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PODCAST EPISODE 48
Unmasking Spiritual Abuse and Cult Communities - Part 1

PRAYER EXERCISE

Make this a time of prayer and reflection. Remove distractions. Begin an authentic conversation with Jesus. Consider writing down thoughts as they come to you.

Thank you, Jesus, that You are here with me. I ask You to reveal truth to my heart and guide me in this time of prayer and reflection.

- 1. There is so much in the news today about spiritual abuse and cult communities. But what is it exactly?**
 - a. Spiritual, or religious abuse, is typically when a church elder or religious leader inflicts abuse on congregational members, often using their power or position to control members, creating a toxic culture.
 - b. Spiritual abuse can occur within an intimate partner and in families as well.
 - c. Check in with your own heart now. Is there a situation that comes to mind in your life?

- 2. What is the litmus test for identifying spiritual abuse? This is not an exhaustive list, but will help identify a toxic relationship or culture:**
 - a. Controls your behavior, friends, books, movies, politics, clothes, money.
 - b. Emphasizes faith in the church or leader more than faith in Jesus.
 - c. Communicates that they are the only ones with "truth;" only enlightened ones.
 - d. Emphasizes that if you leave the group, you are eternally lost and deserve punishment.
 - e. Manipulates with shame/ guilt trips / "don't tell what you witness."
 - f. Usually has "elites" within group - men vs women / leaders vs "common folk."
 - g. Usually involves secret immorality: i.e. sexual abuse, misuse of funds, etc...
 - h. Allows gross hypocrisy on behalf of leaders: "Do what we say, not what we do."
 - i. Involves over-working and exploiting children and young people.
 - j. Hates sinners or nonconformists to cult.

Pray, then be still. Write down any thoughts that come to you: *Lord, highlight any mindsets in me that are the result of people's abusive control over me. What does freedom look like in this area or these areas?*

But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love of good, traitorous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these! 2 Timothy 3:1-5

3. **What can we do if we, or someone we love, is trapped in a spiritually abusive relationship?**
 - a. Pray for them. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and empower them to follow Him.
 - b. Assure them you love them no matter what.
 - c. Reach out to safe, supportive friends.
 - d. Seek healing from a prayer minister or counselor.
 - e. Remove yourself from the abusive relationship and establish boundaries for healing.
 - f. Seek medical and legal action as appropriate. Abuse is abuse.

4. **Take more time to pray . . .**
 - a. **Pray for those in an abusive relationship or communities to find help for healing and freedom through Jesus.**
 - b. Check in with your own heart. Are there any current relationships or communities you're involved in that have spiritually abusive qualities? Do you need help from someone trustworthy and wise to enact boundaries or end a certain relationship or community involvement?
 - c. If you have been the victim of spiritual abuse, ask Jesus to forgive you and help you move from a personal mindset of control and shame to one of love and empowerment through a deep and personal relationship with Jesus.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18

For more on freedom from spiritual abuse go to www.teachingfellowshipinsitute.org
Courses on detoxing from religion, healing from trauma, and more.

**If you have yet to call on Jesus as your Lord and Savior,
find a biblical explanation of the vital need and a prayer guide at
FearlessAndFreeCommunity.com/Saving-Faith**

