

A Durban Mother Concerned About “The Given Life” and Exclusion of Parents

In 2003 we joined a small intimate fellowship that had just started and was headed up by Basil O’Connell-Jones

For about 3 years this church was the best thing that had ever happened to us. This “Gospel” gripped us and we were “giving our lives” and of our substance daily. However I often felt that we were giving our lives but it appeared that there was an imbalance regarding who was giving and who was on the receiving end of the giving. I kept realising that I had to check the “state of my heart” very often as we were taught that if you noticed things in other people’s lives you couldn’t confront them, especially if they were in leadership but instead you had to look at the state of your own heart. Though this could be true I felt that some people were able to behave in a questionable manner but were not subject to correction. Anyone who had an issue with Basil in particular was always expected to “repent” and examine their own hearts and often found themselves ostracized and alienated from the “in crowd”. We were labeled as “not well” – “not given”

I then became quite alarmed about what was happening with the young people as youth seemed to be being targeted. One of the young guys who was at university suddenly gave up his studies (this is one that I knew of) and was just hanging around Basil’s. I noticed that these young people, when they dropped out and spent every spare moment with Basil suddenly became very spiritual and were asked to “share their hearts” in meetings, at church, taking up the offering etc. But what they actually did was just parrot what Basil and other visiting elders were saying, which always seemed to be the same thing – take up your cross, give your life, go to Mauritius, die to your own desires and be a “son in the house” which meant be totally submitted to the “mother and father” Miki and Audrey and the elders. Basil’s home became quite the hub of activity and was constantly abuzz with people, often people visiting from Mauritius.

We have a young son who was about 18 at the time and not really interested in the church, he did attend with us on a few occasions. Our daughter, Jade who was aged 15 at the time was quite involved and got on well with most of the youth.

I became concerned when a youth camp was being arranged in Zimbabwe and leaders were arranging things with my daughter, who was then 16, and pressuring her into going without speaking to me. She knew that I was not keen on her going as the situation in Zimbabwe was very unstable. The youth and the leaders arranged everything with my daughter and not once did an adult come and talk to us, her parents, and ask if she could attend the youth camp. There was a lot of pressure on her and Jade really wanted to go, so reluctantly we conceded and paid.

The same thing then happened with a youth camp in Mauritius. Again nobody asked us if we were okay with Jade attending. It was taken for granted and we were notified of the cost and we were sort of bullied into letting her go, and paying the large sum of money that it cost. I had fears then already, that she may not come back home, as I could see that the pressure from the elders was on these young people to give up their careers, studies, families etc and move to Mauritius and quickly get married off to someone in the church.

She was initially going to the camp for a week and this then kept being extended at the instigation of the people in Mauritius until she had been there for 6 weeks. My worst fears were being realized! Prior to Jade going on the youth camp to Mauritius she had had an interview with an exclusive chef's college for possible enrolment in February 2007. While she was in Mauritius I received a call from the college saying that she could start in February 2007. We were all very excited as she had been really looking forward to this new venture in her life – the start of her career. When I called her, she appeared to have had a change of heart, this was so strange as she had been so keen to attend the college and had desperately wanted to pursue this as a career.

Now she told me "I'll have to think about it". I was amazed! She knew that we had gone all out to get her enrolled in this college and we were financially committed to the exorbitant fees that the college had charged. The college had made special provision to accept her above their normal quota of students and she was really lucky to have been accepted. In the past she would normally consult with us her parents if she was indecisive about something.

She then went and asked several of the elders what she should do. She was told that she should "do what God puts in your heart".

Several of the youth asked her how she could even think of pursuing such a career rather than serve the Lord. Fortunately she did "what God put in her heart" and returned home within 3 days to attend college. Basil did write her an excellent reference of recommendation.

After she started at the college I was amazed when Basil invited her to come and live at his home. We live a few kilometers away from Basil and I thought this was a ridiculous suggestion. It would inconvenience the whole family, it was suggested that each morning we would need to drive to his house with a clean uniform, pick up Jade and take her to college, then bring her back in the evening and drop her off, go home wash the uniform and repeat the whole procedure the next day. This suggested arrangement was also against our family principals. We felt that God had given US these children to bring up and to prepare for life and for Him.

A few months earlier we were rather disturbed when Jaymie Slement left her home to live with the Page family – "so the Lord could do a work in her heart, and theirs" We have always been a very close family and decisions over our children, were made by us – the parents in consultation with the children. We are by no means overbearingly controlling parents but we believe God blessed us with our children and He will give US the guidance to bring them up..

We stopped attending meetings at GGC around May 2007. Jade was attending some of the youth meetings when possible. After a particular youth meeting we collected her and she was in a state when she got into the car.

Basil had preached directly at her, in front of everyone (the youth meetings were open to ALL ages, from as young as 10 to whatever age – many adults attended some well into their 60's!) He preached along the lines of "It's all good cooking in fancy restaurants for celebrities but it's not good for your Spiritual Life. After the meeting Basil's daughter Kara-Jane confronted Jade and bombarded her with how her career choice was ungodly and how could she choose such a career above serving the Lord.

She vowed that she would never go back to GGC. Thank the Lord – We were set FREE and are now truly free to serve the Lord in FREEDOM and with GRACE, without manipulation

We thank the Lord for saving us from the suffering that so many families are enduring.