced now that parents and residents were told what to say in these testimonies. Sad.]

8.

Loving and decent people...

In regards to the ' , staff , and also their procedures and rules; I have found them to be the finest, most loving and decent people I have ever met. [Wow!] Yes, they teach the Bible, and are so caring that they devoted their lives to caring for these wayward, rebellious girls from "so called" Christian homes [so-called?].

Some are [Christian] , but some unfortunately are as I was, a little too liberal in my thinking. My daughter was there, and unfortunately I had to bring her home because I could not afford medical needs for her unless she was in my home. This was the requirement of our insurance company. It certainly was not because I felt anyone was abusing her. [Thou seemest a bit defensive, dear.] The staff gave her more love and patience and Biblical training than she got at home. Anger made me do it.

I was a young Christian and had an anger issue. [All young parents with anger issues should give their children away? Aren't there better options?] They never corrected her in anger. [Are you sure? But if their their methods were a matter of policy, that may be even worse.] She still has the utmost respect and love for them. She's not a success story only because she lived in a sinful home for all of her early years and saw and heard way to [sic] much before she was sent there. [So, your daughter would have been a success story if she could have stayed longer? Are you sure? Have you read the sad stories of girls who did stay significant amounts of time?]

9.

We noticed a real change in her...

We had consulted with our pastor [and with the daughter?] about our situation for a couple of years also and his advice was to get her

away from the bad influences of her friends [Were you not concerned that this was a home filled with teens as troubled as your daughter?] . So we, along with our pastor and our daughter, drove to the home and enrolled her.

She was there for several months and was able to complete her high school diploma.

For the time that she was there our pastor called her every Saturday night faithfully and wrote to her weekly and even made a visit to her. We as her parents wrote her once a week and talked to her on the phone once a month. We made one trip by ourselves to see her and her siblings went along for another trip in the summer. [You did not suspect that the home scripted and monitored these visits, as others have testified?]

Jesus saves the day!

She wrote to us once a week also and sent us a list of what she ate each day and what she was doing which included church, volleyball, and chores. It wasn't until several months into her stay that we noticed a real change in her as it was at that time that she accepted Jesus Christ as her Saviour and made Him the Lord of her life. From that time on you could see a real change in her attitude...[Indeed. If anyone is in Christ, she is a new creation. Christ receives all the glory in this matter. And we can be thankful that someone shared Jesus with her. But that does not explain or excuse the horror stories that surround this house.]

10.

Now a devoted wife and mother...

At no time did we ever have any reason to believe that anyone abused our daughter either physically or mentally, nor has she ever

alluded to such treatment. [There it is again. Do you think it is merely accidental that parents feel a need to say this in every story?]

11.

The best thing we could have done for her...Staff made us aware of all the rules and regulations of the school , including corporal punishment if necessary. He demonstrated how this was done and we did not feel that it was abusive in any way. [Seriously?

Would you yourself do it the way victims describe it?]

Since leaving, she has never complained to us about the treatment she received while she was there. [Girls testify to the fact that they are afraid to talk about it, sometimes for years, sometimes not even to their (future) spouses. It's called trauma].

While the rules are strict and perhaps a bit unorthodox, we do not believe them to be abusive in any way.

My aha! moment, and hopefully yours...

A glimmer of understanding dawns on us. Much of what I have recorded of the girls' complaints on my blog is not viewed as abusive by some parents! No, this is just training. Intensive training for bad girls. Whatever works to change my baby must be good. Hence the forever sounding of the no-abuse theme. Has the church become so cold as to believe that the teen gulag ways of managing children are normative, and especially, Scriptural?

Again and again in the parent "testimonies" is the theme of "no abuse." Did they expect abuse? Or are they responding to survivors' accusations? Or did someone "request" them to say something along these lines? We now have an idea of what other parent

testimonies will look like.

Independent researchers can easily go to the websites of troubled teen homes and continue on their own.

September 19. Where are God's men?

Using the same website [of a troubled teen home] that gave us stories of ex-residents and their parents, we now glean testimonies from pastors. Unfortunately there are no such men that have come forward to support the victims. Their support is mainly of other pastors.

Where are the men who will take an objective look at this home, and part company with other men of the cloth? What pastor will listen to the cries of the hurting, the brokenhearted?

Many pastors will stand by the director and his ministry. One of them, though his testimony is not recorded here, was my own pastor for some time. I honor him still. But I felt I could no longer remain in a church that would be constantly defending the home, while I was constantly finding fault with it. I had to be free to examine and report, which I have done.

We hope to cast no shadows on these men. They sincerely believe what they are saying, or so it seems. But,

Who are they?

We are faced once more with nameless writers, and no ability on our part to contact and verify. All we know is that they were involved in sending students. Are they all from the same denomination? Are they all in compliance with the “Pearl” book cited earlier? Do any of them, all of them, practice the paddling of infants, as the Director recommends?

A partial answer comes by way of response to a video I produced on this subject, from a former resident: “Most of those pastors [writing praises] have served on the board...” and we assume that their visits and tours of the facility were for the most part announced and prepped.

1.

We are thankful for the influence that the home had in her life.

When she was taken by her parents to this home, she was literally out of control...

In desperation, they took her there, under great protest from her. Fortunately, shortly after arriving, she settled down and settled in. As her pastor, we communicated often by phone and by letter. It appeared that genuine change was beginning to occur in her life in a very positive way.

However, in retrospect, the change now seems to be something she put on, [no doubt, to avoid the awful punishments available] and that she did not really receive the Lord, and really commit her life to Christ. Her availability for the Bible studies began to be spotty, ostensibly because of conflicts with college in which she was then enrolled.

She is a backslider

It was not long before some of the old behaviors began to surface. She has since had moral failure with different young men. She has lived off and on with the guys, and with her parents, who finally asked her to leave.

We are thankful for the influence that the home had in her life, and rejoice that she was taught the real answers to real life. However, we also recognize the incredible challenge the home was up against with her as evidenced by her life today. Thank you for your influence. Our prayer is that someday the things she learned will come back to her, and she will find the way to real, satisfying life—life in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for having such a ministry.

[Now that is a strange recommendation to be sure! Need I comment?]

2.

A refuge

I have had the privilege of visiting on two different occasions and one of the first thoughts that came to my mind is...Refuge. It is truly a place of refuge for troubled young ladies. I believe [opinion?] it to be a place where a young lady can come and find truth from God's perspective. I believe it to be a place of opportunity and place where young ladies without hope can once again experience God's wonderful grace.

It has been my honour to be a life long friend of [the director's] family. Your family has been a great encouragement and testimony to me. There are many so-called "ministers" and "ministries" that simply are wolves in sheep's clothing. I have always observed your family and the staff to be of the utmost integrity. If the need ever

were to arise I know with complete confidence that I could wholeheartedly recommend this home to a family in need.

Thank you for having this place of refuge where a young lady can learn that she is of great value; precious, and loved in the sight and heart of God. [Why do hundreds disagree?] Thank you for your sacrifice and stand that others may reap the benefit.

3.

Our denomination needs this ministry

I am a pastor of a church. I have known Dr. for over 25 years and have visited the ministry on many occasions. In a Church such as ours, this is a much needed ministry.

Most [numerical proof?] of the girls that have gone there initially express gratefulness to their parents, and the ministry for helping them in their time of need. There are girls that still openly praise the Lord for the e ministry as they continue to live a God fearing life and raise their families to honor God. This ministry has stood for 37 years in salvaging many young ladies.

Our girls have turned around

Thank you for the excellent way in which you have helped the young ladies whom we have recommended. Your superb professional counseling, the secure home atmosphere, and the joyous, positive attitude and emphasis have brought help to their distressed lives. We are exceedingly grateful for the continuing ministry.

when they were released from the home, they [the girls sent there by this pastor] could not say enough good about how they were treated and they were grateful for your counsel and what God was

doing in their lives. Both came out with the desire to honor their family, to make things right, to be an asset in the community and a help in the church. We rejoiced with them at the complete turnaround in their lives.

Go figure

Please ponder the question with me about the pastors who are aware of the heartbreak that took place at this home. Where are their voices? Why do they remain silent? Why has the Christian presence in the city, led by its pastors, not risen up to investigate, and if necessary, help bring closure to a facility that has brought upon it such dishonor?

Many of the men speak of their visits. Ever had anyone visit your house? Did you do a little extra clean-up? Of course you did. Vacuum. Washed and dried and put away dishes. Nothing wrong with that. But did your visitors get a real impression of how I live? Nah. So should they go out and tell everyone, Wow, these , they are SO clean and neat! Nah again.

Visits are visits and they are always a little – if not a lot – contrived. This particular facility may have been a nice place to visit. But many will tell us, you wouldn't want to have lived there...

4.

Never heard a negative word

I have known Dr. for many years. I have visited their home and have enjoyed meals with them as well as the girls in their home. Never have I witnessed anything that would be consistent with what some people are saying about what goes on . [So some people must be telling big fibs.]In the past, some of the members of the church I pastor, have sent girls there.Never have I heard them or

their daughters say anything negative. [I have heard much. Will you listen?]

I have never known this place to be abusive to the girls in their home, physically, mentally, socially, or Spiritually. [Again, the required denial.]

5.

So humane!

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:...the ministry, under the capable direction and leadership of Dr. , has undertaken this important responsibility. Having carefully observed it for 30 years, in my estimate, it combines genuine Christian compassion and concern with careful restraints that are humane and wise. It is filling a distinct void and meeting a tremendous need in a vital area as they endeavor to salvage tender lives for productive purposes in families, churches and human society.

6.

All but lived there!

I am happy to express my personal appreciation for the ministry. Since I have been on the campus many times [pre-arranged visits?], spoken in the chapel services, visited the school, and my wife and I have talked with some of the students, I feel that I know the ministry well.

Perhaps two weeks as a resident might have given an even clearer vision?]

The love of the entire staff for the students that I have witnessed on many occasions is refreshing and encouraging. Your steadfastness

in consistently showing the girls a better way (God's way) according to His Word is the reason I remain a loyal and faithful supporter of the ministry.

7.

They seem so content!

As a pastor and as a supporter of the ministry, I thought it would be good to visit with them and I did visit on three different occasions. Upon my visits I found the ministry to be very organized and with a pleasant and clean environment [I would imagine so!]. I sensed a genuine concern and dedication among the staff members. The young ladies who were enrolled there seemed content. They conducted themselves very well and I saw no signs of depression. [And why would you?]

I greatly enjoyed their singing during the church services and I remember hearing some give their testimony of how the Lord had changed their lives since they had come there. After hearing and seeing all that was said and done I truly considered this to be a needed and helpful ministry. I feel there are few that could undertake such a task as has. His years of consistency, faithfulness, and dedication both to the ministry and to the Lord have proved him to be a true and upright servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8.

Biased, but with good reasons

I am a pastor who has been an acquaintance of the ministry for over thirty years. Some might accuse me of being biased, and rightly so. I am, not because of the length of my acquaintance, but because of what I have seen and heard during that time. What is it

that I have seen concerning the ministry? First, it is the consistency. This ministry has stuck by their standards...

Secondly, I have seen an ongoing love for the girls, sometimes misinterpreted by outsiders and even the rebellious girls themselves [slap!] who mistakenly think love is letting you do anything you want and not making you do anything you don't want. [Never once in the testimonies of victims has this mind-set been expressed. You assume too much! They all expected discipline! They did not expect torture!]

It is that kind of thinking that lands girls there to begin with. Love does what is best for the one being loved. Sometimes that can be unpleasant [You have gone from giving a testimony to preaching to victims. Just read their stories! Unpleasant easily, and often crossing over into inhuman and unacceptable in these homes].

God uses this home to crash people's pride. Had the Lord not brought my pride crashing down, I would be in hell, or headed there, today [Were you beaten into submission regularly? Locked up? Shamed? By Christian people? Are you sure that is the Lord's way of bringing our pride down? Sounds more like the world to me.]

I have visited on frequent occasions, both announced ahead of time and unannounced [It is impossible to walk into this place totally unannounced. The serious locks that bind the residents inside the house also keep out visitors. Only a short notice needs to be given to put things visibly in order. I came unannounced recently, but there was time for an alert to be sounded about someone coming through, I am sure. This is a totally locked-down facility, as I was told when we approached the door].

Everything done in level have never seen anything that would be

contrary to expressed love. I have had young ladies from my church become residents in this program. They returned changed and happy girls. Unfortunately, one eventually went back to her old ways, but that was not due to any blame of the ministry. [I get it. All credit for positive change goes to the home , but all blame for no change cannot be charged to them. Biased indeed, sir.]

Third, I have seen good training – academic, spiritual, character, and practical life skills training are all emphasized, along with having good clean fun and building good memories.

Fourth, I have seen quality of care. The facilities are nice and clean [Residents themselves do this work on pain of more punishment if done poorly.] The good, healthy food and exercise is a model for successful, healthy living. Medical needs are addressed. The girls have access to good counsel and are urged to keep in touch with their pastor back home. [Via censored letters, say the victims.]

Fifth, I have seen preparations to help serve others. Nay-sayers are just negative people. Isn't it strange that those who choose to see everything through negative-colored glasses are blinded by their negativity to all that is good, and seldom, if ever, mention any of the good? [And isn't it equally strange, Sir, that some can ignore the cries of hurting people who happen to live in the very same setting as the happy ones?]

Sincerely, An Appreciative [but admittedly biased] Pastor

We still await the rising up of a pastor who will look at all the evidence, and weigh in on the situation as an advocate for the suffering.

So the pastors would tell the ladies, Stop those attacks! No fair telling your truth. Listen to our truth. If you had bad treatment, you

deserved it. And since you rejected the ministry, you still deserve it!
Ladies, stop those attacks!

Is there really an unwritten code that demands lock-step agreement among the clergy? Someone told me that but I did not want to believe it. Can't pastors be wrong? We are told by the home that we should not believe the victims because they tend to pile on when they see words against something that hurt them in the past. Can't pastors pile on also, and just assume some things are true, with no proof? What greater proof could there be than hundreds of eyewitnesses?

9.

Those ladies are vindictive!

Dear Dr. ,In light of recent attacks against you [Then these letters were simply a response to victims, not an ongoing effusion of praise for this house? No names or dates are given on any of these letters...], I would like to pen words of encouragement to you, and lend my voice in your support.

This is not theoretical, contrived or offhand. Please be assured that I am very familiar with the home.I visited the home on at least 3 occasions and found a loving, learned and considerate organization Each and every staff member displayed a minister's heart toward the girls. They displayed a proper regard for the value of each and every girl's souls.

As pastor to this young lady, I had weekly contact by phone and developed a strong and precious bond with her that continues. Do these vindictive people begrudge or resent this young lady's happy home, loving husband and beautiful children? [Now, the witnesses are vindictive.] None of these would have been possible without the

loving care and counsel of our dear friends. Some of these are now working against this fine organization of people who give of themselves in their behalf.

Thankfully, our church's young lady is not among them. She made life-long friends, loves and keeps in contact with these dear people and by her very existence reveals the lie of these sad creatures who, by a continuation of the rebellion that landed them there in the first place, would destroy the opportunity for all those others to come and realize liberty in Christ, peace, harmony and fellowship. Sad creatures! [Those who tell of things that happened to them are now sad creatures. How I would love the good pastor to meet with some of these sad creatures, who work for the Lord Jesus, have wonderful families of their own, yet wish with all their heart that they could close down this home]

It is short sighted, selfish and destructive....the same characteristics that made their parents turn in desperation to the home to begin with.[Talk about vindictive and sad... These girls who were run off by their parents and then abused at the home , were merely telling their stories. Is this man filled with hatred?]

10.

Those ladies are disreputable!

Throughout my ten years of acquaintance and involvement , God has allowed me to make several observations.Always [Always is a big word. Have you lived there always or even at all?], the air at the ministry is one of peacefulness. In the church services, there is a beautiful attitude of worship enhanced by the girls' demure appearance, chaste behavior, and enthusiastic singing.

In the school, one can find, even on an unannounced visit, a happy

environment with students performing their academic studies and carrying out their vocational training with obvious willingness. Always [Hmmm], in my experience, there is an unspoken respect [fear?].

Never have I seen or heard a confrontational spirit between student and teacher, between girl and house parent, between member and pastor. In every instance of my observation, there has been a mutual esteem because the staff see their students as unique, special creations of God who should be honored as such. Liars! There was no abuse! As to any physical abuse or misuse, I have seen none, [one would not think such abusive behavior would be on display in front of a visitor] either in actuality or in evidence. [For the evidence, look around online. There's tons. Then please print a retraction of your story.]

I have never so much as observed a staff member take a student by the arm or even mildly shove or move a student. Having spent years counseling abuse victims, I can easily spot the distrust in the eyes of an abused person if he is near the one who has taken advantage of him. Such distrust is never visible in the eyes of the students here when they are around their staff and counselors. [So we have another expert, who is willing to call all of the scores of witnesses to the contrary, liars.]

Furthermore, no worthy, reputable source can be found to lodge true complaints against the staff or pastors, past or present. [Ouch! The witnesses of abuse are now unworthy and disreputable liars!] All their supporters would testify that what I have said is true.

11.

Those ladies have abused themselves!

Those young girls who have been at the home and are now saying and writing horrible things against staff and the ministry, are to be supported in no way for their attacks. [What do you think was their motivation, as they are now moms and grandmothers?] They deserve no ear by the public. At the end of the day, the fruit of their words and life-styles

will prove them to be much like the girl I have described [He talks of a very evil woman who went into a life of sin after rejecting the home. Proving that the methods of the home don't work universally.]

If any of these girls who have been there have been abused, it is they who have abused themselves! [bizarre statement!] Let anyone who believes otherwise beware! God avenges truth!

Eruption!

No, sir, God avenges lies! We can thank you for admitting at least that abuse did take place! But shall all the abused of earth now be blamed for being abused, and their abusers go free? How dare you suggest such a thing! Are you sure you speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus?

Are you sure you have full knowledge of the individual cases of every girl who attended? And are you aware of how many of them are actually serving God, like the success stories that the home claims on its website? On the other hand, do you know how many victims found God to be real to them in the darkness of the trial posed by the home's policies? And can you vouch for all those policies?

Prostrate on the floor beatings, yes beatings, by a giant of a man wielding a heavy board on their back side? Can you imagine the

shame for a teenage girl to endure this, and cruel mockings of all sorts? Read their stories! Read their stories! Their very names are given, unlike yours and the seemingly “good girls”. They deserve no ear, you say?

Where were you born, sir? Russia? North Korea? Victims of abuse deserve no hearing by the people outside the ten-foot fence of a gulag-style home? None at all? Why do you fear their testimonies? What if they can bring proof? What if their testimonies are corroborated by fine women of God who also happen to be survivors?

For yes, many went on to serve God in spite of the abuse. Would you dare confront one of them? A testimony that tries to prove too much, proves nothing at all, except the bias of the testifier.

September 24. My job at the troubled teen home.

A leftover word about visits from pastors...

Before we move away from pastor reports altogether, I must share with you a comment someone left in response to my post of two days ago. I felt it was worthy of your attention immediately, as further support for the case that is being leveled against the policies of this house. Hear the commenter:

“As a student there for about 22 months,

this [assumption I made about pastoral visits] nails it. We knew when the director announced a visitor we were to stand and cheerfully greet them as ordered. It was all some charade. We weren't allowed to freely visit with ANYONE, even our own parents if they showed up for the periodic, prearranged allowed visit which followed rigid guidelines, and included staff even following us in the bathroom to monitor conversation, which they wrote down as we visited. It was always a great facade of some well-oiled machine of girls' spirits and /or souls being crushed and formed into puppets. If he said jump, we jumped, if he expected a smile, we smiled. We scrubbed that place to immaculate more than once a day. Certainly it appeared spectacular."

She was there. The following stories, taken directly from their website, were supposedly written by others that were there. Staff. Like the staff who wrote stories with a different perspective much earlier on this site.

Turn your discerners on to high, and I will share my doubts by putting my own words in brackets. I have seriously condensed these statements.

1.

I wanted to help girls that were like me

After enduring my own rocky teenage years, I had a burden to help teen girls avoid the pitfalls I had faced. When I first visited, I was drawn by the Godliness I sensed in the staff. After joining the staff, I realized the structured program and schedule provided discipline lacking in my own life, as well as providing security in the lives of the students.

We single staff ladies lived with the girls 24/7, sharing in all

activities – meals, schooling, work and play as a family. Learning individual traits, needs, and desires gave many opportunities for counseling and redirecting negative thoughts into positive channels toward victory over detrimental habit patterns that would lead to defeat in later life.

My personal goal was to see hearts changed through salvation, but for those who had no interest in God’s free gift, there was still ample opportunity to learn good character necessary for future success as a wife and mother or employee and responsible citizen.

Teaching girls the basics

Many girls had never learned basic household skills. I enjoyed teaching them to sort laundry into dark and light colors and sharing tips for removing stains. Some even had to be taught personal hygiene such as changing underwear daily and how to properly wash their hair and trim their nails. The “dishwasher generation” had to be taught that clean dishes are the result of more than just dipping dishes in soapy water and rinsing, hence the term “elbow grease.”

Gardening was a new experience for me. I enjoyed it, but at first my weeding was not appreciated when I finished my row, and the staff’s sunflowers were gone! After I learned, I enjoyed patiently teaching the difference between weeds and plants. The staff spent many long, hot days helping with gardening. I enjoy eating most produce, but eggplant and okra presented a challenge in setting a good example for the girls in thankfully eating everything. Mrs.

creatively used what the Lord provided to serve nutritious meals – a good lesson for future moms.

Teaching them work skills

With so many occupants, we all had to do our part to keep the facility clean and sanitary. I had to learn a balance between doing a good job and taking all day to clean one room. Most girls, on the other hand, had to learn the importance of taking pride in a job well done rather than spending time trying to look busy while accomplishing little. Employers want diligent workers rather than clock-watchers.

Upon admission, many were doing poorly in school, some on the verge of suspension or expulsion because of disobedience or disruptive behavior. We strove to teach them the importance of earning their diploma through diligent work rather than trying to cheat their way through school.

Education enhanced

The family are very concerned about the girls' education, providing a curriculum that allows them to work at their own pace so they can make up the time they lost through foolishness. Many have graduated and gone on to college while some continued their lack of achievement, progressing very little.

Staff were always trying new ideas for recreation. Many times we stayed up late planning fun times for the girls. Staff never went home for holidays; instead we spent time decorating, cooking and preparing special celebrations. Unfortunately, these times were often marred by unruly behavior of one or more students who showed no appreciation for all the effort in their behalf.

Success?

People often ask about our "success rate." Individual results varied based on desire to change. Those who resisted change completely seemed miserable, but we refused to let them discourage us from

providing a loving environment and guidance for those who desired to leave their dark past behind and press on toward a brighter future. [Some statistics about that rate of success would surely be helpful to the public.]

[It is possible that everything you have just read is not only true but highly commendable. But why did the staff member not tell the whole story? We know the answer to that. Or did she fully agree with the methods used to accomplish all these worthy goals?]

2.

I came to the Lord myself, as a staff member

Pastor came to our church when I was a young lady seeking what the Lord would have for my future. As I watched his slide show and heard the needs of this ministry, my heart was burdened for these girls. I also had been a rebellious young teenager, and it is only by God's grace that I am serving Him today.

Through a series of events, it became clear to me and my family that the Lord would have me go to help in this ministry rather than go to college. I was young and inexperienced. It was my heartfelt desire to help in the ministry but, as time went on, the Lord revealed to me my own rebellious heart. Though I was serving as a staff lady, in my heart I became more like a girl going through the program. I began to feel lonely and inadequate. I began to question whether or not the Lord was really real or if everyone just pretended to have a relationship with Him. The preaching was some of the best preaching I have ever heard. [And how many years of experience had you had in hearing sermons?] These pastors seemed to really know God. I always thought I did. It was in my head, not in my heart.

After being there a year and a half, I came to know the Lord as my personal Saviour.

I was only able to stay for two months after this turning point in my life. I was needed at home to help my mother, who was suffering from extreme back problems. Always I regretted that I couldn't stay longer to help once I came to truly know the Lord.

Didn't agree with everything... but no abuse!

I may not have understood or completely agreed with everything that was done in this ministry, but I do know that nothing was ever done, to my knowledge, to hurt or abuse any girl. [We have heard this before] There was certainly always more than enough food, with the option of half the amount for those who desired less. The girls were required to responsibly do normal daily duties in a reasonably timely fashion- keeping their things neat and tidy, basic cleaning jobs, kitchen duties, etc.

is one of the kindest, big hearted men I have ever met, and very funny. We had movie nights and game nights frequently. We played volleyball often and always made a big deal of many holidays. The picnics, parties and such were great fun. We would order out and have subs, pizza, and special cakes, etc. I have many fun memories.

The Lord and this teen home

I now have a wonderful husband and five beautiful, happy children. I was able to have a pure courtship, a wonderful spirit filled wedding, and now, a Christ-centered, happy home. I owe all this to my Lord and Saviour, who I came to know at this home.

[Who can argue with any of the above? Who can deny her experience and the changes that took place in her life? But we still

want to know how in the world she could have believed that the discipline tactics she was seeing were somehow taught in Scripture, and therefore not worthy of mention.]

3.

Happy Days

It is very exciting when a new girl comes to our ministry because she is a unique individual who adds to our home. Some young ladies are athletic, musical, or poetic while others are skilled in crafts, drama, or any of a host of other talents that make for a lively and interesting home! Some of our girls have been to foreign countries or come from different cultures and enjoy sharing their experiences. We all love to tell stories, some of which add illustration to a conversation or a biblical topic we have been discussing. Some of our stories are just funny things that have happened and give everyone a good laugh![Yes, there were happy moments. Now, is there something missing in your report? Maybe even a whole lot?]

4.

A Divine Call

I was called by God to go to there over a decade ago. It was my desire to serve God in a capacity that He found suitable for me. I was shown that there was a need for staff workers at this home, so I took a trip to investigate the possibility. I enjoyed a two-week visit, but because of personal reasons, I frankly determined that I probably was not going to go there.

A staff member cordially extended a welcome for me to return should I ever decide to serve with them there. Nothing more was said, and I continued my schedule of work. No one asked or

pressured me further. Another few weeks passed, and I found that I was burdened more and more for those teenagers – it was God’s call. [It is a call I am feeling even now. A call to help salvage lives ruined there.]

Serious schedule

My schedule is packed daily – 6:55 a.m., I am up praying. Who can serve God in any place without looking to Him for guidance? 7:30 I dress and take care of a few details, which might include making breakfast, taking out trash, etc. The girls are up by 7:55, and the day flies from there. 8:15 breakfast, 8:30 dish crew and light duties (bathroom cleaning, sweeping, table clearing, etc.) 9:30 the girls are in school and my tasks vary depending on where I am needed most. I may be in school for the day, preparing food, baking, cleaning, gardening – basically any duty that most women would do to take care of home and the needs of children.

I also have time during the day to take care of personal needs. Once the girls are out of school, we get some fresh air by a brisk walk or some calisthenics. We work together to clean the house. Oftentimes, we will have different projects to do which give variety to our duty time. By 4pm I or another staff will put dinner on. At 5:30, we are sitting down to our evening meal.

Conversation at meal times is and has always been a delight to me. “I got ‘B’ honor roll,” “I finished a PACE,” “I’m struggling with Algebra,” “Hey, do you want to hear a funny story,” “Isn’t it great to see God doing this,” and on and on. [Are you sure you will not share how some cannot join you at the table? How some at the table are not allowed to talk or even make eye contact?]

Just loved doing dishes!

The interaction is wonderful and challenging. Dinner dish crew follows, which can be at times fun and a little rowdy – splash, squeal, ugh, laughter! [No demand for perfection and demerits if things are not done properly? Others mention this, why not you?]

Evening activities typically begin by 7pm – study hall, tape class, crafts, and Scripture collation are a few of our engagements. 8:45-9:15 p.m. is group devotions and singing. Then the girls are in bed around 9:30. This time of the night involves many things for me – catch up on laundry, phone calls, picking up loose ends, correspondence, taking caring of girls needs (this will often include a girl wanting to talk to me about something on her heart and mind), locking up, picking up, checking our cooler and freezer, shoveling snow or whatever else needs to be done to make the next day go more smoothly.

Bedtime is usually 11pm, but it is up to me if I want to go to bed earlier or later. [No mention of screams in the night as students are taken to a room for punishment while others try to sleep? Or had these horrors stopped by then?]

No beatings, no starvings

Since I have been here, corporal punishment has not been used nor has the withholding of food been practiced as a form of correction. [The date of this letter is omitted from the site. In 1996, say some reports, such practices stopped. One wonders how the Scriptural mandate to beat from baby-hood was carried out.]

The demerit system has been utilized. Sentences and restricted privileges are the mode of correction. Even this system has been modified over the years to reflect a desire to train and show grace. [Meaning that little grace was shown originally?]

Enough of this. You get the picture.

Other testimonies follow on the website. The reader is encouraged to visit sites of teen homes and read each word carefully. You will find much of the same content:

Staff who are grateful for the opportunity to have been there. The schedule of each day's activities.

Relationships with troubled girls that had to be worked out. Praise of staff.

And of course, total denial of any abuse.

Help! I grow weary of this. Hundreds of people saw what these staff members either did not see, will not see, or cannot see. Who will set things straight here? It so happens that, late in my blogging process another staff member appeared on the scene. In the next post, I will share her thoughts on what really happened there. I do not mean to doubt the stories I just shared. But I do mean to say that the report from these particular staff members is not complete. We'll try to fix that next time.

September 26. The secret writings

It pains me to continue to dwell in anonymity. The people I am defending in this blog site are all very eager to have their names out there with their stories. They have proved this on other sites. But

having run across the threats of certain ex- residents, I have decided to simply tell the story. Stories don't take you to court.

So, a long line of witnesses, all from one website, the website of the home in question, have let us know that this place was and is squeaky clean. Ex-residents, moms, staff, even pastors, all declare the glories of the little house in the little town. No abuse. Not even a raised voice. Gentleness. Kindness. All the fruit you would expect from a Christian home.

Well, even the directors of the home don't claim that much. They admit to "mistakes" at least.

The witness you will hear now was also there. She spent a shocking summer there many years ago, as staff.

When she could, this lady took notes and wrote letters home . I have taken her statements and interjected my questions to make them relate to it. All the words that are labeled "C" are her actual words. I have only omitted people's names. Mix this into your thinking as you try to see the whole picture, which you obviously will not receive on the home's website.

C's secret writings

C: The director frequently discredits his past students' accusations as bitterness, piling on, forever unreliable due to teenage misdemeanors, or simply inaccurate. I mean, "who can really say what happened so long ago"?

Bob: Just a minute, C, let's tell the readers a little about you. Why were you at the home in question?

C: I was not there for being what the director considered a "wayward girl." In fact, I was "good enough" that he hired me as a

summer staff member.

Bob: Did you experience some of the things that so-called “victim” residents have experienced?

No abuse. For me.

C: I was not abused. Indeed, the director was actually quite kind to me. He was charming and charismatic. He made me feel like an important part of the ministry that summer. I loved him as a pastor and believed in the work he was doing.

Bob: So when you left, you weren't thinking bitter thoughts about him or the home?

C: I left at the end of the summer in good standing. I had no reason to be bitter against him and have never spoken against him in bitterness.

Bob: So, you...

C: However, I will speak out against him. While he didn't abuse me, he did abuse the students, and he convinced us all that he had a special word from God to do so.

Bob: Oh. I misunderstood. There were problems there after all?

Stunned by harsh treatment.

C: I was so stunned by the harshness that I wrote about it in letters home to my then- boyfriend, now-husband. I will share excerpts from these letters below. But first, I need to say something about collaboration.

Bob: Collaboration?

C: In those days, we dared not speak of our dissatisfaction. For

example, we did not discuss the fact that we were hungry. Never. Not a word, not an eye roll, not a sigh. No girl would have dared express discontent about anything.

In fact, because all the other girls smiled pleasantly through all the trials, I sometimes wondered if I was the only one shocked by the situation.

So, in case anyone is wondering, no one collaborated with me when I wrote down these observations.

But they all smile.

Bob: Got it. You mentioned pleasant “smiles” on everyone. Were you the only one seeing bad things?

C: Nearly 30 years later when I reconnected with my former students, they told me they kept smiling only because they feared allowing any other emotion to cross their faces. Virtually all of them were harmed by their experience there. I’m talking about permanent scars, both physical and emotional.

Bob: But they were getting some needed tough love, right? Isn’t that the Christian way?

C: When someone encounters a true Christian ministry, they don’t walk away scarred. If they walk away scarred, it wasn’t a Christian ministry they encountered.

Bob: Hmmm. Now, you said you were actually writing down things as they occurred? C: So, here’s some of what I wrote home:

The awful paddlings.

“The other night , my sweet girl, got in trouble. The spanking was horrible! She got eight licks! Eight! Eight licks!

“And I promise you, hit her as hard as she could! It was like she thought she could beat the badness out of her. It was like she was not hitting a human being at all.

“And this didn’t bother at all. She did not have any spirit of sorrow. No ‘this hurts me more than it hurts you.’ She just picked up that huge paddle and beat with all the strength in her body, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, like it was nothing.

“I would pass out if somebody hit me that hard. It is not like a normal spanking. It is truly horrifying!

“The girls are paddled constantly, but I’ll never get used to it. It makes me feel sick. They get anywhere from 7-10 licks for all sorts of minor offenses—for biting their fingernails, for not being feminine, for pride, for being homesick, for crying.

“And Pastor beats them hard! I’ve had my share of spankings, but nobody has ever hit me that way. I’d pass out. I don’t know how they stand it day after day, night after night.”

Nightly calls to the punishment room.

“The absolute worst thing that they do here is the nightly spankings. We tuck the girls in bed. We kiss them goodnight. Then, presumably, they begin to fall asleep hoping to be left to sleep until morning.

“But then Miss begins calling names over the intercom for them to get out of bed, go down the stairs, and be paddled.

“I lie on my mattress (in the floor) [Staff members slept on the floor across the doorway.] dreading to hear the next name she calls out, even though I know she won’t be calling mine! And I cringe and cry

a little with every name I hear. I can't even imagine how terrified the girls must be.

"We have this system for punishments. When a girl does something wrong, we assign work duties, which are like demerits, except you have to work them off. It takes an hour to work off a work duty. If you get over 35, you get paddled every night until you're down under 35.

"And poor little is so little. She gets paddled every night because she has more than 35 work duties. She is not allowed to speak to anybody but staff. I believe she is really not doing well. I mean physically. She looks just awful. Her skin is all broken out in a terrible rash. It's all over her body. She's so thin, and she looks terrible. She must be miserable. It just breaks my heart."

Break

We put the report on hold a minute. Please try to understand what you have just heard, and place it mentally next to the testimonies from past staff on their website, some of which was recorded here. Close your eyes. Think hard. What do you see?

There is another witness you should hear from before we continue C's testimony. A corroboration witness. I have featured her before. She was there when C was there. With her permission I enter the following description of our present witness, as described those many years ago when the two first met. Please forgive an occasional [bracketed] comment from yours truly.

"C showed up at the home like a shot of sunshine, like a fresh breeze over the city dump. She drove a car. Had stylish bobbed hair. She had snapping, intelligence eyes, and a warm smile that erupted from her whole face. I drank her in. I studied her.

“Pastor said rebels attracted rebels and sniffed each other out in a crowd. Was C a rebel? Miss [dorm mother, whose story may need to be told some day] seemed to think so, she scowled and grunted and stomped her feet whenever C tried to be kind or engage in a conversation with us girls. C brought a new idea, a different opinion. Maybe [the Director] was wrong, maybe it was not Christian, what was happening here ~ maybe it was not Christian at all.

“I watched C’s body language. I watched her face. Watched her eyes. It was blatantly obvious that C was shocked and horrified by the food, by our lack of medical care and personal care, and by the brutality of our treatment. She was alarmed by the lack of schooling, and horrified at the nightly beatings.

“Over the 3 months of summer, young C connected with almost every girl. When she left I prayed and wished and hoped she would find a way to help us. I imagined her coming back with a posse of pastors and deacons to rescue us. [Reader, can you imagine such fantasies? Then you can cry with me about the plight of these girls?]

“Then I sighed, if C did not return to rescue us it meant that [The director] was indeed right and holy and good. “

If you are not in tears by now, it must be just me. An old man given to emotion, right?

Let’s get back to “C”. I have interjected questions into her letters home...

Bob: So, you were sending notes home about things. What was your next topic?

C: About the food. I could not eat the first meal they served me. We had a huge plate of leaves with no salad dressing. Do not picture

the kind of lettuce that comes in a head from the grocery store. This plant comes out of a garden. It has the texture of canvas and the taste of grass. And no dressing! Also we had a large Cool Whip tub full of beans (no seasoning). Each. I ate about a third of each. It was awful! Oh, and we had water to drink. “The next morning for breakfast we had a fried egg and powdered milk. It tasted awful! The milk wasn’t even cold. But no one dared say a word. I ate and I drank.

I dread each meal.

For supper last night we had huge bowls of spinach with sardines. Then, for breakfast we had a bowl of bran. Not Bran Flakes. Not Raisin Bran. Just the stuff that looks like dust like you would buy at a health food store, soaked in water. It has no flavor. It has the texture of wet sawdust. Very hard to swallow. I feel like I’m a missionary to Africa.

The food here doesn’t taste a bit better. I can barely force myself to swallow it – but I do. It’s important for the girls that I eat it. I’m famished, but I don’t want any more!

Dirty grass?

My main problem is the lettuce/grass and the huge bowls of greens. Sometimes it’s gritty with dirt. And we have it almost every day. Huge bowls of it. Which must be consumed, grit and all. Last night for supper we had a bowl of beans. The night before that, it was boiled chicken wings. (Don’t even imagine any tasty sauce.) This morning we had plain bran again. We are hungry all the time.

The atmosphere around our dinner table is nothing short of oppressive. The girls are afraid to say the wrong thing, to look at the wrong person, to grimace at the taste of the food.

Miss snaps at every mistake. The girls who aren't allowed to eat sit in hungry silence.

How you could earn your supper

The girls have to work off three 'work duties' a day (and five on Saturday) in order to be allowed supper each night. Supper is the biggest meal of the day, so to miss supper means missing most of the day's food (especially on Saturdays when we only get two meals.) It is truly pitiful to see the girls who aren't allowed to eat sitting on the couch with nothing to do but watch us eat.

Meanwhile, the girls are hungry, and I mean seriously hungry. Their stomachs growl constantly. The ones who have been here a long time are painfully thin. looks like she's about to starve to death.

Bob: What else forced you to share with people at home?

Unfathomable work load

C: About the work. I wish you could understand the work here. I could never describe it so that you would get a good mental picture of it. The girls do hard manual labor every moment that they're not in school. Some of it is regular cleaning and scrubbing. But some of it is heavy outdoor labor like a man would do. They are just exhausted all the time.

Some of them are so thin!

We do so much work in that dang garden! Saturdays we work in the garden all day, without even a break for lunch. It's hard, hard work, and the time drags unbearably. Sometimes we can chat, and that makes it so much sweeter. Other times, though, either the girls aren't allowed to talk or we're too far apart.

Saturday nights, after working all day in the blazing sun, my arms are lobster red with sunburn, and I'm covered with bug bites. I'm just exhausted. We all are.

Alone and lonely

Bob: Was there more?

C: Yes, the isolation. We just got two new girls, and . Pray for them. It's a very lonely time. They aren't allowed to talk to each other or the other girls. They have no contact with their family or former friends. It's a terrible adjustment.

They are allowed one phone call every three weeks after they've been here one month. But they only get to make the call if they have less than 9 work duties and at least an 87% on scripture memory (not an easy task). Naturally, that means a lot of the girls miss their phone calls. And, when they make their call home, a staff member is on the line with them so they can't complain or beg their parents to come get them. They're not even allowed to cry. If they start crying, the staff member will cut off the call immediately.

"Mean" says it all

Bob: At least, not all the staff was unkind. You certainly were an exception. But how would you characterize the attitude of some of the worst of the workers?

C: Just plain meanness. "Miss and snap at the girls, talk down to them, and criticize them constantly. Like at breakfast today, Miss said, ' , your hair looks terrible! Remind me to give you a work duty.' (Remember, after 35 work duties, each one translates into a paddling, so essentially, was going to be spanked for her hair being messy.) You would not believe the room checks! We don't have daily room checks. We have spot checks. It includes

everything: inside drawers, inside closets, shelves, beds, etc. Whatever doesn't check gets stripped and dumped all over the floor! You've never seen such a mess in all your life! It's like a crime scene. I can't tell you how shocked I was the first time I saw this.

God, love them somehow!

Bob: How could you summarize what was going on at this home when you were there?

C: No love. I guess what I like least about it here is that this is not a place of happiness. Someone is always in trouble, or scared, or crying, getting paddled, or being criticized. If anybody is loving these girls, I don't see it. They are regarded, spoken to, and treated very harshly. I just wish the girls could be loved. They do not feel loved — not by the , not by the staff, not by their families, not by God. Pastor says I'm naïve about this.

I wanted to tell her [wife of the director at that time] how much the girls are starved for love. How lonely, confused, and discouraged they are. How severely they are punished and how afraid they are. Surely she wouldn't want her own children to be treated like that, would she?

We've heard worse

Bob: Many of the girls tell of horror stories even beyond what you have mentioned.

C: Because I was only there three months, I wasn't privy to everything that ever happened. For instance, I don't remember any diapers or other toileting issues. I don't doubt this happened, based on so many testimonies; but I don't remember it going on the summer I was there. I also wasn't aware of the pelvic exams, but I don't doubt this happened either, based on so many testimonies,

but I can't vouch for it personally.

What I can vouch for is that [redacted] preached to them daily about the utter importance of their purity and modesty. It is beyond me how he thought they could reconcile the constant deification of purity with his authorizing their violation. I can also verify the lack of menstruation. None of the girls menstruated that summer.

I have no explanation for why this was, but it can't be anything good. And no staff member was unaware of it as it was charted and posted publicly. Maybe things have changed?

Bob: Well, that was a long time ago. Do you think things there may have turned around?

C: Maybe [redacted] has changed since then. But, if he, indeed, had [in those days] received instruction from God on how to manage girls (as he claimed often in recorded sermons and published literature), he can't have changed much, because God's word cannot change. But if his methodology was not from God, and thus he was free to change it, then he owes the girls from those years an apology for the harm he did to them.

This is what hundreds of [redacted] women, now mothers and grandmothers, still crave from the [redacted] director. [redacted] An acknowledgement of, not just a few "mistakes", as he recently offered, but a denial of policies that did not come from Scripture at all, that were not from God at all, and that ruined lives. Many [redacted] of these women have shown in other ways that they are ready to forgive.

September 30. Community support

You heard from an eyewitness of many summers ago regarding a certain troubled teen home. As you can imagine, there are other takes on her testimony. I will share them with you here, but first a question: In court, if we were in court, would the testimony of an eyewitness not be valued far above the shouts of people who never saw anything, but who have an idea about people in general? This is what we are dealing with here: some well-meaning shouters, from the newspaper that I quoted much earlier that voiced serious concerns about the home in their community.

Two favorable emails

It turns out that there were actually two favorable email sent to the paper during those protest days. As always, I will insert myself into these quotes with brackets that include my own comments.

1.

Friend of former student

Supports the home Editor:

I am a friend of a former student at this home. I knew her family and former pastor in Ohio. Also, my son attended school with her at Mentor Christian School in Mentor, Ohio, in the 1970s. I have eaten meals with the staff, with the students, and with both families. Also, I preached nearly all the Sunday a.m. and p.m. services at the Church [that sponsors the home] from 1980 to 1990. I support this home and .

Just not true!

The things charged against this ministry are not true. Hundreds [How many, approximately?] of girls were students there, and were placed there by their parents or legal guardians because the students had behavioral problems. Most [a huge word. Please offer a statistic.] students had problems of rebellion and were hostile. Where is the proof of the 10-, 20-, and 30-year-old charges? [Where is the proof of your blanket assumption that hundreds were hostile and are not telling the truth?] Why did their parents place them there? [Yes, now that is a good question.] These are the questions they should be asked.

The people bringing the charges need to accept personal responsibility for their own lives. They are wasting a lifetime with their anger and fighting. They need to do something constructive.... I support the home and . [But I fear, without much investigation or listening critically to the other side.]

Rev. Pastor

2.

The imperfect need to be given a pass

Editor:

For 37 years, parents of hundreds and hundreds of girls have given up on trying to rear their rebellious teenagers, and have appealed to and Hephzibah House to bring about "behavior modification" in their daughters.

Isn't it safe to assume that initially most of the girls did not want to be there, most did not want to cooperate with the program, and most were determined that this home would not turn them away from lives of self-destructive and antisocial behavior? [Though we must take exception to the use of the word most, Yes, young people

generally would not like to be abandoned by their parents into the hands of people who might beat them and abuse them in other ways, as the testimonies on this blog site attest. What does that prove? Only that they are normal, at least in that respect.]

Should anyone be surprised if the home has not been successful in the eyes of every girl they have tried to help? [This site is not dealing with the success rate of the girls, but rather with the failure of the House to demonstrate God's methods of raising children, which go far beyond a rod. And isn't it telling that success stories are to give glory to the home, while failures are credited to the residents? The home refuses to take any blame for any problems the women are having now.]

No one, including _____, would say they have been perfect. No doubt he has grieved over those who were released to their parents without the hoped-for changes. Perhaps he has felt that he failed with these, even as he has rejoiced and thanked God for successes in others. [His personal success or failure is not the issue. The issue is scars left on human lives by the use of methods of child-raising that are not condoned by God's Word.]

Where is the stream of protest?

But if it weren't for the fact that _____ and the staff have poured their love into these girls with great wisdom, wouldn't you think that there would have been a steady stream of parents protesting for almost 37 years? [Parents have protested, and that stream has been rather steady when it finally dawned on everyone that something very sinister was happening at HH, and that there was something that could be done. That stream continues to this day, on national media!]

Parents, especially those of you who have had problems with your

teenagers, surely you can visualize some of the problems that staff have encountered through the years as they have poured their lives into the lives of these precious girls. Even if you have had only a glimpse of the difficulties some other parents have had with their rebellious teenagers, thank God for the ministry of . And pray for them. [Raising teens is no piece of cake. Where good was done we can be thankful. But un-Biblical policies practiced through the years have left a trail of bitterness and pain. When will someone admit it?]

I believe that we are fortunate to have the ministry in our community. If you appreciate this ministry, why not e-mail or call and express your appreciation for his 37 years of ministry to parents and troubled teenage girls?

So what do you think? A visiting pastor, an outside philosopher, or do we stick with the eyewitness and her letters home? That's an easy one.

October 1. Family resemblances

Though my case has been made rather convincingly by a long series of witnesses, there are still doubters out there. Let me bring forward a couple of testimonies from another teen home or two, only related to the main one we have followed, by origin.

As you listen to them you are just sure that you have heard it all before. Somehow, the Christian abusers have a play book from which they learn the ropes of training youth.

I am not anti-Christian. I am a Christian. Unashamedly. I'm even a conservative Christian who believes that young people need to be formed, sometimes by serious means.

Formation is different than planting the tomato plant in the garden and hoping for the best. Formation involves standards, enforcement, and yes, pain.

Nevertheless I will continue to contend that these homes have gone too far, need to repent of any unbiblical methods, and need to make peace with those who have been so fatally wounded.

A home in Louisiana

This one was shut down in 2011 after 30 years. There is always hope. It was also inspired by Mr. "Preacher" of earlier posts. I have here the testimony of one of its survivors, at this time, a 43-year-old mom of four children. She too attended a church meeting where the House director came with his girls and held a recruitment rally. You should come to this home, said the speaker, to ride horses, study the Bible, find salvation.

This teen of the 70's, a bit rebellious as teens can be, was sent to the home, followed later by her ten-year-old sister. Alas! No horse-back riding. A compound surrounded by barbed wire. But lots of Bible study, especially forced memorization, failing at which one received paddlings. There were belt whippings, and other unique and somewhat barbarous punishments available.

She knows of at least one attempted suicide, a repeater in fact, who had come straight from a mental institution to this place.

Religious Freedom

The place was awful, per four hundred survivors who got online at a forum to decry the evils of the place.

Some of the residents got so brainwashed that they could not report or run away, thinking they must somehow be in God's plan.

People trying to complain or even ask questions were hung up on, or denied any talk about allegations of abuse.

Such is the protection of the freedom of religion in America that even bad religion is protected.

As I said, the place finally shut down, but not before years of police raids and legal battles. Persistence pays off.

Then there's that Indiana preacher

This man was a truly effective pastor – if numbers mean effectiveness – of the middle twentieth century. His was the largest Sunday School in America. His moral failure towards the end of his ministry, and the moral failure of many of his disciples, can overshadow other falseness regarding his ministry, one of which is the subject of my research.

I quote from an old Chicago Magazine.

“One area in which this pastor—a father of four—exerted particular control was child rearing. In this, his views were severe to merciless. Using biblical passages as justification, he preached that spanking was more than tolerable; it was a sacred duty. In his 1979 book *How to Rear Infants*, he wrote: ‘The parent who spanks his child keeps him from going to hell.’

" ‘Spanking should be deliberate and last at least ten or fifteen

minutes,' he continued. The blows 'should be painful and should last . . . until the child is crying, not tears of anger but tears of a broken will.' They should 'leave stripes' if need be. The age at which such punishment should begin? Infancy."Several people who grew up at his church recall that parents took the instruction to heart.

" 'Beatings would last endlessly, it seemed,' says 45, a corporate trainer in Colorado whose father was a deacon in the church. As a seven-year-old, she 'used to count the lashes as a way to cope through the searing pain.' 's younger sister,

, told me she once received more than 300 lashes from a thick leather belt. When authorities were called, says, the preacher told the girls' parents how to avoid arrest."

Family Resemblances

This should all have a familiar ring to it by now. The family resemblances are stunning. I bring these people in to show the reactions of the public to these similar ministries and men. The problem we face is widespread but can be successfully fought.

October 2. A lesson learned

There is a story out of my younger days that will be most instructive to readers. We all understand why some Christians cry for the old days, when discipline from the police to the school to the family was in place. A safer world, a more predictable world. I can tell of

an incident where serious physical punishment won the day.

I was playing the jerk in my high school gym class, around 1962 or '63. And getting others to join in with me, to the consternation of my gym teacher, who happened to be the school's football coach. A strong man you didn't mess with. Unless you happened to be a jerk.

In short, kindness, dialogue, ignoring the problem, didn't rule the day. Suddenly Mr. Jackson froze, and looked straight at me. I was in the back row of four rows of male students. So glad they hadn't yet gone co-ed or the shame would have been multiplied. He called out someone else's name and told him to go downstairs and get his paddle.

Oh yes, this was all legal in the public schools at one time. Columbus, Ohio, 1960's. Confronted with the old "board of education" as they called it in those days.

I was summoned to the front of the class, told to bend over and grab my ankles. Don't remember the rest, but it was unpleasant. Shamed and beaten in front of the whole class of my peers.

I don't know the long-term effect. But for sure, I never messed around in gym class again. You mean that physical punishment actually corrected a problem?

I have never stated otherwise on this site. Physical punishment is not on trial here. Abuse is on trial. And abuse comes in many forms. If Mr. Jackson had continued on with five or six more whacks, and left scars and bruises and blood, the story would have been different.

And that is precisely the story at some "troubled teen homes". Not only teenage boys, but on teenage girls.

The coach had made a point, and the point is well taken. Sometimes one must resort to the physical. But there are questions that need to be asked:

What about my past history? Was this a first event? Was I always that obnoxious? Why didn't parents deal with me? And what should the church have done with such a guy as me? For after all, we are dealing in this site with the church's obligation, a church-related home. Not the institutions of the world.

Many of the directors of Christian teen homes claim to be a shepherd of the flock, a pastor. Is this the way God's big people are to deal with God's little people? Didn't we answer this in the Scriptures earlier?

One could argue that that scene in the gym should never have happened. Even the people of this world have decided against such things. But others could argue that in the providence of God, since there was no such guidance at home, God found a way to bring a little pain into my life and set me on a straighter path.

The fact is I had pushed Mr. Jackson to the limit by repeated interruptions to his class. He may have been able to solve the problem in a better way, but decided against it. How often has the "troubled teen home" decided in favor of more wise ways and more thought-out ways to handle discipline? How often is prayer involved in a student's correction?

When the home is placed in a situation where it is forced to tell us more of its reasoning, we will understand better. Some day the walls come down and the locks come off and we hear the truth. Until then we have the testimonies of scores of women who believe with all their heart that they were mercilessly abused. For this reason I have put together my site and brought the allegations of

abuse squarely where they belong.

October 3. Joining forces with Ahab

Jehoshaphat and Ahab.

Jehoshaphat was a good king from the little kingdom of Judah, later called Judea by the Romans. Ahab, Jezebel's spouse, ruled in the northern kingdom called Israel.

These two tribal nations were often at war with one another, and understandably so. In their earlier years, the people of Judah clung to Temple worship, the Aaronic priesthood, and all that was good about God's laws. On the other hand,

Israel went soon, after its split with Judah, into idolatry and worse. Ahab was among the most devilish of the offenders.

Good King and Bad King on the same side?

As it turned out, there was a period of time when Ahab needed a partner against an enemy that was common to Israel and Judah. He asked for help. Jehoshaphat agreed immediately and graciously. Too graciously, according to a prophet of that day. The southern king was rebuked for his improper fellowship with evil.

My posts are written by a Christian to a Christian audience, I cannot be blamed if others may read it and agree with it. Christians and non-Christians have a totally different agenda in life. So should I join

forces with so many others outside the church, who, like myself, are decrying the evils of this teen home?

This is a question each will have to answer personally. My own conscience tells me to press forward, deal with the church's people and leaders, and worry not about who comes along.

Mixed signal?

But when I join forces with those who have turned against God, do I not give a strange mixed signal to the rest of the church?

The fact is, I have not joined any group that is outside the New Covenant, but I will happily be, simply by the nature of this case, in the company of those who hate what I hate, and what God hates. I could just as easily write a blog opposing abortion and homosexual aberrancies, and be thankful that there were positive comments on my post, demonstrating that even non-Christians were in favor.

My apologies, on behalf of the people of God, to the people who are now outside God and the church, some of them because of the outrageous behavior of those who wore His name and enjoined awful disciplinary tactics. This troubled teen home stuff is not who we are or who we want to be.

Still, I argue with myself, can we write off those who believe they are the people of God, as in the churches that support the homes, and join with those who hate them? Are we not told to have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness? Are we not told to stay away from unequal yokings with unbelievers?

My own answer: I am joining with no one. I do not personally know which ex-residents are still on the God team. Some once were, but have at least temporarily turned away because of their stay in the home. Some never were, and never will be, no matter how many

swats they are given, how many rooms they are locked up in, how many meals they miss, how much restraint is placed on them. They were at least given the message in written form of what God did for them and how to respond.

Why I post.

My messages are especially intended to touch those who knew Him once, knew Him throughout the troubled teen home storm, and still know Him now that the sun is shining in their lives. To let them know that they are heard. To encourage them to forgive. And, to affirm that many “home” methods are not found in God’s Word.

As for those churches , if any of their people read this, they will know that I am after correction of a problem, not condemnation of a church group.

One other issue regarding the Ahab thing. Suppose I am victorious and I and Ahab do win a battle against the home. The government steps in. Non-Christian values are enforced. The church loses control not only of homes like these, but eventually over Christian mothers throughout the land. In fighting with Ahab, though I may see a common enemy, am I sure I want what Ahab is fighting for, and which I may help him win?

It would hurt me deeply if our push for outside interference would cause the government to enforce non-Christian values on homes like these. But it hurts me equally to think that the church, which is often not very effective in judging its own, is allowing abuse, also a non- Christian value, to fester, thinking it is obeying God’s commands. Who in the church is going to be raised up among us to save us from sexually ravenous priests and fundamentalist baby-beaters? If we won’t judge ourselves, we must be judged from the outside. What alternative is left?

October 4. Questions & Answers

The issue in which we are engaged brings up a lot of questions that each must resolve. I here imagine an interviewer pummeling me with queries.

Q. Can't you be more positive?

For nearly ninety posts you're just emphasizing the bad. The mistakes. You seem to have entered the sphere of Matthew 7:1, the judge who has no business judging others. People do make mistakes. The best of families have members in their headship that have need of repentance. Why such an assault on this one ministry?

A. A fair question. A difficult answer. It was not my intention to be part of all this. I was content with my little church in Chicago. I had found a place of service, and a nice assortment of friends. There was honor and love and a lot more. But when I heard the cries coming from past residents of a home that my church supported, my heart was broken over it. I had to leave it and pursue the captors in some way. That's the whole story.

It led me to do research. To start writing. To keep being broken. At one point it was so oppressive that I had to lay it down. I could see it was having a negative effect on my emotional state. But the images kept coming back.

I have tried to say positive things, to give them the benefit of the doubt. I have allowed their witnesses to speak on this site, often. But the reality of it is that there are altogether too many that are hurting because of this place. And, the research shows that homes like this dot the land, or at least used to. Most have been shut down. I am not alone in trying to expose the remaining ones, to call them to major reform, or to likewise close their doors.

Q. Weren't they better off at the home than they might have been elsewhere?

Listen, Sir, listen to the other cries. Listen to those who tell you in all honesty, "We were worse off before this home. This home saved our lives."

A: Cocoons are safer places than the wild woods, where caterpillars are eaten regularly by hungry birds. But better still to be a butterfly. Much of life is comparative. A shack is better than a cardboard box. A house is the goal. Scooters and wagons will travel faster than the pedestrian. Bikes even more. But I'll take a car.

It is true, as far as I know, that rape and other sexual sins were not something that these already-abused (though not necessarily sexually) girls had to deal with at this home. (However, some felt tampered with in the doctor's "closet" upon arrival.) I'm sure the diet was a step up, though it caused issues for some. Sure, there was the Bible. They were not beaten every day.

It was better for some. Is that an excuse for the harshness? Does that justify the prison-like atmosphere and all the allegations recorded here and elsewhere?

Q. Weren't the residents guilty too?

Has it occurred to you that in all of this talk about guilty leaders we have forgotten why the girls were sent there? Have we forgotten that teenagers do indeed drive some adults up a wall? That girls need to be held accountable for their guilt too?

A. Then one has to wonder why an adult, who surely must be aware of such things, would feel called into such a ministry. No doubt there are persons gifted in the art of mothering and fathering. By all accounts, that does not seem to be the case with many teen home

employees.

Even given that the intentions were pure, and only God knows whether that is true, it would have become obvious that the entire skill-set of the directors was a rather thin arsenal of corrective measures, the main one being the rod. The solid wood board, that is.

No one is, or should be, defending adolescent behavior. Whether classified as “troubled” or “normal”, these teens can be a handful. I raised a few myself. By myself. Such days! But to my knowledge I never justified my disciplinary methods by quoting a Bible verse. I was sorry when I got overly angry. Raised my voice. Struck my girls from frustration.

There are no Bible verses to back up many of the home’s policies. But policies they are, nonetheless. Policies stopped only when the law of the land intervened.

Teens do need correction. But when correction creates even more problems it is not correction. Many of these women have had to deal with correcting the home’s corrections all their adult lives.

Q. Didn’t the girls “pile on” and exaggerate?

You seem to believe everything you read about the ones you call “victims”. But is it not true that some people will pile on, exaggerate, rewrite even their own history?

A. You could perhaps gather a small “pile” of people this way. Extra angry. Vengeful worldly people with nothing better to do that get involved in a fight somewhere. But scores? Perhaps hundreds? Middle-aged women and grandmas with children and grandchildren and responsibilities? Does it seem likely that this is their motivation? That they have no better way to spend their time?

Q. Do the girls love God and the Bible?

Write it down: There are just some folks who do not love the Bible and strictness. Of course they will complain about how bad it was, yes?

A. Interesting that you should bring this up. I wonder what made some of these women turn off to the Bible and Bible discipline? My guess: the Bible was taught but not seen. Discipline was part Biblical and part an angry need for control, desperate attempts to keep order on the grounds, by any means necessary.

But for the most part, those who do not love the Bible and Christian living usually just walk away and do their own thing. No time for a protest in a far-away state. There's something you are not seeing, that rouses passion in the ones who are still talking about their pain, thirty years down the road!

Q. Are all the good testimonies just lies?

Are you willing to just write off all the good testimonies recorded on the home's website? All liars? Like people say about your own stories? You cringe at such an accusation being made about your accusers, why not accept the other side too?

A. Some are willing indeed to write them off, and for good reasons. I am not. Not yet. But I know this. Perspectives change over the years. Men and women that I thought were true and noble in my early years, I do not honor today. And the other way around.

People who seem almost to enjoy pain and punishment at one stage of their lives, masochists we call them, often get healed from this disorder and realize what people were doing to them. The guilt-ridden of one day will on another day have negative thoughts about those who forever put the guilt on them. Christians, the mature

kind, will recognize the conviction of the Holy Spirit that stands in stark opposition to that piling on of guilt by hypocritical superiors.

Q. Don't Christians preach forgiveness?

If you are a born-again Christian, should you not be preaching forgiveness, and "Let's move on from this" ?

A. Indeed. I agree. But I write my posts because the abuse continues, and it gives our Jesus a bad name. And, there are others who want to be in this struggle so that no one else will be sent to these homes.

I am a great sinner, though forgiven. But if only the sinless speak against sin, the voice will never be heard. I judge no one. I mean merely to help rescue an afflicted child. People rescuing others from a burning building may be aggressive in their efforts, even knocking others down in their haste. Not intentionally. It's just the nature of a rescue operation.

Q. Why so much division on this matter?

A. Ignorance, pure and simple. And the ones who could help us overcome that ignorance are the present leaders of these homes. There is a way for them to open their doors in such a way that the entire program would be transparent. Those who won't do this are simply showing they have much to hide.

October 8. Open up, or shut down

Job

The book of Job. You know the story? The devil himself appears before God Himself, and begins to berate a good upright man, about whom no human had ever brought an accusation before. Satan proceeds to question his motivations. God is up to the challenge. Job eventually passes the test too, and never curses God, though the enemy said he would.

Accusers of the brethren?

That seems to be a far cry from what I and many other Christians are doing in regards to the troubled teen industry. I mean, many of the people who are in this fight truly still claim the Christian faith, in spite of what they endured. Are they and I “accusers of the brethren” who run the homes?

Was John the apostle an accuser of the brethren when he came publicly, in written form, against the bully Diotrephes (3 John 9)? Was Paul accusing the brethren when he announced in a letter that Demas had forsaken him because he loved this present world more than the promised one (2 Timothy 4:10)? Today he might have been accused of slander. But he told the truth. Demas had left him, for a bad reason.

We do not accuse these men and women before God, but we do appeal to men about them. And, we pray for them. Further, we ask them to consider their actions and repent of things that cannot be squared with the Scriptures. We ask them to have mercy on a lot of grown women still struggling with nightmares due to their stay at certain homes. We ask them to open up to the rest of the church or shut down.

“Remember the Prisoners”

For many years I have been involved one way or another in ministry to the persecuted church. I lived in Communist Romania for several weeks in the 80's. Also, I have a website that is devoted in part to the North Korean Christians. I support the persecuted in prayer and giving.

Rallying Cries

And when I read of sisters in the Lord enduring the torture and torment of a home that was supposed to be a safe place for them, a bell goes off inside. The connection is real. Imprisonment. Brainwashing. Forced confessions. I've seen this elsewhere. And the command of Scripture to “Remember the prisoners” kicks in. Am I misunderstanding Hebrews 13:3?

“Tear down that wall, Mr. Gorbachev!” Remember that? It came from Mr. Reagan's vocal cords, but the words were breathed out by every freedom-loving citizen of the world. And eventually the wall came down.

If I could hold a rally and get people screaming some slogan, as politicians today seem to know how to do, it would be, “Open them up, or Shut them down!” “Them” being every home that believes in Pearl-inspired, baby-beating, emotion-squelching, discipline. Open up. Let the church see what is going on. Be transparent to members of the body of Christ. If you can't do this, but feel, cult-like, that you have a corner on the Christian discipline market, you have no right to be open. Shut down.

Have things changed?

Have things changed in these homes? We don't hear as much about abuse. Did they self- correct? Or did they get smarter, and learn

how to hide their abusive ways? Until these homes are totally above board in terms of communications with the public, we will never know. And blogs and A & E specials and the like, will continue. A word to the wise.

Of orphans

Young people sent to another place to live beyond their own home are, temporarily at least, orphans, and Scripture that applies to orphans applies to them. Like in James.

James 1:27. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans... in their trouble." Orphans at teen homes are indeed in trouble. But who is allowed to visit them and get a straight story about what is going on? Nevertheless, we continue to reach out, in obedience to this word from the Lord.

Proverbs 31:8 and 9 can be brought into the service of teen home resident also: "Open your mouth for the speechless... open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."

October 9. Advice from some experts

Some wisdom from an array of historic and non-historic persons, that I believe applies to the situation at hand.

Nehemiah or Ezra, Which are you? Which am I? Nehemiah.

Israel's famous governor Nehemiah is a strong man. He

loves God. He is so upset when God's people mess up. I'm reading in his book, chapter 13:23-31. Skimming and paraphrasing as I go...

"I saw some Jews who had married some Gentiles. I got mad and argued with them. Cursed them. Hit some of them. Pulled out their hair! Made them swear never to do this again! Then I told them why I was so angry. 'Remember Solomon, and the wickedness he entered into with all these Gentile wives? How could you!' So, I cleansed the people of God in this way. Remember me, God, for good." Well, that's one approach. Worked for him.

Ezra.

Ezra's is a little different. The book of Ezra, 9:3- 10:1, similarly paraphrased: The Jews have married Gentiles, the same Jews and the same Gentiles that Nehemiah speaks of.

"So I," says Ezra, "tore my garments, and pulled hair – my own – and sat down astonished! The people gathered to me. But I still just sat there in awe and shock. I told God I was too humiliated even to lift up my face to Him. Oh we are so guilty. All of us. You told us not to intermarry. We disobeyed in this and so many ways. You had to take us into bondage for seventy years. Now we are free, and we are still disobeying you. I can't believe it."

Ezra keeps on praying and afflicting himself, while the people silently gather in repentance. And things are changed.

That's another approach.

Pull my hair or yours?

We can lash out to others or afflict ourselves.

In dealing with the problems of the troubled teen industry among

Christians, we are tempted to retaliate. Smack. Pull hair. Theirs, of course. That sure gets their attention. But Ezra shows us a better way. Self-affliction. Prayer. Fasting. Waiting on God.

The words I have spoken on these posts have been directed to readers but they have often involved smacks and hair-pulling of gulag leadership. More profitable will be the words we direct to God and the affliction we bring on ourselves. Let us ask Him to do what we cannot do, namely, penetrate the hearts of men who avoid us and write us off as troublemakers.

A word from Charles Dickens.

Book the First, Chapter the Fourth, Oliver Twist

Oliver is living under the authority of the cruel Mrs. Sowerberry. She offers some food that has been set aside for the dog. "I dare say he isn't too dainty to eat 'em, are you boy?"

Dickens then responds to Oliver's grasping for this meal with this classic rejoinder: "I wish some well-fed philosopher, whose meat and drink turn to gall within him, whose blood is ice, and whose heart is iron, could have seen Oliver Twist clutching at the dainty viands that the dog had neglected, and witnessed the horrible avidity with which he tore the bits asunder with all the ferocity of famine: – there is only one thing I should like better; and that would be to see him making the same sort of meal himself, with the same relish."

Dickens' orphans.

We reflect with sadness that the orphanages of Dickens' day were run by the churches, as so many are in our own day. They could be abusive. Merciless.

We read, in the testimonies quoted on this site, of well-fed directors, contrasted with strangely concocted meals for residents, and we cringe. We see the pontificating of church leaders about sin and purity and the rest, then we hear the squeals of horror in the night.

And we are tempted to lash out, and to say with Dickens that we wish that men who caused children to suffer unnecessarily could experience a bit of the pain they have caused. But this is not charitable or safe, yes? We all have caused pain to someone at some time. At the very least, let us use the cruel among us as a reminder never, ever, to enter into cruelty ourselves. And to repent for the times when we have done so.

“Remember the Titans”

It’s now an old movie. A tough high school football coach. Some rough teens. Awful methods and words. But the team turns out great, though the coach has to learn a few things on the way.

Moral of the story: Gotta be tough with some people. Gotta do things that look and sound horrible if you want to turn kids around.

Is that the moral of the troubled teen home way? Seems to be. Do whatever it takes to achieve the desired end. Tough guy, rough kids? So, beat ’em up, lock ’em up, shame ’em, do whatever to gain control over their lives. Break ’em. Doesn’t matter if they’re already broken by life. Break ’em again. And again. Until they call you lord and master. Win the game.

That may be the way of the world, the way of the “Titans”. That’s not Jesus’ way. Jesus’ way is Matthew 11:28, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

It ain’t easy.

I raised some teens and taught teens in Middle School. Not easy at all. I wasn't personally successful during those years, though I am pleased with the way my daughters have turned out. It has to be among the most frustrating of all endeavors, this teen-raising. This we must give to the staff and leaders of teen homes, and allow that we might not do it better.

But we still do not have to justify the policies that were in place, and still are in place, in some homes. So many of us still want these places closed down for a while or forever. If there are not people skilled in this kind of work available to work there, they have no business being open to the public.

Read the stories, weep, and join the resistance, for Jesus' sake. There is a better way. Some of you know what I mean.

October 10. I just can't do this

More questions than answers today. But questions that I hope will make us all think.

I've read it elsewhere, this question:

Should Christian group homes even exist? Are Christians called to raise the world's children? It is true that the persons who are accepted into Christian teen homes, are "church" people. But does that mean they are Christian? Are they turned over to the home so they can "get saved"? Do homes do that, or does the Gospel do

that? How indeed does God save the wayward?

Through living at a “home” for years with other troubled people?

Origins of abuse.

I mean, if one teenager can drive parents up a wall, how can any staff, however purely motivated, control scores of them under one roof? The answer some find: brutality. Rigid rules. Rigid enforcement. Which leads to abuse eventually, as in home after home. Reminds one of the wild West, where a schoolteacher could lay a .38 caliber gun on his desk and claim that he was in charge. Period. And he was.

It takes a village, they say, to raise a teen. But a village of teens, well, that’s just asking for trouble, and trouble is what most of these homes get. Lawsuits, justified or un-. Of course, there are enough uncaring parents who are too busy to file suits, and enough hiding of the truth from parents, for the homes to get away with... a lot.

For money?

I’m speculating. Trying to figure out why these homes exist. I’m told it is a lucrative business, this teen gulag industry. But surely there are easier ways to make money?

Surely somewhere, teen homes actually work. But for now, I think all of them could be shut down. Let troubled parents (for that seems to be the real problem) ask help from the local church, from family, books, friends. No need to send them far away. That just reeks of irresponsibility.

And, we are told, it means that some of these parents are dumping children so as to cover for their own sexual sicknesses. Enough said

about that.

No Holocaust?

A question for the deniers of pain at the homes : Do you also deny there was a Holocaust? Testimonies everywhere, and you dare to say it's a pack of lies?

Solomon's diapers?

Here's one: How was King Solomon raised? You who believe Solomon was a baby-beater, and a bruise-maker, based on some misinterpreted texts, how did the great wise one enter into his childhood experience? Here's a hint from Proverbs 4.

"When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me..."

Ah, but then, from time to time, while in his diapers, he started crying! He had accidentally wet on himself! And he was hungry. David heard about it, snatched him away from Bathsheba, and beat him to within an inch of his life until he stopped that infernal noise! Then he handed him back to his mother, who fed him.

Sorry. That was the Gulag Translation. The real Scriptures speak of a tender raising of this child punctuated with constant teaching of God's ways. That's how we got the book of Proverbs: David's influence and God's revelation combined.

How can I do this?

Lots and lots of questions. How can I raise a child in this evil generation? How can I keep my cool when the defiance is so real? How can I turn to others for help when they are failing too? Who is doing it right?

I am 73. As I have shared before, I wasn't exactly successful, personally, in raising my first batch of children back in the 70's and 80's. "First batch"? Yes, in His wisdom and grace he has given me another shot at this. Won't share all the details, but two lovely little girls have come into my home on a regular basis lately. I am being challenged to "do it right.

I cannot do this!

I find that in my natural man I am still impatient and prone to loud anger. To the point that I despaired recently and simply told the parties involved that "I just can't do this" any longer.

But that wasn't true. I knew this responsibility was partly mine and I would have to find a way... especially in the light of scores of my own posts, saying there is a better way to raise children.

Prayer changes... me.

I prayed. Really prayed. And as the difference between light and dark, the next day my desperation had turned into eagerness to see the little charges again. Ideas began to flow. Projects. Trips. Activities. Calm discipline. Understanding. Love.

All of that, plus self-control, comes from walking in the Spirit, not from trying hard not to hurt someone! Some are simply not capable of doing children's work. Some others may have a "natural" talent. I needed more than that. And what was needed, was provided.

As far as I can see that's the only answer I have for those who ask the above questions. If you are in Christ, this is for you. Ask Him for Help.

October 14. Explanation: The Stockholm Syndrome?

The Stockholm Syndrome

Are you a bit surprised about the defense of abusive homes by some past residents, and some staff? I'm not assuming all are dependable witnesses, but suppose they were. There is another known factor that could explain it all.

I promise you I am no psychologist, and like many of my Christian brothers and sisters, I try to stay away from psychology when describing the human condition, which condition, in a word, is "sin."

Nevertheless, men have studied men, and their discoveries are insightful. We should at least listen. And anyway, this phenomenon actually can be found in Holy Writ.

A Swedish discovery

And the phenom is: Some people love their captors! Folks with a weak will or an easily changed conscience. Gullible. Compassion-filled, but for the wrong people and reasons. Abused to excess in their younger years, so assuming that abuse is the norm.

Is it possible that some/many of those who are being abused at these homes come in with such serious guilt that they feel they deserve to be abused?

Of course they would never have called it abuse, hence the chorus of "There was no abuse at _____"

Yes, there is such a symptom. It has been defined in the real world. In short it is called the Stockholm Syndrome. Here's how it works, quoted from a Wikipedia article on the subject:

Kidnappers Justified.

Mary McElroy was abducted from her home in 1933 at age 25 by four men who held a gun to her, demanded her compliance, took her to an abandoned farmhouse, and chained her to a wall. She defended her kidnappers when she was released, explaining that they were only businessmen. She then continued to visit her captors while they were in jail. She eventually committed suicide and left the following note: "My four kidnappers are probably the only people on Earth who don't consider me an utter fool. You have your death penalty now – so, please, give them a chance."

Everyone knows of the Hearst tragedy of the 70's. This famous granddaughter was kidnapped by a so-called "urban guerilla group" and was brainwashed so thoroughly by them that she denounced family, friends, and authorities to serve them. Later she was even seen robbing banks with them, justifying them and that action by the supposed righteous cause of her captors. Her attorney tried to use the "Stockholm syndrome" as a defense, but failed in that attempt.

Sweden and Me.

I have told you how the children of God cult "invaded" my apartment building, uniting the Christians living there against their home church and pastor. I was 22. And the cult so turned around my thinking that I was hurt deeply when they kicked me out for asking too many questions! Amazing what captors can do to a ready mind!

Another story, much earlier in my life, about age 6 I think, is even more telling. I had been a "bad little boy" and my mother was called into the principal's office. First came a little lecture, then a command: Bend over that chair. Smack.

Only one swat? I thought I deserved more. The principal even asked as much, something like, Did you get what you deserve? When I denied that, he had to swing into action again.

Guilt does that. I was raised in a culture of guilt in my home and could easily believe that my “captor”, who held all the cards, also held the right to swat away. Captors are big and powerful. They must be right.

Lot and the Syndrome.

The Bible character Lot didn’t seem to realize that he and his family had been swallowed by a carnal culture something like the one in which we live. He had to be persuaded by an angel grabbing his hand, to get out of town, quick! He loved his captors. He had allowed himself to be changed.

Christians get trapped by this or that sin, or this or that cult, and failing to get themselves free from it, often begin to love it and accept it as part of life, at least their life.

We’ve all run up against this syndrome at one time or another.

Origins of “Stockholm Syndrome.”

Wikipedia tells us more:

In 1973, Jan-Erik Olsson, a convict on parole, took four employees of the bank (three women and one man) hostage during a failed bank robbery in Kreditbanken, one of the largest banks in Stockholm, Sweden. He negotiated the release from prison of his friend Clark Olofsson to assist him. They held the hostages captive for six days (23–28 August) in one of the bank’s vaults. When the hostages were released, none of them would testify against either captor in court; instead they began raising money for their defense.

Nils Bejerot, a Swedish criminologist and psychiatrist coined the term after the Stockholm police asked him for assistance with analyzing the victims' reactions to the 1973 bank robbery and their status as hostages. As the idea of brainwashing was not a new concept, Bejerot, speaking on a news cast after the captives' release, instinctively reduced the hostages' reactions to a result of being brainwashed by their captors. He called it Norrmalmstorgssyndromet, meaning the Norrmalmstorg syndrome; it later became known outside of Sweden as the Stockholm Syndrome.

Not to be confused with Forgiveness!

Now, there is the Biblical standard of loving our enemies. Asking God to forgive. Forgiving them ourselves. But that's in spite of their evil.

What happened in Stockholm, and perhaps at teen homes, to me, and maybe to you, is an arrival at a mindset where one agrees with the enemy and joins the enemy's agenda. An awful thing. Always to be avoided, eventually seen, then confessed.

Could this be why some people sing the praises of the homes to this day, in the light of testimonies that are so obviously opposed to such a belief?

October 15. Thank you, Captain Kennedy

Following is a trimmed-down version of a superb Newsweek article, by Art Levine, March 2, 2017. I discontinue temporarily my attempt at anonymity. First, the Captain does not need my protection. Second, his story is out there many times, and Art and I have only the finest things to say about him. All other names and places have already been published and re-published. No secrets here.

Featured prominently is a hero of the movement to shut down abusive homes, now 75-year-old Captain Charles Kennedy. If you haven't met him yet, go to A & E to

watch the special called "Living in Sin", where we see him offering his assistance in protesting the abusive practices of a teen home near me.

Captain Kennedy introduced to the evil.

October 2011. Captain Charles Kennedy, a veteran policeman, was in the main office at the Restoration Youth Academy (RYA), a Christian home for troubled teens in Prichard, Alabama, when he caught a glimpse of something shocking on a close-circuit monitor: a naked boy crouching in a 6-by-8-foot isolation room as a light bulb burned overhead.

Kennedy asked about the boy, Robert. He wanted to know what the boy had done to deserve such treatment. "He's got an attitude. He's only been there for a day, and he'll be there for another day or two."

Kennedy had been investigating RYA for little more than a week, spurred by a few complaints by parents of kids in the program. Victims of the center say it was mostly sadistic torture and caused many to suffer from PTSD.

Interviews of the fearful.

What Kennedy had found disturbed him. He'd come after hearing from two mothers who were alarmed that their kids had been facing severe punishment. He had been provided a tour of an empty classroom and an adjoining cafeteria filled with quiet, unsmiling children. Afterward, the Director had allowed Kennedy to speak alone with one of the boys whose mother had called him.

As he investigated, he found that many of the school's "cadets" were afraid to talk. But those who did, left Kennedy with the impression that he had stumbled across something terrible. The boys, for instance, told him they were often grabbed out of their beds in the middle of the night and forced to fight one another until one was beaten to a pulp.

Drill instructors, including Director Knott, frequently punched them, choked them and body-slammed them as they worked out.

The desire to help.

Kennedy wanted to protect the cadets from abuse, but he also knew he lacked the hard evidence needed to make an arrest. So for the next week or so, he periodically returned to RYA, which is how he found himself asking about Robert in the isolation room.

He knew what he'd just seen wasn't illegal in Alabama if it took place over a relatively short time span.

The boy eventually told him about his stay in isolation. Director Knott and the school's founder, John David Young Jr., the pastor of Solid Rock Ministries in Mobile, were frustrated by Robert's "poor" attitude; and they were determined to change his behavior. So after days in solitary confinement, they dragged him from the isolation room to Knott's bedroom, where Knott handed the boy a .380

automatic pistol. "If you're so determined to kill yourself," Knott said, "you should put the gun next to your head and pull the trigger."

"I pulled it, and it went click," Robert told the officer.

"Crazy People."

Kennedy was appalled. "I knew then I was dealing with crazy people," says Kennedy. "You don't do that to a human being."

But the insanity had only begun.

Today, in the United States, there is a multibillion-dollar industry for residential treatment— one that sells an illusory promise to desperate parents: Your children's addictions and mental health problems can be cured with a relatively quick (and usually expensive) fix.

Too often, critics say, these programs profit off the misery of emotionally troubled kids, substance abusers or just misbehaving youth, as well as their parents, who struggle to deal with kids they can't control. "These are throwaway children. They are looked at as dollar signs, not as individuals."

Kennedy says of the nation's unmonitored religious programs: "They're hiding behind a cross, but there's for sure evil going on."

The naked truth.

Kennedy knew he had to move quickly. He was allowed to have an interview with the boys. To the officer's surprise and discomfort, each boy entered and sat across from him completely naked to answer his questions, while Knott stood nearby to watch.

Only later did he learn the full purpose of the stunt; as an RYA

cadet, William Vargas, explained in a letter to the officer: “After Captain Kennedy left, Mr. Will [Knott] told everyone to write a paper saying that Captain Kennedy wanted to see us naked, and make Captain Kennedy look like a pedophile.”

Sabotage.

Kennedy conducted his final interviews, then attempted to present his findings to the Mobile County District Attorney, But from the beginning, Kennedy sensed something was awry. It turns out that half of his needed documents were missing.

Kennedy went down to his car, and retrieved copies of everything intended for D.A. Rich. After Kennedy made his presentation, he says the D.A. coolly responded: “Parents need to be more careful where they send their children.”

The teens enrolled in Young’s program said they were subject to numerous beatings and forced nudity, among other things. Yet it took years for the authorities to arrest the pastor and his associates.

More interviews. But most only talked when the Director was present, and they were petrified even then. The D.A. took no further action.

Where to turn?

Giving up hope that local law enforcement would handle the problem, Kennedy next turned to local Child Protective Services and its director, Beth Nelson. She set up an appointment to visit the place herself, but that advance warning gave the facility time to “prepare.” No signs of abuse.

Even so, after Nelson conferred with Alabama’s DHR Commissioner,

they reached an initial decision to close down RYA on November 28—apparently based on Kennedy’s concerns, even though they didn’t substantiate them. Yet the two changed their minds after talking to Pastor Young and Knott the next day; they didn’t want to face the cost, liability and logistical hassles of removing nearly 50 endangered kids, according to Kennedy.

Kennedy was infuriated, and called Nelson to protest. To no avail. “There is more concern about chickens on a poultry farm in Alabama than for children!” he says.

Teens vs Politics

But Kennedy didn’t give up. He started writing detailed letters to Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange. Yet his efforts mostly led to more of the same.

Early in 2012, Kennedy says the attorney general’s chief investigator, Tim Fuhrman, brushed him off after he also had done an on-site investigation that didn’t confirm Kennedy’s claims.

On February 3, 2012, Kennedy says he got a call from Fuhrman, who told him the attorney general had determined the case wasn’t worth pursuing. “These children are from out of state and their parents don’t vote here and I don’t want the churches mad at me,” Kennedy says Fuhrman told him in regards to Strange’s views.

I just wonder how much of this same reasoning went on in other homes? How many inspections were made by the state and pastors after fair warning that they were on the way? How many politicians made decisions based on their status and their salary and not on the basis of allegations that have proved now to be true? How many people had to suffer... ???

Back to this riveting (but greatly condensed) article:

We care for voters first.

Captain Kennedy is concerned with the slow movings of government. The Attorney General of Alabama even admits that he can't worry too much about residents in the bootcamp who are from other states. They don't vote. Kennedy quotes Strange in that regard. But in a letter, [Alabama Attorney General Luther] Strange denies preferential treatment to voters, and adds: "The allegation that my office did a 'superficial job' is unsupported and unfounded."

Frustrated, Kennedy turned to the local newspaper, the Mobile Press-Register. In March 2012, a story appeared mentioning in a vague way the "rough treatment" cited by one of the victims. After that story appeared, the issue faded ... Ignored year after year.

For the next two years, even after he retired from the force, Kennedy continued writing letters, trying to get Alabama authorities to stop the abuse. But state officials continued to ignore his pleas. Captain Kennedy then retired.

March 2015.

Kennedy was about a year into his retirement. The pastor shut down RYA during this time, and started a facility in Mobile under the name the Saving Youth Foundation in order to avoid negative attention. He was rushing to keep an appointment with the lawyer, when he drove past the ramshackle boys' home. Yellow crime scene tape and police cars surrounded the facility, and Kennedy's heart sank.

"I thought for sure someone had been murdered," he says. When he pulled up next to the building, he saw John Barber, a Mobile Police Department captain, and his face looked deathly pale. Finally

someone listens. Too late for many. “What’s happened?” Kennedy asked. “Have they killed somebody?” “No, but I can’t believe they haven’t,” Barber said.

A veteran of more than two decades of police work, Barber began recounting the scenes of horror inside—the isolation cells, the shackles, the frightened children—the same awful conditions Kennedy had been warning officials about for years. Barber’s department had learned of these horrors from a mother who lived out of state and had picked up her daughter from the facility’s girl’s program in Mobile. Horrified about what she saw there, she took photos of the isolation rooms on her cell, then called the police in Mobile...

A DHR-led raid a few days later rescued 36 children. As he stood outside, talking to Barber, Kennedy sensed a real opportunity to finally win some measure of justice for abused children. A few days later, the now-retired police captain began briefing Cotner on the case, handing him all the files he’d been keeping in the trunk of his car. Finally, after four years of trying to stop Knott and Young, he had an ally in law enforcement.

Shutdown. Arrests. Trial. Verdict.

After the March raid, the Mobile police and DHR shut down the Saving Youth Foundation, and with Kennedy’s assistance, the police arrested Knott and Young along with Moffett, the counselor, on charges of felony child abuse several months later. The trial began in January 2017, and Kennedy anxiously attended all four days of the proceedings.

On the final day, when the jury left to begin deliberations, the fatigued crusader drove home for a break. It was 5 p.m., and he was sitting on his front porch, when he got an urgent call from Leslie

Crawford, the mother in Maine who had also long fought for Alabama law- enforcement to crack down on RYA. “Did you hear about the verdict?” she asked him excitedly. It had only been two hours since the jury left, and Kennedy couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

The jury, she explained, had convicted Knott, Young and Moffett on all counts of aggravated child abuse, the maximum charge. Kennedy was ecstatic. As he put it in an email to friends and supporters: “All of the monsters were convicted!”

But the suffering goes on. Despite the convictions of Young, Knott and Moffett, many of the teens who suffered at their schools continue to struggle with the trauma they experienced. On February 22, Kennedy felt a similar sense of elation when a Mobile judge sentenced Knott, Young and Moffett each to 20 years in prison. But his feeling of triumph and vindication is tempered by the fact they got away with it for so long.

“They all knew,” he says of the government agencies that ignored his pleas, “and they did nothing.”It’s a pattern that continues to this day. Neither the long prison sentences nor the shuttering of the brutal facility have fundamentally changed oversight of such programs in Alabama—or anywhere in the country. Over the past 20 years, the Mobile effort against Knott, Young and Moffett remains one of a handful of arrests and prosecutions for physical abuse allegations at any youth treatment facility in the country.

Other unmonitored religious and secular troubled teen facilities in Alabama and elsewhere continue to operate with impunity, generally protected by the indifference of local and state police, prosecutors and child protection agencies.

Now to shut down others.

Now 73 [in 2017], Kennedy is trying to close other facilities. Most recently, he's briefed the district attorney's office in Baldwin County Alabama about troubling abuse allegations at a facility in rural Seminole called Blessed Hope Boys Academy, which is run by pastor Gary Wiggins...

Kennedy is equally outraged that former state Attorney General Luther Strange has been appointed a U.S. senator to replace Jeff Sessions, the new U.S. attorney general. "He [Strange] threw the children under the bus so he could grease the way for his political ambitions," Kennedy says. "All these politicians have lined their pockets with the blood of children."

The legacy.

Meanwhile, the horrific legacy of Knott's program lives on, and many of the young people who went through the program remain severely damaged.

Among them: Erin Rodriguez, now 18, once a pill-popping runaway in suburban Atlanta before her father sent her to RYA and later to the Saving Youth Federation until she was freed in the 2015 raid. "They would whip me," she says. "They stripped me to my underwear and bra and took out a belt and hit me until I bled." Back home trying to rebuild her life, she still has nightmares about her experiences at the facilities. [Readers of this blog know exactly what she is talking about!]

Robert, the teen who was told to put a gun to his head, is still struggling, too. After being released into the custody of his grandparents in a small Texas town, he continued to unravel. He's been arrested twice on drug charges. The latest incident occurred in the fall of 2016, when police found the traumatized, suicidal youth sitting by his mother's grave with a gun and some illegal drugs. They

arrested him, and despite pleas from Kennedy that he needed mental health treatment, they sent him to jail where he remains today, unable to afford bail.

Why he continues on. The traumas these young people face is why Kennedy continues to fight against abuse.” One of my greatest satisfactions is knowing that these children who suffered so much at their hands know that justice has been served in some way,” he says, but “you can’t return the youth that was stolen from them, you can’t restore the mental and physical damage they suffered.”

And that is the man recently offered his services to a home of which you and I know far north of Alabama. Check out the A & E video. This man is a hero. We need more of this courage.

October 17. The tragic death of Hana Williams

Let me remind us once more of where bad teachings about the Bible can lead. As with Lydia, whom we mourned earlier, these two young ones had their lives snuffed out by – at least in part – listening to discipline gurus who advocate brutality in the bringing up of children.

Death. Torture. Shame. In the name of the Son of God. We’ve got to fix it, brothers and sisters. Too many cries from among us.

Here then is Hana’s Story, I follow it by a quick telling of Sean’s.

An adoptee's tragic fate.

From "An adoptee's tragic fate, and how it could happen again" by Kathryn Joyce. I give only pertinent bulleted facts.

Back-yard crisis.

Sedro-Woolley, Washington State.—a small town just 40 miles south of the Canadian border

On the night of May 11, 2011, 13-year-old Hana fell face-forward in her parents' backyard. Dead.

The family adopted her from Ethiopia three years before.

Hana was naked and severely underweight that day. They had shaved her head, and her body bore the scars of repeated beatings with a plastic plumbing hose.

Inside the house, her adoptive mother, 42-year-old Carri, and a number of Hana's eight siblings had been peering out the window for the past few hours, watching as Hana staggered and thrashed around, and fell repeatedly, hitting her head.

According to Hana's brother Immanuel, a deaf 10-year-old whom they also adopted from Ethiopia, the family appeared to be laughing at her.

She's really rebellious. And dead.

Carri came outside. Upset by Hana's immodest nakedness, Carri fetched a bedsheet and covered her before asking two teenage sons to carry her in.

She called her husband, Larry, then finally dialed 911, telling the operator, "I think my daughter just killed herself. ... She's really

rebellious.”

Hana had been outside since the midafternoon, as a punishment, ordering her to do jumping jacks to stay warm. She walked Hana to an outhouse reserved for her use and watched her fall several times,

Carri went back inside to avoid seeing what she thought was attention-seeking behavior.

Carri put out dry clothes and sent two of her biological sons to hit Hana on her bottom with a plastic switch for disobeying.

As the operator walked her through mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, she described Hana’s behavior, and how she’d been “passive-aggressive,” causing “so much stress!”

Denial.

They pronounced Hana dead at the hospital, the cause being hypothermia compounded by malnutrition and gastritis.

The following day, when Child Protective Services (CPS) tried to check on the other children, (adoptive father) Larry refused to let them in.

When police followed up, a deputy noted that the family acted as though Hana’s death was “an everyday occurrence.”

Twelve days later, detectives and CPS conducted interviews with the children, but their answers seemed rote and rehearsed, all repeating that Hana was rebellious.

According to investigators, Immanuel said that “people like [Hana] got spankings for lying and go into the fires of hell,” just before Larry abruptly ended the interview.

Children all removed. Thank you God!

Two months later CPS launched a formal investigation, and all eight remaining children went into state care. In late September, officials arrested Larry and Carri and charged them with Hana's death.

Hana was one of at least dozens of adoptees alleged to have been killed at their adoptive parents' hands in the past 20 years.

Most were from large families with fundamentalist beliefs about child rearing. Ethiopian adoptions in the Seattle area are often absent any real oversight and in environments of harsh discipline, (sometimes) with good intentions but going profoundly wrong.

Hana's body was exhumed January, 2013, in an attempt to verify her age for one of the charges the couple faced—which applies only to victims under 16. (According to adoption records, Hana was 13 at the time of her death, but the family's attorneys argued in court, unsuccessfully, that she was much older.)

The lifestyle of devout, fundamentalist Christianity would become part of the unfolding trial.

the family prohibited most TV and Internet access, homeschooled their children, and only socialized with one or two families beyond their own relatives.

To train up a child. And beat her to...

Investigators found a fundamentalist Christian child-rearing book called *To Train Up A Child*, written by Michael and Debi Pearl, which advises raising children to obey without question by starting to spank them when they're just a few months old.

Authorities have implicated the book in the beating deaths of two

other adoptees—an American boy in North Carolina [Sean, to follow this story] and a Liberian girl in California [Lydia, whose story is earlier on this site]; the prosecuting attorney in the latter case, Michael Ramsey, called it “truly an evil book.”

The family had “diligently applied [the book’s] concept to all of their children, who told CPS investigators that they (biological children) didn’t rebel because they were ‘trained’ and because their adopted siblings weren’t ‘trained’ at a young age, so they were rebellious.”

An awful life in America.

Hana’s life was a series of daily and escalating punishments.

She had been forced to sleep alone in a barn more than 80 feet from the house; then in a locked, dark shower room; and finally, in a locked 4-by-2- foot closet, where she spent much of the last six months of her life, perhaps confined for as long as 24 hours as her parents piped in Bible sermons and religious music.

Sometimes the family wouldn’t speak to her for as long as two days at a time.

If she argued with Carri about the clothes she picked out, she was made to wear nothing but a towel, and sometimes she had to go barefoot.

Hana’s braided hair, of which she was proud, was shorn off three times, once for cutting the grass too short.

She and Immanuel were both fed different meals than the biological children—cold leftovers topped with frozen vegetables, or sandwiches deliberately soaked with water.

Biologicals inside, Africans outside.

Most often, they had to eat outside, away from the family, even in rain or snow.

They weren't allowed to participate in birthdays or Christmas.

And they were spanked with a variety of instruments, including belts, a long, flexible glue stick, and a piece of thin, plastic plumbing tubing.

The misbehavior they were punished for, included getting homework wrong, not standing in the right place, and sneaking food. The biological children were sometimes spanked too, but not like the adoptees.

No one liked Hana, her siblings told investigators, but that didn't matter, because Hana was "always in the closet"; they rarely even heard her because Hana had stopped crying when spanked.

We've seen some of this before...

Kindly read the charges of former teen home residents and see how much of it sounds like Hana's story. You women who are reading this must be thanking God you are still alive. No, the teen home personnel were not as severe as these folks, but both families got their information from the same book... and it was not the Bible!

And poor Sean...

Another product of the Pearl book was Sean. I will be brief. We've had enough. The weight of sadness is too much...

Sean , 2006, North Carolina. By Mandy Locke of Poundpuplegacy.org

Sean was suffocated by tightly wrapped blankets at age 4, by his adoptive mother Lynn , who had sought Christian discipline advice in the books of Michael and Debi Pearl. There were 5 other adopted children and 1 bio child in the home who testified that Lynn beat them frequently with flexible plastic rods, wooden spoons and other devices. Lynn was convicted of first-degree murder.

Adoptive father Johnny was not charged criminally, but a civil jury found he “aided and abetted” in Sean’s death. The family left a Primitive Baptist Church to attend a “a smaller, fundamentalist church in Sanford ...”

And so, on and on.

Jesus said that a little leaven, or yeast, leavens the whole loaf. Churches and parents and children’s homes that may otherwise be right on, can be brought to fiendish horror by a little bit of false teaching that is allowed to fester...

October 18. Settled?

What if?

A horrible thought surely must be presented to both sides of this issue of raising teens and abusive homes. The thought is, what if the victims and the defendants are both right and both wrong?

What if they both told the truth but not the whole truth? What if

the abused only see the abuse, and forget that there were some happy campers at their troubled teen home? That there were some good meals, good activities, good facilities? Even good people?

“Always” and “all the time” are terms that mature people do not use. No activity in our life is “all the time.” I dare say that even in North Korea, prisoners have a moment or two of reprieve. Could not there have been such moments, or hours, or even days, of relatively harmless behavior?

And could not all of this be true, yet their testimonies be true also?

And those awful allegations?

On the other hand, what if the abusers were not able to see the pain they were causing, a pain that may never go away, by beatings too severe, rebukes too unkind, practices far removed from Biblical compassion?

What if their record is indeed stained with brutal abusive tendencies? What if they founded

their beliefs on faulty interpretations of Solomon, and they ignored Jesus and Paul on the way?

That would not take away from the fact that they provided much good for these “troubled” teens. The stories some of their people tell of “happy days” would not be denied. But their omission of the unhappy times, well, that would be regrettable and even deceptive.

All pained people are lying?

Sirs of the teen gulag, is it really your notion that these victims, now quite grown, are all anti-christ people who have a sudden urge to target some tiny ministry where their feelings were hurt twenty-five

years ago? Really?

Can we have a truce here? Can both sides admit they didn't really tell it all? Just sayin'.

Judge Not?

It was obvious whose side I was on from the beginning. We are certainly going to hear about Matthew 7:1. "Don't judge, or you will be judged!"

I take that admonition seriously, and tried to guard my speech on this site, limiting myself as much as possible to the bald facts of the case. I have judged myself, confessed my guilt, and repented of bad parenting.

But the facts are clear, in my opinion. Abuse did take place. It needs to be addressed. The home that was mainly in question, though never named, needs to stop its operations, at least temporarily. Those who have broken laws may need to be prosecuted, should the government have the gumption to interfere. The same with homes across the nation.

Not looking for blood.

But legal prosecution is not something Christians seek; rather, correction of the problem. And all need to be forgiven, if indeed repentance is forthcoming.

We must not be condemning in our judgment, but wise and careful, looking to ourselves and our own many needs. And being serious about protecting the ones needing that protection.

We remember that Assyria was called of God to judge Israel, but she went too far, and became unnecessarily abusive. Assyria then

had to be judged too. Let's don't go too far. Let's be careful. But let's move ahead with setting free some young men and women who otherwise may be in grave danger.

A verdict?

If the verdict, after all these testimonies and arguments, indeed is "guilty", there are some things the survivors would like to see. I mean, the ones who suffered. They are not after blood, or imprisonment etc. No vengeance is being called for by the great mass of the ones who have come forward. But there are some things that would bring closure and healing... I have added a few thoughts of my own.

- Written admission that abuse did take place.
- Admission that the policies arrived at years ago were mistaken, and have since been repudiated and repented of.
- Apologies from the heart for having sent young people into the world with a taste of Christ that was so bitter.
- Desire for reconciliation with all the offended.
- In ongoing ministry, if this ministry is to continue, a submission to the greater Body of Christ in the community in which it operates. Formation of an inter-church committee that will have oversight of this home.
- Unfettered access of present and future residents. No more monitored calls, censored letters. Any-time visits from family and local churches. Stopping of the prison mentality. "Tear down that wall."
- An abuse hotline connected to pastors of all local churches, not

only to ones in the denomination that formed the homes.

Wouldn't it be wonderful?

What a testimony to and of the Body of Christ in the community this would be! What a clearing of the air, a spirit of repentance that would be felt throughout the churches!

Ol' man Bob is fantasizing again, right? But as far as I am concerned, if the leaders of these homes do not listen to these cries of the hurting, and grant their requests, it is time for Christians to pray for, and work peacefully for, their permanent shut-down.

Watch out when Christians pray. I mean, really pray. Many homes are already history!

October 22. Wrapping it up (1)

Mission accomplished

On a lovely Sunday morning much like this one, as I was preparing to go to church, I received a message from the subject of several of my posts on this blog, informing me that I was going to receive a slander lawsuit unless I removed my blog about her. She has been a champion of a "troubled teens" home for years, defending it at every turn. Hers was the only credible voice, in fact, raised in its defense.

In fairness to my own coverage of this whole situation, I included

her testimony as a star witness on the “other” side. I even advertised her book, and gave her every possible benefit of the doubt as I was sharing her story. Even though doubts arose.

But at her request, I have eliminated from the previous blogs, her name, the title of her book, the story contained in that book, and any comments she might have found offensive.

It is not slander, you all know, to print true statements. It is not slander to quote a person’s book, though I only used summary statements, not actual quotes. It is definitely not slander to disagree with or doubt publicly, someone’s position. We all know that.

Nevertheless, she will have her wish. The good lady says I am believing lies and half-truths in listening to the victims. Since I am spreading lies, she says, I will answer to God. She calls me a bully. I thought that was particularly amusing. An old man sees some hurting women and wants to help them. But one woman does not like what the old man is seeing and saying, she threatens to get a legal team arraigned against the old man in a court of law. But he is the bully.

I did more than she asked.

-I rewrote all my material, taking out the names of any other persons who might have this vindictive attitude and want to threaten with the law.

-I have even taken off names of dear friends and all victims. To protect them. I erased all their comments. All links are gone.

-I thoroughly edited every post. I regrouped posts. I consolidated posts. I eliminated posts. I did away with the “trial” motif.

-The posts are now sanitized to the point that I can publish them in book form with no fear of reprisal. The book will appear on my sermonaudio website. Soon this book will be available to all at Amazon. Lord willing, of course.

I am amazed at how much good her little bit of aggravation helped me. One person meant it for evil, but now my story will go to many other people. I had more responses during the second publishing of my posts than the first! And now a book...

ONE MORE LOOK AT THE SCRIPTURES...

Before I sign off again, may I offer a word of instruction to parents who want to do the right thing for children in this evil society. One more look at Ephesians 6:4.

The verse is addressed to fathers. They are told not to provoke children to wrath but to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

We know how the wrath comes now. This entire series of posts told us how to make children wrathful. So, please, avoid all the methods of the troubled teen homes!

But there is a positive note, a clear directive for parents: training and admonition of the Lord. I know the KJV says "nurture." The picture is of a woman giving milk to her little baby. That is not what paideia in the Greek, means. The word is "tutorage" or "education" or simply "training" as in the corrected translations. It is rendered "chastening" elsewhere in Scripture.

So we don't write off the rod by reverting to the nice word "nurture." Neither do we invoke the rod for every offense. Paideia is a neutral word, like "religion", or "personality." Training can be whatever you want it to be. There is good training and bad training.

The fact that a child has been trained or educated means nothing. It's the description of that training given by Paul that matters.

As for "admonition" in the text, that too can go either way. It is a mild rebuke or warning. Some fear. Some cautions. But again, admonishing a child can work for or against him, depending on the last three words of Paul's admonition:

The key to the passage is not the paideia or the rebuke. The key is "of the Lord." It is the Lord's training, the Lord's education, the Lord's warnings, that we fight for. We pray to be used to place the Lord's very Spirit in our children so their steps will be directed accordingly. Short of that, the rod does nothing. Nothing eternal.

What is the education of the Lord? Is it not the same as your own, disciple of Christ? Are we not all being taught to obey, to worship, to respect, to seek God, to know His Word, to walk in the Spirit? Pass it on to the children.

But the rod, the rod, what about the rod? Don't put it away! The rod is not the problem. It's the misuse and wrong defining of the rod that ruins children.

"Spare the rod and spoil the child" is not in Scripture. "Spare the rod means you hate your child", is in the Scripture. The abusers were right in saying that, but wrong in their application. Let me quote one of the men of Spurgeon's day, speaking of another subject, but very applicable to this one:

"...everything that hath, or may be abused, must not therefore be abandoned; the turning of a thing out of the way, is not a taking of that thing away, but good things deflected to ill uses by some, may be by others reduced to their first goodness."

The rod lives. But the rod does not reign. The Spirit will speak to the

listening parent when a rod is needed. But do not be surprised when the rod takes a different form, as Moses' rod changed miraculously. The object is correction. The method is often pain, but not ever brutality and not always physical. Children can endure physical pain and learn to work around it.

Pain can be administered in a hundred ways. Not sadistically, but meaningfully, until the parent can truly say, not as an adage, "this hurts me more than it hurts you." We have infinitely more resources available to us in Christ than Solomon knew, when, though he himself was raised tenderly, he declared that sparing pain to a child means you don't care much for him.

The abusive homes have done more damage than we realize, when looked at in this new light. Parents, aghast at the brutes who hurt their babies, are determined never to hurt them again.

And that is the tragedy of all tragedies. Unhurt children hurt others. Be God's administrator of pain, but only by the prescription he gives in the moment it is needed. Your constant recourse to the belt or the shaming comment or the loud voice or the threat will come back to haunt you for many years. Be wise. Use the training and warnings of the Lord. Listen for His Voice. Trust Him for the results.

To be concluded

More closing remarks, in one final post before publication, next time.

December 15. Wrapping it up (2)

The off-key folks.

I was sitting in a church the other day, trying to keep up with the song, but having trouble because one of the musicians was playing off-key and clashing with the rest of us. Someone needed to have a little talk with the good brother (or was it a sister?) to help get us all on the same page.

It is the opinion of many believers and definitely many victims of many teen homes, that someone is playing off key. I suppose we could ignore it, and try to sing somewhere else? Or better, maybe have a “little talk” with the persons involved? There’s a lot to learn on both sides.

This blog was meant to be such a talk. Please pass on my messages. Or talk with the concerned people yourselves.

The voice of one crying...

I have to leave for a while now. I think I have done what I set out to do, and to keep yapping about the subject will serve no one. Oh, it’s not that there is not still a lot to cry about among us. I began collecting Google alerts on the subject of Christian – or church – child abuse, months ago. Every day I receive these alerts, but have not read them. They still sit in a file

on my mail site, waiting to be encountered.

I’m sure there are Catholic priests in there. Probably, stories from liberal churches that don’t believe anything any more. And about fundamentalist churches that believe too much, as in the case of the present study. And accounts of just ordinary Christians who got trapped by their sinful nature. Do I dare keep exploring this topic?

The present venture took over a year of my life. What will that pile of alerts demand? Tears everywhere. There are other issues that call God's people to tears. The false prophets and prophecies, teachers and teachings, just plain ol' false people: they're everywhere among us distracting from the main road.

Then there's the persecuted church. Slaughters by Muslims and Communists. North Korea. I've got to step aside from the path, to hide in yonder Shelter awhile, and ask my Traveling Companion the best way to proceed from here. Need some time.

Long live the church!

I love the church. There really is a holy group of people worldwide, headed for Heaven. God sees the finished product and rejoices in it. We sometimes see the work in progress here and weep. We are so weak. God, give us your eyes.

A word to the few of you who have left the Christian faith because of your early disillusionment at the hands of the abusers. You left the Scriptures. Then you set out on your own. I beg you to come back to Christ and His Word. People are false. He is still Truth. He alone can save. His Word alone can lead to a sin-free life. His Spirit is available. You were on the right path once. Come back. Give us a reason to smile through all these tears.

If I can be of service, let me know. Perhaps a story will break that you want me to write about. Maybe that home really will close. You know how to get in touch with me. Blessings

Bob Bob.j.faulkner.72@gmail.com

P.S. Oh, about that picture today... You may have wondered why the image of a sad little boy has changed to the picture of a sad old man.

That boy is the little guy inside of yours truly. Your hurt became mine for these months. The man represents my growth in understanding of the pain in this world, and our need to cry over it.

What can You do?

The verdict is in. The recommendations have been made. Will they be carried out? What else can we do besides tell our story, and pray, and cry, and write?

Keep educating yourself.

I ask you to research on your own the information that is so plentiful on the web and elsewhere. Check out videos, law agencies. There's a ten-year-old petition to close the gap in the schools and homes of indiana (for example). And so much more!

Email A.C.E.

How about an email to A.C.E. [Accelerated Christian Education] ? These are the folks who provide materials in ACE schools. [Which aren't really accelerated at all. But that's another question...]. Suppose the people at A.C.E. knew that some of the schools buying their products were under serious investigation? That the media (as in A & E) have produced specials about these schools that are not too pleasant? That hundreds of former residents attest to abuse? Would these Christians keep selling their Christian products to such a place? Give it a try. As you pray, more ideas will come.

Goodbye for now. Stay in touch.

I have maintained this site, at the advice of a friend, for the few who need it, for encouragement. They need to know that there are people who care. This site will not be discovered by many others, especially now, as I have removed links and other SEO features that

make a site “discoverable.” [Apologies to readers of the book who have discovered formatting issue also.]

Bottom line, though, This blog’s for you, dear victim of some misled believers.

May the voice of one crying, be the voice of one comforting others who cry. Goodbye for now. Let me see what I’m supposed to do next...