

Recovering From Ministerial Abuse / Assault / Murder (NIV based)

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Introduction:

- - From decades of experience of watching dynamics that occur in true churches and para-church ministries, a subtle and very disturbing reality is that it is common for some leaders and workers in those churches and ministries to experience unjust significantly-harmful mistreatment to the extent that it results in them permanently discontinuing their ministry functioning in that church or ministry and then in any other in the future.
- - This document will endeavor to help you, who have been seriously wounded or destroyed by ministerial mistreatment, to recover to spiritual well-being and return to ministry functioning.

Parameters:

- For purposes of this recovery document, the mistreatment of you as a leader or worker in a church or para-church ministry can be classified as necessarily having the following characteristics:
 - - - - the mistreatment was in relation to your ministry functioning, under the authority of a church or para-church ministry;
 - - - - the mistreatment was not physical abuse - not physical assault on you bodily;
 - - - - aside from the abusing person(s) who perpetrated the mistreatment on you, your ministry functioning was regarded by people who observed your ministry functioning as being very good or excellent, and likewise your conduct in your ministry functioning was readily regarded by them as always appropriate and innocent of wrongdoing;
 - - - - God would agree with you that you were seriously mistreated and were subjected to unjust suffering for doing very good or excellent ministry functioning in a blameless manner; (1 Peter 2:19-20)
 - - - - the mistreatment was sufficiently devastating, and/or severe, and/or destructive to directly result in and cause that you ceased engaging in that ministry functioning;
 - - - - this outcome of your ceasing of that ministry functioning, which has perhaps since evolve into being permanent, is contrary to what you wanted or desired to occur at that time.

Definitions:

- Within the context of doing ministry functioning under the authority of a church or para-church ministry:
 - - - - MINISTERIAL ABUSE can be defined as a ministry worker experiencing significantly-harmful unjust treatment by one or more leadership or prominent persons in the church or ministry, which can range from occurring on an occasional to frequent basis that can extend over a lengthy period of time;
 - - - - MINISTERIAL ASSAULT can be defined as a ministry worker experiencing significantly-escalated harmful unjust treatment by one or more leadership or prominent persons in the church or ministry, which occurs as an incident that can last for a few hours, or a series of incidents that build to a critical explosion in which one or more of those leadership persons inflicts a lengthy verbal flogging, which typically can include a barrage of unfounded charges, personal attacks, and erroneous accusations of doing evil;

- - - MINISTERIAL MURDER can be defined as in connection to the ministry worker experiencing relating unjust ministerial abuse or assault, now furthermore the ministry worker being terminated, or fired, or given no other options than to resign from his/her ministry functioning, which may also include having to abruptly and immediately leave that church or ministry.

- - Being removed from ministry functioning by means of ministerial murder typically can be accompanied by heaped-on shame, disgrace, and supposedly righteous condemnation that thereupon seems to become glued to the ministry worker, the innocent servant of God, to scar, haunt, and oppress him/her thereafter.

- - Due to this extensiveness and intenseness of trauma that is experienced, ministerial murder typically can transition into becoming permanent - wherein the innocent servant of God never returns to that type of ministry functioning again for the remainder of his/her entire life.

- - Moreover, ministerial murder can also result in never returning to any significant ministry functioning for the remainder of that innocent servant's entire life.

- - This long-term damage from ministerial murder is a sad and disturbing reality, especially considering that the servant was completely innocent of any wrongdoing and had been producing very good or excellent ministry functioning in that church or ministry.

- - So, in effect, that church or ministry likewise suffered a significant loss, in the form of the unjust ministerial murder of one of its very good or excellent workers.

Aftermath repercussions, processing, and response:

- - Perhaps you have experienced a situation in which you were unjustly inflicted with one or more of these ministerial abuse, or assault, and then murder.

- - Immediately after being ministerially murdered, initially you were bewildered, in a state of shock, and totally devastated - in a sense, shuffling around like a mummy, wrapped up tight in a death shroud, and your ministry life-blood splattered all over the church office and hallways.

- - To make your situation even more dire, you getting unjustly fired and its corresponding loss of income has catapulted you into an immediate financial shortfall crisis, with no foreseeable means of quickly acquiring a sufficient flow of income to reestablish your financial solvency.

- - In your mind, you replay (over and over) what happened - what was said and done during the event or time in which you were ministerially assaulted and murdered.

- - You question - "How can God let this happen to me?". "I was doing excellent ministry functioning, and in a manner that He was really blessing, pleased with, and empowering." "Now what? - Now what do I do?" "He called me to do this ministry work, and now its completely dead. Now what do I do?"

- - So while you are still trying to make sense of being ministerially murdered and recover from its trauma, you naturally start looking for some kind of replacement ministry functioning, but these efforts quickly prove to be futile - producing no immediate open doors of ministry opportunity for you.

- - So now, running out of time due to exacerbating financial pressures, you essentially abandon looking for any replacement ministry functioning, and turn to pursuing secular employment and interests, which you eventually are able to secure and proceed into.

- - The instance of you being ministerial murdered has thereupon decayed into being long-term and on track to becoming permanent.

God's perspective on ministerial murder:

- - Upon being ministerially murdered, the natural and appropriate response is for you to carefully, accurately, and thoroughly consider all of the charges that were brought against you, and unbiasedly determine if you were in any way guilty of 'sinning' within those charges, in the context of your ministry functioning.

- - If you are guilty of sinning or conducting yourself improperly or negligently or substantially incompetently in one or more ways in regard to the charges brought against you, then obviously you will need to make corrections and honestly self-evaluate as to whether or not you were rightfully terminated from your ministry functioning, rather than concluding that you were unjustly ministerially murdered.

- - On the other hand, if you are completely innocent and blameless before God in this matter, then it is necessary and helpful to consider God's perspective on you being ministerially abused / assaulted / murdered.

- - In 1 Peter 2:19-21a is declared, "19. **For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.** 20. **But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.** 21. **To this you were called,...**".

- - The stark and somewhat shocking reality here in these verses is that God has "called" true believers to experience and "endure" "unjust suffering" "for doing good", which by extension includes His servants who are doing ministry - who serve Him, because they are "conscious of God".

- - Therefore, God has intentionally allowed and perhaps even ordained that you experience the unjust suffering of being ministerial abused / assaulted / murdered.

- - And, God wants you to appropriately "endure" and "bear up under the pain of [this] unjust suffering". (vv.2:20,19)

- - A main objective of God in this suffering is "that you participate in the sufferings of Christ" (v.4:13) - that we true believers in a small way personally experience the incalculable horrific unjust suffering that Christ endured for us on the cross (vv.2:21,24), for every one of our own sins.

- - Another objective of God in this suffering is that we "commit [ourselves] to our faithful Creator and continue to do good" (v.4:19), - persevering in "entrusting [ourselves]" and our suffering situation "to him who judges justly" (v.2:23), while simultaneously finding ways to "continue to do good", which for ministry servants of God means finding some kind of replacement in ministry functioning.

- - Experiencing, responding, and enduring unjust suffering in God's way is "commendable before God" (v.2:20), and for which "[we] are blessed" (v.3:14).

- - So, in this "participating in the sufferings of Christ", we are "not to be surprised at the painful trial [we] are suffering, as though something strange were happening to [us]" (v.4:12), "but" instead we are to "rejoice" (v.4:13) and be "blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on [us]" (v.4:14).

- - Because this "calling" to "endure unjust suffering for doing good" applies to all true believers, then being propelled into unjust suffering situations is not a matter of choice for us true believers - this 'calling' applies to us whether we like it or not, whether we comply with it or not, whether we strenuously strive to avoid unjust suffering situations or not. (vv.2:21,20)

- - By God's design within this 'calling', unjust suffering situations will come upon us in life, and when they do, this 'calling' activates - it becomes actively applicable to us personally in each of those unjust suffering situations.
- - By implication then, God will hold us accountable to respond to unjust suffering situations in a manner that He prescribes.
- - By implication, we are also bound by this 'calling' for the remainder of our life.
- - Therefore, in an unjust suffering situation, if we fail miserably to respond in a manner that God approves of, then we are not released from this 'calling', but instead we are therein obligated to make corrections so that we succeed excellently during the next unjust suffering situation that inevitably will come upon us.

God's position about the aftermath of being ministerially murdered:

- - If you are completely innocent and blameless before God in this matter regarding you being ministerially abused / assaulted / murdered, then it is distinctly contrary to the will of God for you to react by thereafter essentially ceasing / dropping out of / withdrawing from doing ministry work that God has also called, set you apart, and assigned you to be doing - as "a holy [and "royal"] priesthood" and "servant of God". (vv.2:5,9,16)
- - This 'ministry work calling' from God is still valid, and has not been cancelled, even though a high-ranking ministry leader or pastor or leadership board has pronounced and judged and terminated you as being no longer fit to be doing that ministry functioning.
- - Those ministry leader person(s) **do not** speak for God in this matter, **nor** has God authorized them to treat you in this manner.
- - Therefore, their verdict and termination actions against you **do not** follow you and **do not** apply outside of their realm of authority in their church or ministry.
- - So thereby, you do **not** need any religious authority person or institution to reinstate your fitness to again be doing ministry functioning somewhere else - God considers you to **not** have been unfit to be doing ministry functioning, in regard to this ordeal of you being ministerially murdered.
- - An example of this is after Jesus' crucifixion, the resurrected Jesus did **not** abide by the verdict of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin that He was no longer fit to be a rabbi or teacher of the Law or have any authority in the Judaism religion. (Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 28:18)

Steps to recovery:

1. FIND A WAY TO RESUME DOING MINISTRY, OF SOME KIND

- - Despite the severe devastation, major setback, and perhaps even ministerial murder that was unjustly inflicted on you, God wants you to continue to fulfill the ministerial calling He has on you to be doing ministry work, unless you have since disqualified yourself. (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 9:23-27; Galatians 6:9-10; e.g. John 21:1-17 - the experience of Peter and the other disciples right after his denial of Jesus and then the crucifixion of Jesus)
- - Therefore, in prayer, commit yourself to trust in, rely upon, and "entrust" yourself and your situation to God to restore you to ministry functioning. (1 Peter 2:23)
- - Even though you are working on psychologically and spiritually recovering and healing from the devastation and trauma of being ministerially murdered, nevertheless simultaneously take action steps toward getting plugged back in to doing ministry.
- - Promptly start and continue making contacts, sending out inquiries and résumés, and mulling over ministry options with your spouse and a few godly and wise persons close in your life.

- - Expect that you will naturally have an aversion to returning to a situation that may result in you again being ministerially abused / assaulted / murdered, but nevertheless maintain a willing submissive attitude toward whatever ministry functioning God has for you to do next.
- - If you subsequently encounter nothing but closed (and seemingly locked) doors to returning to the same kind of ministry functioning that you were previously doing when you were ministerially murdered, then extend into also considering wider varieties of slightly-different kinds of ministry options.
- - Be open to the distinct possibility that in direct conjunction with you being ministerially murdered, God may want you to slightly change course in the ministry functioning direction that you are going - to perhaps shift or transition into a related but somewhat different type of ministering functioning or role than what you were previously doing.
- - So be watchful, flexible, and willing to be restored to some kind of ministry functioning, whether it is the same, or instead a slightly-different kind of ministry functioning, or field, or manner, or position that God provides an opportunity for you to do.
- - If you consequently or subsequently suffer a fatal drop in your financial income, then make adjustments or adaptations that are distinctly temporary and flexible, so that you can easily, quickly, and forthrightly transition into doing the ministry functioning that God provides you opportunity and places you into next.
- - If an opportunity seems to open up for doing a slightly-different kind of ministry functioning, then be aware that God may want you to take a step of faith and move forward into it, even though some aspects of that ministry functioning opportunity may not be totally evident or clear to you at first (in the beginning). (2 Corinthians 5:7, Strong's #4043 - "We walk" by faith, not by sight.)
- - And if or when it looks like God is leading you into a slightly-different kind of ministry functioning, then start preparing yourself and your spouse to make that transition and to adjust, without being "hindered" or "entangled" or diverted or stopped from "running with perseverance the race marked out for [you]" by anything such as doubt, anxiety, or fear, or the pursuit of wealth, comforts, or financial security, for examples. (Hebrews 12:1; similar concept in James 1:5-8)

2. ESTABLISH A CORRECT SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

- - While you are actively and persistently looking for an opportunity to return to doing ministry functioning of some kind, allow yourself to take some time to process before God what has happened to you in this ministerial murder.
- - A significant objective here is for you to establish a correct view of the truth and a correct spiritual perspective of reality about what has happened to you in this matter.
- - If you have unbiasedly determined that God agrees with you that you are entirely innocent in this matter that resulted in you being ministerially murdered, then solidly accept and adopt the view that this whole matter is an incidence of you being inflicted with unjust suffering that God has "called" you to endure.
- - God intends and has designed that your experience of enduring unjust suffering is in some ways similar to what Christ endured at the hands of the highest ranking religious leaders during the events leading to His ministerial murder, which for Him was furthermore enforced by horrific physical torture and physical murder. (1 Peter 2:21,22-23)
- - Within your processing of what happened to you in this ministerial murder, accept that you were in a no-win situation - that the adverse outcome inevitably would and did

come upon you, even though you did all that you could appropriately do to try to establish peace and avert the adverse outcome while adhering to the priority of you maintaining personal integrity before God. (See, for example, in 1 Peter 2:21-23 how Christ maintained personal integrity before the Father when being abused / assaulted / tortured / murdered for doing ministerial functioning.)

-- If you were "doing good" of ministry functioning, while being innocent of wrongdoing and having pure motives when you consequently became inflicted with unjust ministerial treatment and suffering (1 Peter 2:19-20), then thoroughly consider and rest in the assurance that:

- - - - God sees you in your enduring of this painful unjust suffering; (v.20)

- - - - through Christ, God has firsthand experiential knowledge of enduring unjust suffering like you are; (v.21)

- - - - God empathizes with you and in a sense feels your pain with you, in your enduring of this painful unjust suffering; (example: John 11:32-36,38)

- - - - and God highly values and regards as "commendable" your properly enduring this painful unjust suffering, in conjunction with your "suffering according to [His] will", your "committing [yourself] to [your] faithful Creator", and your "continuing to do good" of ministry functioning, which He has called and assigned you to be doing. (1 Peter 2:19-20; 4:19)

- - In being 'called' by God to endure this unjust suffering, also accept and adopt the reality that you are furthermore 'called' by God to appropriately recover from that enduring of unjust painful suffering and 'called' to be restored to again doing whatever ministry functioning that God has for you to do. (v.4:19)

- - 1 Peter 5:10 - **"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."**

- - So, expect that God will restore you - to well-being in the areas that you have been harmed or wounded.

- - Cooperate with God's efforts to restore you, compliantly submitting and entrusting yourself to God's will and care, while steadfastly maintaining faith and patience for God to accomplish in you recovery from the unjust suffering, to restore you to wellness, and to enact justice on your behalf, which perhaps may be delayed until Judgment Day (1 Timothy 5:24).

- - By God's design, in this life you may never receive the vindication that you rightly deserve for being unjustly ministerially abused / assaulted / murdered, but rest in the assurance that God will vindicate you and "commend" you in His presence in heaven one day. (1 Peter 2:20)

- - Perhaps it would be helpful for you to remember that God institutes obligations like this 'calling to endure unjust suffering for going good' in order to both achieve His "good purposes" and to supply us true believers with more opportunities to earn "great rewards" that will last for eternity in heaven. (Philippians 2:12-13; Matthew 5:11-12)

3. ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS TO BE REALISTIC

- - Expect that your church probably will not address any requests you make to hear your side, or to set things right, or to reconcile you, because leaderships in churches

naturally seriously avoid confrontation - even if it results in gross injustice and devastating harm to one of its excellent workers or fellow leaders.

- - Furthermore, expect weak or no extending of sympathy or tangible verbal support by the church, its leaders, or its members, because they regard with great fear the topic of being ministerially abused / assaulted / murdered, and therefore they want the topic to quietly go away and disappear, albeit regrettably taking you along with it in disappearing.
- - Even though you have this ongoing compelling desire to tell people about what happened to you - the injustice and harm that you endured, expect that nobody wants to hear your story, or think about it, or deal with it. And your spouse has quickly gotten tired of repeatedly hearing about what happened to you, and wants you to get over it and move on in life, not bringing up that topic in conversation any more.
- - Expect that your abuser(s) will continue un-phased - personally unbothered that he/she inflicted God-**dis**approved and fatal ministerial harm upon you and continuing on in doing his/her ministry functioning or leadership as if he/she is completely innocent of any wrongdoing or mistreatment to you.
- - Consequently, expect that your abuser(s) will publicly champion himself/herself as always doing what is right and always treating people appropriately.
- - Accept the unpleasant possibility that perhaps at some point in the future, in a different setting but under similar circumstances, you may again experience unjust treatment and suffering for 'doing good' - for submitting to God in doing the ministry functioning that God has for you. (1 Peter 2:20b-21a)

4. ESTABLISH SPIRITUAL PURITY AND FORGIVENESS IN YOUR HEART

- - Having gone through major and unjust treatment and abuse, especially when it is from someone who claims to be godly as a leader in the faith and the church, our natural tendency is to develop "bitterness" and "anger", upon which we devise ways to strike back and enact revenge by resorting to "slander", "malice", "letting unwholesome talk come out of [our} mouths", and etcetera. (Ephesians 4:31,29)
- - But this approach immediately defiles, taints, corrupts, sours, pollutes, and agitates our spiritual integrity and our demeanor - how we think, how we respond, how we carry our-self, how we present our-self, whether we realize it or not.
- - So you, as a servant of the living God who strives to be "upright" before the Lord, will need to re-establish or reaffirm your spiritual purity before the Lord in regard to this occurrence of you enduring unjust treatment and ministerial abuse that culminated in ministerial murder. (Titus 1:8)
- - The guidelines for establishing spiritual purity in this kind of situation are distinctly and succinctly stated in Colossians 3:12-15, "12. **Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. 15. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.**"
- - Take some time to re-establish or reaffirm each item in these verses, in your heart in prayer before the Lord.
- - The imperative command in verse 15, "And be thankful", may be difficult to apply. So a suggestion for this is that you express to God that by faith you are thankful that God is using your enduring of ministerial abuse / assault / murder to build the spiritual strength

of your "faith", "perseverance", endurance, fortitude, character, "maturity", "completeness", and "wisdom". (James 1:2-5)

- - Be especially certain that in prayer before the Lord, you fully forgive your abuser(s) (Colossians 3:13) in the depths of your spiritual heart, for everything they did to unjustly cause harm to you in regard to this occurrence of you being ministerially abused / assaulted / murdered. (Also see Matthew 6:14-15.)

- - Likewise, fully forgive every observing leadership person in the church who failed to do what is right - failed to attempt to stop, or to mitigate, or to rectify the harm that the abuser(s) were inflicting upon you.

- - Also of great importance, ensure that you are holding no issue with or grudge against God for not protecting you from the unjust ministerial abuse / assault / murder that was inflicted upon you.

- - Accept that God ordains that being inflicted with unjust ministerial abuse / assault / murder can be part of what happens when serving the Lord. For example, prophets in the Old Testament were hunted and killed by religious leaders for speaking what God wanted them to say. (v.34 in Matthew 23:29-37; 5:10-12; vv.22-23 in Luke 6:20-23)

- - Next, confess any relating sins that you committed during or after experiencing this ministerial abuse / assault / murder. (1 John 1:9)

- - Then, in prayer, ask the Lord to right now please remove any influences or problems from the Kingdom Of Darkness that you may have picked up in the course of experiencing this ministerial abuse / assault / murder.

- - A parting question to ponder: Are you going to allow the God-disapproved actions of one or a few ministry leaders to henceforth destroy your future in substantially serving the Lord and in eternally impacting numerous people for the cause of Christ?

- - To customize Galatians 6:9 - "**Let us not become weary** [or in this case, utterly destroyed and terminated] **in doing good** [of ministry functioning], **for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**"

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