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BlackSDA _ 3ABN _ Integrity...

Posted by: Expression Aug 23 2006, 01:39 PM

There is an aspect of this whole situation that I personally feel needs greater emphasis. How our church deals with this issue will speak volumes to Adventist families all over the world.

In his letter to "Adventist Today" Danny speaks of those who are "...attempting to bring disgrace to the cause of God" and urges us instead to be on "Jesus's side". First of all, what defines "Jesus's side"? We serve a God who invites us to test Him and try Him. He tells us, "Come and let us reason together..." He knows that the more we learn about His character the more we will like Him. God has nothing to hide. He isn't afraid of questions.

Secondly, by asking questions are we really disgracing God? Or has He already been disgraced by those who profess to serve Him?

The guise of religion has served as a faithful cloak for many things throughout history. We cannot loose our focus when verses are quoted, texts cited, and prayers prayed. We must look at this situation for what it really is.

One thing of vital importance in discussing this situation is that we understand what we're dealing with. Knowledge is power. The Seventh-day Adventist church to a great extent does not understand the nature of abuse or the ideology of abusers. This has helped Danny immeasurably, because many Adventists have said, "Well, I don't know who to believe..." and therefore have sided with him. If we had really understood what we were seeing, things would not have gotten this far. We don't have to be in the dark if we're willing to step out of it

Abuse is a serious word.

One we don't like to use in Adventist circles.

However, Danny's actions have shown that he is a controlling and abusive person. Such as:

1. Verbally trashing Linda
2. Slandering her to the point that her closest friends backed away
3. Isolating her
4. Putting all the blame on her
5. Taking her personal belongings from her
6. Breaking the bathroom door to take away her keys (!!)

And on and on...

Lundy Bancroft was the co-director of "Emerge" which was the first program for abusive men in America. For over 17 years he has specialized in domestic violence and the behavior of abusive men. In his book, "Why Does He Do That?" Dr. Bancroft lists the warning signs of abuse (an abuser would exhibit some, not necessarily all of these):

He speaks disrespectfully about his former partners

He is disrespectful towards you

He does favors for you that you don't want or puts on such a show of generosity that it makes you uncomfortable

He is controlling

He is possessive

Nothing is ever his fault
 He is self-centered
 He abuses drugs and alcohol
 He pressures you for sex
 He gets serious too quickly about the relationship
 He intimidates you when he's angry
 He has double standards
 He has negative attitudes toward women
 He treats you differently around other people
 He appears to be attracted to vulnerability
 ("Why Does He Do That?" pg. 121-122)

Dr. Bancroft lists the four critical characteristics of an abusive argument:

1. The abuser sees an argument as war
2. She is always wrong in his eyes
3. He has an array of control tactics
 - Sarcasm
 - Ridicule
 - Distorting what you say
 - Sulking
 - Using a tone of final authority--"defining reality"
 - Interrupting
 - Not listening, refusing to respond
 - Laughing out loud at your opinion or perspective
 - Turning your grievances around to use against you
 - Changing the subject to his grievances
 - Criticism that is harsh, undeserved, or frequent
 - Provoking guilt
 - Playing the victim
 - Smirking, rolling his eyes, contemptuous facial expression
 - Yelling, out-shouting
 - Swearing
 - Name-calling, insults, put-downs
 - Walking out
 - Towing over you
 - Walking toward you in an intimidating way
 - Blocking a doorway
 - Other forms of physical intimidation, such as getting too close when he's angry
 - Threatening to leave you
 - Threatening to harm you
4. He makes sure to get his way--by one means or another
 (pg.144-147)

Dr. Bancroft addresses the issue of "neutrality" which has become the favorite response to this situation among Adventism. On page 287 he writes, "It is not possible to be truly balanced in one's views of an abuser and an abused woman. As Dr. Judith Herman explains eloquently in her masterwork "Trauma and Recovery", "neutrality" actually serves the interests of the perpetrator much more than those of the victim and so is not neutral. Although an abuser prefers to have you wholeheartedly on his side, he will settle contentedly for your decision to take a middle stance. To him, that means you see the couple's problems as partly her fault and partly his fault, which means it isn't abuse."

Abuse is destroying our homes and families--including those in leadership positions. We cannot afford to look the other way. We cannot afford to be "neutral". How much do we value integrity? Will we hold our leaders accountable?

"The willingness to surrender one's independence, to barter the evidence of one's senses for the comfortable but reality-distorting satisfaction of feeling in harmony with a group is, of course, the stuff on which demagogues and dictators thrive."

(Paul Watzlawick)

Posted by: Chez Aug 23 2006, 01:44 PM

QUOTE(Expression @ Aug 23 2006, 02:39 PM)

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(Paul Watzlawick)

Thank you for this thoughtful post.

Posted by: PaperTigers Aug 23 2006, 01:48 PM

very insightful, i think there is a lot more abuse going on that we just don't recognize (or choose to see)

unfortunately, abuse isn't limited to the physical.. and effects of emotional abuse are just as real and long lasting...

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