

Letter from a mom to the ICC leadership

Bev Adams, the mother of an ICC member, wrote this letter to the local ICC evangelist, regional evangelist, Al Baird and Kip McKean. It is reproduced here with her permission.

April 21, 1999

To the leadership of the International Churches of Christ:

Cc: Anyone interested in truth

Since 1996 when my daughter was first approached by members of this group, I had concerns. Their sudden friendship was different and the instant constant activities were a concern. She was leaving the house at 11:00 at night to go to Bible studies even when she was sick. People were calling our house at all hours. Clearly some of the teachings were different from mine. When she was baptized, I expressed my confusion about the need to be re-baptized. Our daughter said she believed her first baptism was invalid. Did God do it wrong? Does He not know a person's heart enough? Ephesians 4:5 reads, "There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all," and 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." Our daughter spoke of many works that she needed to do and said she would earn a better place in heaven. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." This does not mean we should do nothing for God. Our desire should be for God and the compulsion should come from love for Him, not from the directions of others. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." In spite of my concerns, I did not interfere with her decision to join the International Churches of Christ. In fact, we celebrated her baptism with her.

About a year and a half ago I started hearing some disturbing accusations about the International Churches of Christ. I read in the Heaven's Gate issue of *Newsweek Magazine* that the International Churches of Christ is one of ten other churches they defined as abusive. I've watched hidden videos aired on national television showing members of the International Churches of Christ warning new or potential members that their families will try to drag them out of the church. I heard Al Baird deny things that were shown on the video. In fact I heard Al Baird deny the existence of [sin lists](#) on three different television broadcasts even though a sin list was shown to him each time. I read a newspaper article comparing the International Churches of Christ to the Jonestown, David Koresh, and Heaven's Gate cults. I read [The Discipleship Dilemma](#), a study requested by the church, that found members personality types, which are normally stable, were converging toward a single personality type. I've been warned that if families questioned the church and its teachings too much the members will refuse to listen and consider the questions and concerns of their family members as persecution and as if coming from Satan. I understand some members have been directed to move away from their family and have extremely limited contact.

I saw evidence in our daughter's life of many of these accusations. I watched her cut off from all her friends. Our daughter broke many commitments with us to go to family outings when a church event was scheduled at the same time. I watched my daughter tense up when I asked non-contentious questions. I saw our daughter's fear when she thought she was going to lose her job and not be able to meet her financial commitment to the church. I saw the many notices from the bank and then the collection agencies when she was bouncing checks. Giving money to God should not cause fear. This made me very concerned, but I felt constrained by the teachings of the church from sharing my concerns with my daughter. I wanted to be able to continue our loving family relationships.

In the meantime, I learned as much as I could about the church. I looked to many resources. I did not want to be unduly swayed by former members who might have had isolated bad experiences. So I consulted police, doctors, therapists, ministers, and others, describing the things I saw and had heard. All agreed there was ample cause for concern. I read books, watched related television shows, and searched the web. I attended International Churches of Christ services. I downloaded *First Principles* and *Revolution Through Restoration I and II* and began to study teachings from the church.

While I was studying *Revolution Through Restoration I* was shocked. This was a paper done in 1992 by the highest leader in the International Churches of Christ and it contained many Biblical errors. Most of the Biblical references did not support the claims being made. Some were clearly clerical errors. I found seven separate references to verses that don't even exist in any translation I had, including a New International Version. One of those seven references was cited in two different locations. How could this be? This was one of three papers presented on the official

International Churches of Christ web page. I presume someone has read this article since 1992. Has no one checked the references? Is the writer so above reproach that no one dares question his references?

As I began to study *First Principles*, I became even more convinced that this church uses abusive practices and twists the Bible to its own use. The very first study presents the thesis that if you don't call yourself a "disciple" you are not saved. The study claims the word "Disciple" (notice the capitalized D) occurs more than 270 times in the New Testament. I didn't count how many times it was in my concordance, but I did notice that it is found only in the four books of the gospel and Acts. Christians are "disciples." They are also saints, believers, followers, brothers/sisters, daughters/sons, sheep, people, worker, faithful, church, body, the bride, flock, my people, branches, ... Do I need to go on? If we must be disciples to be saved, why aren't the epistles addressed to "Disciples"? Since not one of the epistles is addressed to disciples, are the followers in those churches not saved?

As time progressed and the evidence grew I felt I could no longer hide my concerns. I became convinced that I was not following God's plan if I did not share my concerns with our daughter, even if it meant that she ran out of our lives forever. My husband and I took great pains to find people who could help us discuss our concerns with her with honesty and integrity, as well as be equipped with Biblical knowledge and perspective. We found people with experiences in several parts of the country, at various levels of leadership, and over a period of time from the development of the church to recent times. These faithful disciples had left the International Churches of Christ because of ethical and religious concerns.

Though we felt constricted by the teachings of the ICC from being open about our plans until the last minute, we took great measures to be honest, truthful, and respectful of our daughter. When we asked her to meet with these people we asked her if she would be willing to listen, giving them as much time as was needed, and to make up her own mind without calling others. She agreed and we went to meet them. We listened to many claims. These claims were made with the promise of substantiation.

When we took a lunch break, I was disappointed to find our daughter attempting to make a phone call. I told her I had believed she had enough integrity to keep her promise to listen to the full presentation, keep her mind open, and not call people from her church. She felt she had not agreed to our entire request. She did not get through to the party. On the way back she said she wasn't sure she was willing to hear the full presentation of evidence. When we got back to the condo, we made a new agreement. She would listen for the rest of the day if she could make a phone call to ask for prayer. When asked for a time, she agreed to 9:00 P.M. and then we drove her to a phone so she could make her call. She asked why we didn't want her to call and we said we were worried someone would come and take her away from us. She said she only wanted prayer.

With the restricted time, only a small portion of the evidence could be presented. For the most part we studied the Bible and compared what we read with a sermon given by Kip McKean. We all heard errors made by Mr. McKean. During this time, our daughter refused an offer of dinner. At 9:00 P.M. the presentation was stopped. We closed in prayer and she agreed to decide in the morning whether she would hear more of the evidence.

When we stopped for dinner on the way back to our condo our daughter left to make another phone call. When she returned some time later she explained that her friend offered to come get her but that she would need to know by 6:30 the next morning. Then she asked if we would be willing to take her home. I felt as if she had already made her decision. I said I didn't want to plan what we'd do until she made her decision in the morning. After some thought I did share other options of getting her home, but wanted us to wait to figure that out after she'd decided in the morning. I assured her, in no uncertain terms, that I did not want her to feel trapped in any way. We made our car available to her to get to a phone since the condo phone was not working. We did not get the opportunity to make any arrangements or decisions in the morning. She had called at 5:30 to have her friend come get her.

At every turn throughout our trip our daughter was free to stay or leave. She was under no compulsion in any way. Certainly we felt she owed it to herself to hear out the evidence. I also felt she owed it to us. I was very disappointed that she did not want to hear the evidence supporting some very serious charges against her church. We will all be watching to see whether the church tells the truth about the events of our trip.

When I performed as a clown, I was very concerned about the ethics of using tricks and imagination to perform "magic." This issue was discussed often in the Fellowship of Christian Magicians. I believe the same parlor tricks I used to perform "magic" are being used by the leadership of the International Churches of Christ to twist the Bible. It makes me very angry that these tricks are being used to control the decisions of adults seeking to serve God. When these tricks are used against my family, I am compelled to action. I have always felt very strongly that our daughter has the right to make her own decisions. But I feel it is important to make decisions fully informed. This is the way we have raised our children. I am not convinced that she is making fully informed decisions. Her actions during our trip have confirmed my fears about the International Churches of Christ.

I want to know what this church is teaching that made our daughter feel the need to go to extreme measures to leave an opportunity to do a Berean study of the Bible and her church. I promised our daughter I will not discuss this issue with her unless she brings it up, but I will not remain silent with others. I plan to continue to learn all I can about what this church teaches and share what I learn with all who will listen. Fear of the magical control by the International Churches of Christ over my daughter kept me silent for too long. I will not allow this church to demonize the truth. God is more powerful than man and He is more powerful than Satan. If the charges are wrong there is no need for fear. If they are true then the evidence deserves to be heard.

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

Sincerely,

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