

Spiritual Abuse Questionnaire

Spiritual Abuse and Group Dynamics Questions to Consider

Questions To Help Identify Specific Areas of Spiritual Abuse, Deception, and Fraud

The following two scriptures are reflective of what happens when authority is abused within a spiritual/church setting, i.e. self-exaltation, heavy handed leadership, etc.

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Old Testament, Jeremiah 5:31 KJV)

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” (New Testament, 3 John 9-10 KJV)

The following list of questions is to help you, the reader, think through a number of things that perhaps you have never seriously considered on your own before.

As you read the questions, circle either YES or NO. When you reach the end, go back through the list and prayerfully consider the questions that you have answered YES to. Answering YES to any of the following questions may be an indication of an unhealthy problem in your group or with your leaders.

Answering YES to more than just a few questions is a definite cause for alarm. If this is the case, it is recommended that you take a much closer look into your group’s or organization’s history, purpose, and goals. Observe closely the methods, activities, and lives of the leaders. Are they using abusive and manipulative tactics on people?

If you believe that you are being abused in any way, it is highly recommended that you seek immediate help from balanced individuals and relatives who are outside of the influence of your group and its leaders.

Remember, you have the freedom to make your own choices and to be free from controlling and manipulative people. Controlling, abusive, and manipulating people will only mock, chastise and attempt to control you even more when their ploys, methods and artful ways of controlling others have been exposed.

Lastly, if you are suffering physical harm in any way or are involved against your conscience in any activity, you have the freedom to call emergency personnel by dialing 911.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR CHURCH OR GROUP'S LEADERS

Are you in any way fearful of your leader(s)?

YES / NO

Does your church or group revolve around one main charismatic personality who is the final arbiter of "truth"?

YES / NO

Do your leaders make claims of being "Anointed," having "Elijah's Mantle," having "Apostolic Authority," etc?

YES / NO

Does the main leader, or the leaders in your church or group always insist that they are right?

YES / NO

Does your group, church or movement employ an "Moses/Aaron" style of leadership (Old Testament Theocracy) where the pastor/leader hears directly from God like "Moses" (unlike a plurality of elders that comprise church leadership as the New Testament emphasizes)?

YES / NO

Does the pastor/leader of your group, church or movement surround himself with "people-pleasers," or with men who maintain biblical leadership characteristics as found in I, II Timothy and Titus?

YES / NO

Is your group, church or movement set up like a pyramid, with a hierarchy - with one single man at the top?

YES / NO

Are you allowed to freely ask questions about the background of your leader(s) and your group without being looked down upon or being considered "divisive"?

YES / NO

Would you be rebuked or chastised by your leader(s) if you researched the background and history of the group and its leader(s)?

YES / NO

Are you allowed to freely discuss teachings, prophecies, or so-called new revelations that your group's leader(s) has/have stated in the past or present?

YES / NO

Are you allowed to ask your leader(s) questions regarding their background in ministry, education, teaching, policies, etc.?

YES / NO

Do you view those who are assisting your group or church pastor/leader as ones who simply “do what they are told,” or as people who can rationally think for themselves and if need be would not be afraid to the main leader(s) to account if questionable practices/teachings arise?

YES / NO

Are your leaders above reproach (without blame) in morals, ethics, teaching and financial issues?

YES / NO

Do any of your leaders have a criminal record?

YES / NO

Would your leader(s) freely allow you to research their background in order to find out if they have a criminal record?

YES / NO

Has anyone in your group ever tried to persuade you to NOT research the personal background of the leaders?

YES / NO

When issues are brought up about abusive situations, do your leaders say, “You just need to have more faith!”, or “You are being disloyal to leadership!”?

YES / NO

Are leaders in your group very, very hard to contact or meet with?

YES / NO

Do your leaders avoid problematic issues? Or, when you discuss or address a real problem, do YOU then become targeted as THE problem, instead of the real issue that needs to be addressed?

YES / NO

Are your leaders aloof, unapproachable, unkind or harsh in any way to any of the people in your group?

YES / NO

Are your leaders amongst an “elite” class within your group?

YES / NO

Have your leaders ever told you or taught you that they are the only ones that can “rightly interpret” the Scriptures (Holy Bible)?

YES / NO

Do your leaders teach that your “church” or “movement” or “group” is the "Only True Church"?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR GROUP AND ITS TEACHINGS

Do you feel that your group twists and misapplies Bible verses?

YES / NO

Does your group or church “allegorize” and “spiritualize” Scripture instead of utilizing the internationally recognized standard of a literal, grammatical, historical approach to interpreting documents, like you would in any legitimate Bible college and even a court of law before a judge and jury?

YES / NO

Are you told what you *will* believe?

YES / NO

Are you guided through the Bible and at the same time not allowed to study the Scriptures on your own, apart from your group’s own materials?

YES / NO

Do your leaders claim “New Revelations,” or special “Words from God?”

YES / NO

Do your leaders withhold or avoid providing you and your group with a written “Statement of Beliefs” or “Statement of Faith”?

YES / NO

Is it difficult to get a straight answer from the group’s leader(s) on the group’s teachings?

YES / NO

Is your group secretive about any of its teachings, practices or meetings?

YES / NO

Does your group take “oaths” or have you commit to unrealistic expectations?

YES / NO

Are your leaders ever “harsh” in tone with you or do you ever feel like an animal that is “driven hard”?

YES / NO

Have you been taught, told or commanded not to share any of your group’s teachings, doctrines or practices with any outsiders

YES / NO

Does your group encourage you to read the Bible on your own, apart from the group’s own interpretation of what it is teaching?

YES / NO

Have you ever been instructed to cut all ties with the past, with relatives (spouse, children, in-laws, etc.) or with friends upon joining the group?

YES / NO

Do your leaders favorably quote and endorse known false teachers and false teachings in their own sermons, messages and teaching?

YES / NO

Are the leaders in your group or church comprised of “yes men” who simply follow, submit to, and carry out the whims and desires of one man?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR GROUP OR CHURCH’S POLICIES

Does your group have any policies (or lack thereof) that allow leaders to use threats, pressures to conform, bribes, verbal abuse, etc.?

YES / NO

Would you say that your church’s or group’s policy on “discipline” is extreme? If so, why and how?

YES / NO

Is, or could, your group’s policy on “discipline” be dangerous, illegal, or abusive in any way?

YES / NO

Does your group restrict you from “visiting” other churches?

YES / NO

If you visit another church for a wedding, baptism, funeral or baby dedication would you get in trouble?

YES NO

If you were to ask valid, enquiring questions about your group’s policies, would this create relationship problems with the leaders?

YES / NO

Does your group have any policies that you would consider harmful to children, the family unit, or society in general?

YES / NO

Does your group employ “out-loud shaming” of individuals and/or families?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR GROUP'S LITERATURE AND MULTI-MEDIA

Do you rely completely, without question, on the literature and information that your group gives you for your spiritual growth?

YES / NO

Will you be disciplined if you ever, at any time, listen to, read or view literature and multi-media materials that are not from your group, church or organization? Materials could include such things as books, journals, tracts, magazines, newsletters, CD's, DVD's, audio cassettes, videos, websites, etc.?

YES / NO

Are you only allowed to use study aids, books, etc. that are from your group or organization?

YES / NO

Do your leaders ever communicate to you that only your organizations materials or "of God" and/or that your group alone is "God's Organization"?

YES / NO

Have your leaders ever told you that all Bible study materials outside of your group are considered worldly, bad, apostate, "of the devil," or evil?

YES / NO

If you are caught reading religious materials or assessments about your group, that are not published by your group, your group's governing body or your organization's headquarters, will you be disciplined?

YES / NO

Do your leaders speak down, mock, or show consistent disdain against Christian churches and Christian counter-cult research ministries?

YES / NO

If you were to visit your leaders and confront them regarding false prophecies they have made, or false teachings they have taught, do you think they would be angry, upset or frustrated that you came to show them their error?

YES / NO

Would you say that your leaders display lack of sorrow, lack of apology, and lack of repentance when they are confronted with real sin or abuse issues?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MORALS AND ETHICS, HEALTH AND CONSCIENCE

Are you dependent upon the “approval” of your leaders for what you do (i.e. what you eat, what you wear, where you go, what you say, who you spend time with, who you marry, the music you listen to, etc.)?

YES / NO

Do you feel as though your life (or ministry) is being “micromanaged” by others?

YES / NO

Do your leaders add unnecessary pressure to your decision making?

YES / NO

Are your leaders cruel, vindictive, intimidating or overbearing?

YES / NO

Do any of your leaders justify sexual immorality by telling you something like, “God told me it is OK!” or “The Lord revealed this to me!”?

YES / NO

Have you ever been instructed, led, or forced to partake in any type of sexual activity with any of your group’s leaders?

YES / NO

Are you or have you ever been commanded, forced, coerced, extorted or manipulated into financial giving, tithing, “sowing your seed-faith offering,” etc.?

YES / NO

Are you being physically injured in any way (molested, raped, abused, whipped, beaten, tied up, slapped, heavy handed “intimacy,” etc.)?

YES / NO

Does your church, group or organization employ sleep deprivation, deprive people of a balanced diet, or utilize dehydration, visualization, vitamin ingestion, enemas, etc. as a means to being more “spiritual”?

YES / NO

Have you been forced, manipulated, coerced or pressured into making any moral and ethical choices against your own will and conscience? If so, what? If so, by whom?

YES / NO

If you address a valid issue or concern regarding problems in leadership that are clearly unbiblical, do your leaders backpedal, shift the blame and/or insist that they are right and you are wrong?

YES / NO

When confronting a leaders(s) with a valid issue or concern, do they turn the whole thing around to the point where now you have become the problem, not the issue that needs to be dealt with?
YES / NO

Do your leaders or ministry helpers ever lie to you or try to cover up the lies of others leaders?
YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MAKING PERSONAL CHOICES

Do you feel that you are manipulated against your own desires when making personal choices about diet, clothing, time commitments, service, tithing, friendships, dating, spouses, purchases, etc.?
YES / NO

Are choices ever made by your leaders that go against and burden your own conscience?
YES / NO

Do authority figures within your group ever demand answers from you or use threats to get their way?
YES / NO

Do your leaders or the group dynamic in your group make you feel as though you cannot come and go as you please (i.e. you feel as though your expected to be at all or most of the meetings)?
YES / NO

If you are experiencing abuse in any way, are you scared, afraid or nervous about leaving your group, church or organization?
YES / NO

Do your leaders, or the group itself, make choices to involve you in things that you don't like or would prefer not to be a part of?
YES / NO

Are you pressured or manipulated into making decisions – any decisions at all – regarding anything?
YES / NO

Do you feel guilty or “dirty” after making decisions because... “That is just what our group does”?
YES / NO?

Do others in your group make any decisions for you? If so, what are they?
YES / NO

Is pressure put upon you, in any way, to avoid “outside information” about your group?
YES / NO

Are you fearful that if you make a “wrong choice” your leaders will punish you?

YES / NO

Have you ever been punished or abused in any of the following ways: Physically abused, out-loud verbal shaming in front of others, given the non-verbal “silent treatment,” coded non-verbal abuse (“the look”), financially mistreated or extorted and as a result suffered financial repercussions, sexually abused in any way, emotionally manipulated, purposefully betrayed, sexual innuendos, etc?

YES / NO

Are there spoken or unspoken “dress code rules” in your group, that if broken, will lead to “discipline”?

YES / NO

If you are a woman, are you taught or commanded that you must wear long skirts, must have long hair, must avoid all make-up and must wear a head covering in order to please God?

YES / NO

Will your leaders or the group you belong to chastise you or refer to you as “carnal,” “less spiritual,” “un-submissive,” or “in rebellion” if you do not wear long skirts, have long hair, wear a head covering, avoid all make-up, etc.?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS ABOUT REGISTERED SEX-OFFENDERS BEING ALLOWED AROUND CHILDREN

Does your church, group or organization allow registered sex offenders (sexual predators) to be involved in children’s or youth ministry?

YES / NO

Do your leaders break the law by allowing registered sex offenders to be anywhere in the vicinity of children?

YES / NO

If it is known by your leaders that a registered sex offender is attempting to visit (or is consistently attending) your group or church service, and is in the vicinity of children, do your leaders kindly remove the registered sex offender(s) from the premises in order to protect the children (and the offender from breaking probation)?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT FINANCES

Are you allowed to enquire and ask valid questions as to how money is handled, where money is spent and who is accountable with your church or group finances?

YES / NO

Is your group secretive about where its financial funds go and how money is spent?
YES / NO

If you were to enquire about who counts and handles the money would your leader(s) show contempt towards you or look down on you with suspicion?
YES / NO

If your group is a church and/or holding services, and monies are received, does just one person or one married couple count and handle all the finances?
YES / NO

Have you ever been told by your leader(s) that no financial board is needed?
YES / NO

If your group is a church and/or holding services, and monies are received, do the leaders avoid filing annual tax documents with the Internal Revenue Service and Franchise Tax Board?
YES / NO

When money is received through offerings and/or collected through offering boxes, do you see that there is a lack of accountability with counting, processing and depositing funds?
YES / NO

If you have ever enquired about the financial accountability procedures in your church, group or organization, have your leaders expressed defensiveness of challenged you?
YES / NO

A FEW MORE QUESTIONS

Is there a high turnover rate of people coming to and then leaving your church or group?
YES / NO

Do you often hear stories of strife, bitterness and controversies within your group or its leadership?
YES / NO

Does your group consistently condemn people and churches outside your group as being “of the devil,” “satanic,” “servants of Satan,” “worldly,” etc.?
YES / NO

Does your church have the “We are the only true church” mentality?
YES / NO

Do you experience cruelty or abusive attitudes from leaders in your church or group?
YES / NO

Are the leading men in your church, group or organization too busy to spend time with their own families?

YES / NO

Is your group engaging in any of the following forms of mystical, New Age, occult or consciousness altering methodology and/or unbiblical perversions of the gifts of the Spirit: chanting, mysticism, contemplative centering prayer, yoga, meditation, uncontrollable laughter, unbiblical manifestations of “non-sensical” speaking in tongues, speaking in different dialects (languages/tongues) without proper interpretation, consciousness altering practices, visualization, guided imagery, Reiki, therapeutic touch, transferable anointing, shaking, jerking, heat in hands, electrical jolts, shocks and currents through the body, carpet time, holy laughter, group hysteria, “fire” tunnels, Word Faith - positive confession, “point of contact” prayers with candles, oils and fetishes, praying for/too the dead spontaneous yoga poses, etc.?

YES / NO

CONCLUSION

If these questions have helped you see clearly that you are involved in an abusive church, group or movement, you are encouraged to pro-actively make the decision to escape and be free from your abusers.

If you are in tears right now and filled with grief, sorrow and pain, please know that there is freedom ahead and there is a God in heaven who desires to break the chains of abuse, pain and hardship that you are in and have been through. God sees your silent tears, He understands your grief and He is willing and available to comfort your pain and distress. Your abusers do not represent the God of the Bible. Rather, they represent fallen humanity abusing authority - one of the primary things Jesus rebuked and confronted when He walked the earth.