

MY EXPERIENCE(S) IN HOUSE OF PRAYER CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Hi all, my name is George Retana and I was a member of House of Prayer Christian Church for 4 years. Yes, I am the same brother Retana that used to attend the San Diego and then later on the Hinesville Ga. Church. Though this church started out as a so called holiness movement, it quickly went downhill and turned into a cult. Though I didn't have the slightest idea as to what would soon take place in my life, God had a plan; a plan that would come to pass rather quickly once set in motion. Though I never made a new year's resolution to leave the church, 2014 would indeed be a new year for me.

February 2014 would be the last time I would set foot in any of these churches, ever again. As you read this; I believe you will find many similarities between my life in HOP and yours also if you are a current member attending there. You will notice that I had some highlights, and some down right questions that never seemed to be answered; but I now know the answers, and I believe you will also after reading this article about "My experiences in HOPCC."

When it all Started

I began to attend the church on January 3 2010 in the city of San Diego. I was stationed there during my time in the Marine Corps and that's where I got invited by Sister Graham, to the church. When I first attended, I liked it, and it became the place where I gave my life to Jesus Christ. But that joy and zeal that my wife (Alexis Retana) and I felt soon became grievous and hostile.

During my time there I was under pastor Jeffery Figueroa. And let me tell you that at first he was the nicest guy, but soon that nice guy became a demon towards me and my wife. I remember how he and his evil, rebellious wife (Yes, that's the perfect description and you'll see why) would constantly act one way one day and another way the next; almost like a possession. Hell on earth began there for us, I remember as we began to go more and more to the church that Figueroa would get more evil and controlling; and don't ask me why I kept going because it's the same reason why everyone else did.

During this time I was a Marine Corps Drill Instructor, and I worked about 18 hours a day, yet I was constantly told to be in church. I guess he figured church first, then my career, family, and everything else last. Yea, it's sad to say, but they

got me with that "Put God first" thing also. My wife would have to drive over to my base and fill my car with food at 2 or 3 in the morning just so I could eat, yet she was demanded to be there at noon prayer.

Not a caring bone in his body

There are too many things to count that happened to my wife and I while in that church and one of them was when she miscarried what would have been our first child together. You might be asking yourself, "What does the church have to do with this?" Well, let me tell you. It was soon after our first conference and my wife was about four months pregnant. And during this time I was working as a Drill Instructor and working construction with another preacher Dave Kuhns (The associate pastor in San Diego at the time who actually left because he'd had enough of Figueroa's garbage) trying to make extra money because I had none (sound familiar?). Not to mentioned that I had to make more money because I was told by a certain pastor "Figueroa" to buy a second car even though he knew we had no money. Anyways, my wife ended up losing our child, and I had to go see her in the hospital because she was hemorrhaging. Therefore, we didn't make it to that Q & A on time and Figueroa got really crazy with the scriptures and started telling me all kinds of junk about myself and what I need to be doing. I remember I got into an argument with him and told him, "Sir my wife just lost a baby and was bleeding out," and yet he never said a word; this inhumane man just didn't care. Here my wife is; on the verge of dying, and instead of the "Pastor" being loving and understanding, he's more concerned about a stupid Q&A. OK, here's a good church Q&A question; why is this man still a pastor?

Did this man actually care what my wife and I just went through? NO! The fact that we were even trying to come that night should have spoken volumes to a man with a heart for the people. It's also interesting to note how that many of the women members have experienced miscarriages; that I now attribute to the extremely high level of stress that they are constantly under. Always pressure from the pastor to do right, attend church, soul win, money situations, husbands not there to defend them, and the list goes on. From that point on we began to clash because his pushy tactics and horrible advice caused a lot of distress in my wife and me.

Another thing that happened was that I would only go to a preacher by the name of Emmett Edwards (the other associate pastor Denis kicked out) for advice and guidance because he and his wife where praying people who were always there for my wife and I. And boy let me tell you, that really made Figueroa mad!! He got so jealous because I trusted Edwards more than him. Edwards actually told me

that Figueroa said to him; you be the "Good guy" and continue to gain his trust and we'll use this against him, I'll be the "Bad guy" the one who will get stuff on him."

I see your true colors

Figueroa would constantly harass my wife and daughter by yelling and belittling her because she wouldn't show up to clean their serviceman's home. Now you really want to hear something interesting about that whole cleaning thing? One day Figueroa's pastor (Denis) just showed up out of the blue and started looking around at everything in the home. He went to the Figueroa's room and just walked in to see what it looked like; it was the biggest mess that anyone had ever seen. There were underclothes, towels, pants, skirts, food (in addition to the "Second" refrigerator stocked with "Figueroa food" cause they didn't want the food bank junk that the brothers ate), socks, an unmade bed and junk everywhere; it was downright filthy. So here this pastor is "Demanding" that the sisters come and work like slaves to clean a home that they don't even live in, his bossy wife making them scrub everything down, and after all this, his room looked like "Yuck." Denis made Figueroa come to the room and just stand there looking stupid while all the sisters, who were cleaning at the time, were told to come and look at this man's disgusting bed room. He told him you got these members cleaning like crazy and you yourself "Are a pig and hoarder," then he plowed him up in front of everyone. Anyhow, He didn't care that my wife had to take care of our daughter who was 2 years old at the time; and after that day we realized that there was clearly other things that he didn't care about, such as being clean, organized and truthful.

Another thing that really bothered my wife and I was that we grew up in a area about 2 hours away from the church there in San Diego. And every time that we tried to go home to visit family, Figueroa would twist the scriptures to say that God didn't want us to have any type of relationship with our families because they were sinners. So from then on we who where new Christians just did what the pastor told us, not once questioning that his actions where wrong because why on earth would a man of God tell us anything to hurt us? But little did I know! So I eventually was medically separated from the Marine Corps and received a lot of benefits from the Marines and VA. And all of a sudden, I became Figueroa's best friend. He was all smiles, acting really nice (like the person he should have been), we actually went out to dinner, and guess who paid for it? Not him! Go Figureoa that one out. So what happened to all the rebukes, in your face conversations, rudeness, and hatefulness? All that went out the window cause he was trying to get all he could from me. I remember he specifically told me that once I got my VA severance pay, to pray and see what God wanted me to give to the church. Later on I would come to realize that HOPCC faithfully invoked their "Pray to pay" policy.

Now mind you, I had already paid my \$3400.00 in tithe on the pay I had received and on top of that I also gave an additional \$600.00 for an offering; but yet he still wanted more; all for God's work of course. What I believe is that he knew we were leaving really soon and he wouldn't get to see any more of that "Disabled vet check" so therefore he had to get all that he could in one last shot.

The move

During the October 2011 conference, Denis pulled me aside and told me to move over to Hinesville Ga. because he wanted to train me specifically to be a preacher. But originally, Figueroa said that we would attend the church in Fayetteville after moving from San Diego. Meanwhile, my wife and I left to Hinesville as the "Man of God" told us. Ironically, a year later in a fellowship meeting at Fayetteville, Denis rebuked Schmidtke for being crazy and out there, and said; therefore he couldn't send George to his church because all he would do is run him off, "And you're going to lose his soul."

When we were in San Diego we were told to just give away all our furniture to certain brothers and sisters and just get in our car and drive (faith or stupidity, you be the judge). And as the obedient slaves that we were, we did just that. We told Figueroa that we were going to say goodbye to our parents before we left and boy did this make him angry, but we did it anyways.

Once we got to Georgia, we were automatically put into the house that we lived in for 2 years and up until we left. And Denis just said that it was a house that a brother was going to rent me and being "Obedient," I asked no questions to the preacher. When we got there we had a Chrysler 300 (the same type of car that Denis previously had but gave to the Bradeen's) and it was paid off and under my name. But Denis told me that the car was too flashy and that I should sell it and buy a different car from a brother by the name of Joe Breen. After the purchase, it had come up in conversation that my car was being paid for by virtue of a "Payment protection plan" which continually made the actual payment for me, and would do so until paid off. So Denis, being the great advisor that he was(n't) said; that he wasn't aware of this information (but I thought that God told him everything), and get this, that "I should have kept the car under these conditions." Right! But by then it was too late, and once again, I did exactly as the man of God told me. Because again, I told myself why would the preacher tell me to do something that was bad to me? Wow! How ignorant I was. Anyways, so I did just that.

Well during my time in Hinesville many things happened. I remember when Denis threw out Rev Edwards in September 2012, and knowing how close my wife

and I were to him and his family, well Denis found out that I was hurt because they threw him out so Denis began to scream at me and told me to block Edward's number and that he would throw me out also if I ever talked to him. This really hurt me because I considered Rev Edwards my soul winner. Denis began to bad mouth the only real preacher I had known because we all know that Figueroa was not a pastor he was just a dirty no good smooth talking hustler. Well soon after that, it seemed like my wife and I started to notice more and more things that were going on in the church.

Bible College

Some time had passed, and all the talk about an accredited bible school had finally come to fruition. The school had become accredited and all the veterans were told to start using our GI BILL for this purpose. This truly became a chaotic situation for my wife and me. We were already struggling with the \$1250 payment on the house we were living in, only to find out that it was a church property or should I say Denis property. And the tuition for the school was \$1200 and we were demanded to pay it up front. And I remember I had asked if we could make payments throughout the semester and I got rebuked for being tight with my money.

Help yourself

All I ever wanted to do was to serve the Lord and be a preacher, not deal with all this nonsense. Nonetheless, I always made myself available to help anyway I could. I would cut the grass at the church, wash Rev Robertson's van, clean his roof etc. There was so much that I did and all just because I wanted to serve God, but I was severely taken advantage of. I remember every time I would come to Robertson for help in regards to my daughter and all he ever said was "Pray." It's like he never showed any care or compassion whatsoever to my ever growing needs. Well eventually with the school and rent and all the offering we were given, we began to get in debt. I told Robertson that I couldn't afford my child support payment and I told him that I need to pay the child support and make payments to the bible college, and he told me don't pay your child support just pay the bible school and God will work it out. And I did exactly what the preacher told me thinking he was looking out for my best interest.

This definitely turned out to be horrible advice because not only was I depriving my very own child sustenance; this not paying child support incident went on my credit. People; don't listen to these men when they tell you such things, because

you will be the one who regrets it in the end. Anyways, you may as well pay child support for your own child because if you give it to the church instead, you're still supporting the pastor's children.

I also had accumulated debt when I dropped from the previous college to attend the bible seminary, and when I told the preachers that I owed the school money all they said was, you guessed it, "Pray and pay," God will work it out. Not saying He wasn't capable, but I was making God a really big list of things that needed to be "Worked out." What advice huh? Well as things went on, we were constantly being invited to Denis' house for so called fellowship. All he ever did was brag about all his money and how he had this and that and just rebuked everyone and their mommas there at his house. Here I am barely surviving and Denis was living like a Pharaoh. And I questioned myself saying is this where all my money is going; to sustain this man's lavish lifestyle? Sure enough it was true.

The last days

Well soon after all this they began to constantly say over the pulpit about the internet and it seemed like it was a constant topic. Well in July 2013 a brother by the name of Angel Miranda stood up in the middle of the service after Denis was calling him a pill popper and homosexual over the pulpit and confronted Denis about how he was using the church member's money to purchase properties and make himself rich. As we all know, Denis got mad and had us escort him out, I was ushering that night and I was one of the ones who obediently but regretfully grabbed brother angel. I did this thinking I was doing the will of God, what's worse; I even put the brother in a headlock.

That night I told Denis and Robertson that I felt guilty for what I did and they told me to stop being a pansy and act like a Marine not a little girl. A funny thing that is; because if I was "Being proud" then I would be told to "Stop being a proud marine." Go figure! Well, more things came as the months went by until I finally got fed up with it all. Then finally in January of 2014 that's when it all happened. After hearing so much about the internet I had to see for myself what they were talking about and I came across the website that Rev Bowers had put up I was in total shock. It all made sense to me now; all this time they were only using me as a cash cow. I was always soul winning and bring people to church, giving money and tithes, and saying "Yes sir" to anything thing that the preachers told me to do. I was just getting used by them, and with no questions asked. So I began to ask some of the questions that Rev Bowers posted on his site and sure enough they began to get mad.

On January 24 2014 I remember speaking with Robertson and I told him that I was going to move to a smaller house that was affordable, and was dropping out of the bible college because I could no longer afford the tuition, which by the way was raised from \$1200 to \$2400 per semester. I had also mentioned to him that I thought it was wrong that I was paying for these classes yet received no grades or anything. And I told him that my daughter was being abused and I was mad because I had come to them numerous times for help and guidance and they gave none.

After that conversation with Robertson, I went home and later that night I got a phone call from Denis who was going ballistic over the phone. He told me I was being tight with my money and threatening my life. Well I confronted him about my daughter and he never once addressed the situation, in fact all he cared about was the fact that I had went on the website that exposed them and that I was being tight with my money. Well, I left the church that day and God has taken me far away from them.

Forsake but not forgotten

Many of my so called brothers forsook me and stopped talking to me. The preachers had anyone that was close to me change their number and even had some of them move out of state, but God was with me all the way. In fact, I thank God for Miguel and Carmen Aponte, Jessica and Anthony Paralta, Logan, Adolpho, Anthony and Priscilla Harris, Curtis and Amanda, Sally, and all those who were there for my wife and me during that terrible hard ship. I thank God for them cause they really stood by our side. The car I had been paying for was taken away because it wasn't under my name but the sad thing is that I was made by Denis to sell my car and purchase the one off Breen and they came and took it. And now that I think about that whole car situation, more than likely someone else before me was probably supposed to get the car, but it didn't work out. I also had to leave the house because it was Denis' Property; a house that we left cleaner than when we first rented it out from them slum lords. I left all I had in California only to come to a place where my wife and I were controlled and manipulated by Ron Denis and his cult. Bradeen, Robertson, Nostrant, Bercini and all these false brethren just stood and watched as he did his evil to my wife and I.

It is finished/The move

After this whole ordeal, my wife and I packed up and moved back to California. Oh yea, but before we left, Robertson had the nerve to call me and say that I could

just go the San Diego church and that way I could be with my daughter. WHAT! Are you serious? But yet this is the same man who wouldn't even come and get the key to the house; sending two brothers over to do their dirty work. No thanks! Many people heard that phone call between Denis and I on the night of the 24th and its recorded as evidence of how evil and psycho this man really is. And I thank God that He pulled me out of that cult which has hurt my wife and I for the last 4 years of our lives. I thank God for the website that Rev Bowers put up that allowed us to see the reality of what goes on in HOPCC and now we are free. I really never expected so called preachers to be a part of such evil like this, especially Robertson whom I loved dearly and looked up to him, but in the end he chose to please his master Denis aka Satan rather than to do what was right before the Lord. But God knows what He does and everything happens for a reason and purpose.

At first I didn't understand all of this behind the scenes stuff, but now I know. And I want all who read this to realize that there is hope outside that cult HOPCC. They are not of God and will one day be judged for what they are doing. God can deliver you if you ask Him and allow Him too. I spent 4 years in this cult and I know how hard it can be to leave but God will give you the strength as He gave it to my wife and I.

Conclusion

I shared this story so people can see what HOPCC is really about, and as a warning to the parents and family members of those that are in HOPCC. Stay away from that cult it's very controlling, abusive, and manipulates you 100%!! So please don't allow them to use you or your family, they prey on the young weak active duty military, and the Vets. Why do you think that all their churches are located near a military installation? Brothers and sisters that are still trapped in HOPCC get out before it is too late and be free because God didn't save you to be in bondage; "He freed you to be free." I still serve God and I attend a church so don't get to thinking that God will leave you if you leave that cult; in actuality, it's the other way around because God will become more real to you once you depart. God has blessed me so much since I left that place.

So much happened to my wife and I while we were there in the cult known as HOPCC, never did I feel love when I was there, all we ever felt was fear and control. We were never able to make our own decisions there in that cult and everything we did or wanted to do had to be run by the pastor who then ran it by Denis, who was running from God. The advice that was given to my wife and I turned out to be complete and total rubbish throughout the years. In fact, if it wasn't for "Bad advice" we wouldn't have received any. After I gave my all,

literally, all it got me was in debt, and the sad part about it is that I make plenty enough money to sustain my family, pay child support, put food on the table, I could have afforded my own house, but in the end, I had NOTHING! to show for. All they cared about was that I continued to pay my tithe, magazine pledge, radio station pledge, school and any other offerings that the church required. What has hurt me the most is the fact that my so called brothers and sisters have not called us at all after being told not to communicate with me; sorry, but that's not of God. In fact many of them were told by the preachers to change their numbers and some of them were even moved out the state and have no contact with us, but that's fine because God saw it all.

It was sad when Robertson heard all the gibberish Denis was saying and he never once stood up for me he just sat there and indulged in the man's sin, but everything that has happened has only strengthened my relationship with God. And although I can never take back the years that I spent in HOPCC, I am now free from that place and won't sit there till I die, die, die. It seems like we lost so much and now have to start over but it was all worth it because I have the peace of God in my soul. And I hope as you all read this, especially those of you that are still there in HOPCC that you leave that place.

I know what it's like to be hurt and belittled by the so called preachers, especially Denis. I sat there year after year hearing that man tell me that Marines were worthless, sat there as he made fun of us veterans and made jokes about the war in Iraq. He would say, "Do you see helicopters in your room, stop being weak, your making this stuff up." But the funny thing is that when it came to my benefits (that he obviously benefited from) I received from the VA for my combat wounds, Denis made sure I paid all to the church. It was a continuous thing for him to approach me himself and ask if I "Received a 100% and my back pay from the VA." My point is, they never cared about my soul, and it shows. Please don't be a sucker any longer to this man; doing his every bidding.

We sat there year after year as this man threw families out of the church and caused divorces between couples. There was so much evil we saw and endured, and the truth is; it was destroying our souls. But God made a way out and my wife and I took that way and now are delivered. When the door opens, do yourself a favor and walk through it, because it just may close on you if you stay in the valley of decision too long. Unfortunately there is no preacher there that truly cares for your soul, trust me on that one. In the end, the very one that I thought would help me, closed that door of opportunity and walked the other way (Robertson). Just to think I helped that man so much and when I needed a pastor to protect me as a sheep of his flock, all he did was pick me up and feed me to the wolf RON DENIS!! But thank God he intervened and pulled me out before I was devoured.

People, when you leave that place and you're on the outside looking in, you will see so much more. Remember the bible speaks of doctrines of devils and false prophets, and guess what, that's exactly what HOPCC and its preachers are. So I ask you all please get out and then and only then will you truly begin to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Brothers and sisters God will bless you and will help you. Be strong and be of good cheer. I hope by reading just a small excerpt of my life there in HOPCC you make a choice to leave, because I don't want you guys to suffer and go through the things we went through (if you haven't already) there in HOPCC. The deeper you get there in HOPCC the more evil it will get, so brothers and sisters leave before it's too late. God bless and I pray you respond to the deliverance call that God is providing for you.

Respectfully, your brother in Christ,
George Retana February 19 2014

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