

Emily's Posts – all of these were deleted

Emily April 24, 2012 Reply

Lizzie,

Your well written post has prompted to tell my story.

First off my family is still in ATI, and intend on staying in it. We are not ready to cast away everything, say it's just a cult, and become vocal ex-ATlars. My family and I still love the ministry and believe that it still has many great aspects. We adore going to the conferences, love the WBs and love the seminars. No ministry is perfect, and so for now we are content on staying, and would appreciate others respecting our decision on.

But still, I feel compelled to tell my story.

My family joined ATI when I was in fifth grade. I have only one older sibling (sister) who had already left our home when we joined. My dad is a very verbally abusive, harsh, unloving, and bitter man, who has been a trial in my life since before I was born. He allows my mom and I to be a part of ATI and IBLP, but is not active himself. Shortly after we joined my mom and I went to the Total Health Conference up at ITC. One day I was walking the hallway alone when Mr. Gothard passed my way. He stopped, asked my name and asked what I wanted to do when I grew up. At the time I wanted to train horses. We said goodbye and that was the only time we spoke until several days later. One night my mom and I got the chance to sit at the same table with him for dinner. We started talking and he said he was struck by my bright countenance and spirit, and asked if I would consider joining the Great Expeditions Team. He said the age limit was 14 and asks how old I was. I was 13. He gave us the info of a HQ girl and said to keep in contact, and in one year when I turned 14 I could join. My mom and I were very excited and said we would consider it. That year I diagnosed with a very serious debilitating and chronic disease called Crohn's disease. I became very sick, and for the next few years all we concentrated on was getting me well.

When I was 15 we were at the ATI conference and Mr. G kept staring at me the whole week and finally asks me for a talk in his office where asked me to come and work at HQ. He didn't remember me until I mentioned that he had made an offer a few years prier. My mom and I discussed it, but decided I was too young, and still not healthy enough to come.

Every year for the next few years at the conference he would keep staring at me than finally ask me if I'd ever consider coming to HQ. The craziest thing is he never recognized or remembered who I was!. Finally this past year(2011) he remembered me. This time he wouldn't take no for an answer. He knew well my struggles with my dad and with illness and determined that HQ was the answer. I'm telling you, when Mr. G wants something he doesn't let go. My mom, Mr. G, and I went round and round the whole week, explaining we didn't have a peace about sending me up there, but he insisted it was the only way I'd ever get well. Finally he proposed that I only go for 3 -4 weeks, just so I could get some counseling on the issues with my dad. We consented. We got there and he immediately started making hints that I would be fine and my mom could go ahead and leave. My mom and I did not feel my staying alone up there since we knew just how persuasive he could be. My mom made it very clear that she intended on staying. (in fact his sister/secretary finally had to convince him by saying, " look, the only way you're going to get Emily, is to have her mom to" Immediately after I came up there Mr. G made it apparent that his only mission was to find a way to convince me to stay. This is where it gets creepy. At the conferences he always paid a great deal of attention to me. He complemented me, and spent a lot of time with me--all this I relished for I'd been so starved for fatherly affection my whole life. He did make a few comments that bothered me a little, but I tried to ignore them. Only now I see how wrong they were. On the last night of the conference I told him how I never felt that my dad loved me. He then said," don't worry because God loves you and I love you"! He then went on to say that "God had put a special love in his heart for me" *jaw-dropping* Back at HQ things got much worse. He started holding my hand, and gazing into my eyes for long periods of time. Once he placed his shoe on top of mine (which really confused me--I thought " Uh, doesn't he notice that he's stepping

on my foot!!) He would caress my arm or squeeze my hands, and wink at my. Meanwhile he called me an angel, amazing, or say, " you amaze me" or " you belong here". He complimented my hair, my smile and my laugh almost every time we'd talk. All of this stuff really creeped me out. I thought," how can he think that this is appropriate?" but I was silenced by the thought that, " This is BILL GOTHARD. He would never have inappropriate intentions, surely he's just being friendly." I never mentioned any of this to my mom, as I felt I was misunderstanding and making a big deal out of the whole thing. I was very careful, though to try to avoid holding hands, the gazes, and always made sure there was someone else in the room with us.

Still, over the next few days he was persistent in convincing me to stay. We confronted him with his original words of this stay being for only "3 - 4 weeks", and finally he admitted that he only said that to get me up there. He said he had no intentions of counseling me without a several year commitment. That was it for us. After only ten days decided to leave. We said maybe, just maybe in a few years we would consider it, but we had a strong feeling that the Holy Spirit was telling us a definite no for right now.

He called our home later in January to ask if I was ready, and again we declined. My mom and I are planning on attending the ATI conference in a month, and have already decided to approach him the first night and tell him that we have decided that HQ is not and will never will be the right place for me. We are praying he takes it as our final answer and does not badger us the whole week!

So that's been my experience. I want to thank you, Lizzie, so much for having the courage to come through and write this. I had not seen the reason or had the courage to tell my mom about the situation until today.

Thank you,

Emily

Emily April 25, 2012 Reply

Elizabeth,

Thank you for the encouragement. One thing that my family has always been very careful about is making sure all of our convictions and beliefs are based on THE HOLY BIBLE--not just based on "what so and so said". My mom actually majored in Bible, so she's pretty careful with using materials that are Biblically correct. I am also very privileged to have ATI parents that aren't extreme. They have never said to only wear skirts, never date, and never listen to rock music because we say so, or even worse, because "that's what ATI families do". Again we base our convictions on the Bible and what we feel the Holy Spirit is guiding us to do. I wear skirts because I want to. I like the way they feel, I like them being more feminine, and yes I do feel that they are more modest. But I still wear pants to work out or to garden. I don't see anything wrong with that. I also don't see anything wrong with makeup, or listening to Blue Grass music. These are personal decisions that I have been able to make according to what I feel God is telling me. Again I am so grateful for parents who have encouraged this. Yes, they (or particularly my mom) have thoroughly discussed these things, and have taught me why they believe certain standards are right, but still it's never been, "this is what ATI says." I understand that there have been many ATI students who felt compelled to turn everything away because they couldn't stand being forced into it.

Emily April 25, 2012 Reply

Thank you all for you encouraging replies.

Ryan,

Why stay? We feel that ATI still has a lot to offer. Particularly the OLD ATI materials. We don't see any problems with the Basic, Advanced, and Anger Resolution seminars. We feel that God was really working at the time those were produced, and that they have a lot of wisdom in them. Same for the WB. At the conference we thoroughly enjoy hearing messages from the Speeds, Tom Harmon, Chris Hogan, and others. From what we have seen there have not been any misuses of scripture in their messages. What we are saddened with are some of the "new ideas" the Mr. G has instilled.

For instance, during a meeting with my mom, Mr. G, and I at HQ he said that basically I needed to forget and abandon my family. My father had abused his role and had therefore lost all "rights" and authority to me. He went on to say that The Family was Old Testament, and that The Church is New Testament. I should no longer have a part in my "real" family, but instead leave and let HQ become my new family. My mom WAS NOT happy about that at all. Later she said to me, "Family is OT? Are you kidding me!"

Another thing that we don't agree on is giving all your expectations to God. This is one area that we do see that Mr. G is taking scripture out of context. Yes, we are to give our expectations to God, but that means trusting in the Lord for everything. I do not see how this verse applies to person-to-person relationships, as Mr. G had me to believe. He said that I was stressed out over my dad because I had expectations of him. He said that if I gave those expectations to God that I would have no reason to ever be offended, hurt, or stressed by my dad. I asked him about all the scars on my heart that were already there from my dad. He said that I would simple have to tell God that I choose to live with them. I was desperate for emotional relief, so I did as instructed and wrote as many expectations of my dad as I could think of on a piece of paper. The next night I gave it to him, he read them, and then asks if I'd like to kneel and repeat after him in a prayer to give them to God and except the hurts. I wanted to. I did. And I meant it. With my whole heart. Or at least I tried to. I wish I could say that I immediately "felt free" as you hear so often, but I didn't. Of course I told him I felt fine, but really my spirit was in despair. "Is my heart really so wicked that I cannot do such a simple thing?" I thought. It wasn't until a few months later I realized why I couldn't, and finally released the burden I'd been carrying for so long. The reason I couldn't give my expectations to God was because they were GOD GIVEN. My list was primarily composed of natural God given responsibilities and expectations that are essential to all relationships. The biggest was love. I actually tried to give up the expectation that my dad should love me. The others were just as fundamental. My mom said that in order to do so I would have to become completely emotionally dead, and have no concepts whatsoever of natural relationships. Doings so would also free my dad of his own God given responsibilities. And what if I carried it on to marriage and to my future husband. To be so lifeless as to say I will not expect ANYTHING of my husband. He can abuse me, cheat on me, do anything he wants, and I'm to take no offence because I have no expectations. Talk about crazy! Yet this was what I believed was to be "expected" of me from God! I have also learned since then that just simply living with past

hurts is dangerous. They live in your heart and in your brain and simply fester like an open wound. As a direct answer to pray we were given an exceptional book by Dr. Caroline Leaf called "Who Switched Off My Brain?" Based on scripture she gives a very doable exercise that helps rid us of those festering sores. This book would probably be very beneficially to many on this site.

Also, Mr. G used to have a high emphasis on parental authority. The fact that he doesn't see this as high of a priority is pretty self explanatory. We definitely don't believe girls should be going to work for this ministry only at the ripe old age of 13! Also, I have heard many instances of Mr. G having the students keep secrets from their parents.

All this aside we feel pretty safe just keeping with the old materials for now, and not becoming actively involved with certain things in the ministry.

Emily April 25, 2012 Reply

Matthew, it's interesting that you bring college up. That was actually one of the main reason we were leery of my staying at HQ. I've been a pianist for 12 years and a harpist for 7, and was just starting to pursue a music degree. Mr. G greatly discouraged this. He said that I don't need that. What I need is to get away from my home and family(he said this right in front of my mom). But it is my dream and I knew very well that leaving would had killed that dream forever. I also loved the church my family started attending a few years ago, and of course I had regular harp and piano lessons, plus many other activities in my life. In short, I had a life back at home I just wasn't willing to leave. (of course they want you to feel guilty about that, since you are not willing to serve God when and where He has called you) As for my degree, at first we were leaning toward the distant learning program at Verity, but after spending 4 weeks there (directly prior to leaving for HQ) for a high school music course, we have changed our minds. Due to the Crohn's I would really feel most comfortable doing home studies, so I'm not really interested in going out of state to another Christian college. Not to mention I quite the homebody. :) Right now I'm just working on getting CLEP credits on my own, and we are looking into College Plus for later. There's also the possibility of local classes, so we'll just have to see.

Emily April 25, 2012 Reply

Interesting idea, only there's one problem. I'm a brunette. LOL No really, I have to wonder as well. So many other girls could have been just as "beneficial" as I to the ministry. He tried to

tell me that he didn't care if I worked. He said he would not require any work out of me. I could just live there doing nothing. He just wanted me to get out of the stress so I could get well. The problem we realized was that if this was true, he wouldn't have insisted that I stay in order to counsel my dad and I. If his ONLY motivation was my welfare, than he would have helped me even from home. So why didn't he just accept "no" from the beginning like all the other girls he asks every year?

Here is what Liz, the Mom, Posted:

Liz April 25, 2012 Reply

Emily's mom here--yes, the one who told BG no repeatedly. Emily has had me reading all the posts, and I do have some thoughts. First, a brief background for perspective. My husband and I were teachers in what was, at the time (70's & 80's), one of the largest Christian schools in the Midwest. When our first child came, I became a homemaker, and my husband was repositioned (fired) when a new pastor came, and he took a secular job. Our girls attended the school through the 4th (Emily) and 10th grades (2003). The school had the strictest standards of any in the entire country (Bob Jones leadership), and I felt like my oldest daughter's view of Christianity was defined by the school handbook, not the Bible. So I decided in the middle of their school year that the following year I would get them home so they would have time to build a relationship with God and for us to become closer as a family. What is interesting to note is how practically everyone involved in that Christian school felt the same way about it as many ex-ATlars feel about their ATI experience. Legalism to the hilt.

There were four stellar, truly spiritual families in our church who had been with ATI since the get-go, and I liked what I saw in their families and got high recommendations for ATI from them. My husband said it would be fine as long as he didn't have to be involved. I was looking at it as a Bible/character curriculum adjunct to our other studies. We got going after all the conferences were over for the year, so I was kind of doing it my own way--using the WBs with other curriculum. We had been seminar attendees for 3 decades with only the highest opinion of all things IBLP.

Unfortunately, things were not to go as smoothly for our family. There was some significant financial scandal in our large church, including embezzlement. People were leaving the church and school in hoards. My husband decided to take our family elsewhere, and he chose the wildest of wild rock-n-roll churches in the entire metro area during that first year of homeschooling. No amount of begging on my part made any difference. Our family was destroyed. My husband went through a midlife crisis, including significant immorality (not just porn). I felt like I was married to a rebellious teenager. My oldest started dating a youth group guy, attended his prom and lost her virginity that night. She dropped out of homeschooling and left home at age 17, got pregnant at 19 and is living with a man now at age 25. I share this because it is the pattern I have seen repeatedly from people who "drank the Kool-Aid" of legalism and finally had enough. The pendulum swings from one extreme to the other. My husband's comment to my oldest daughter was, "You'll like this church. They don't teach you any of that junk we heard for years at the other church."

All I wanted was a balanced Christian life for my family, which was what I saw in the four ATI families I did know, and was my understanding of what we learned in the seminar ministry of IBLP. As Emily said, I have always searched the Word and asked God to teach me truth, and not relied solely on a person to indoctrinate me. That is also why I had the courage to stand up to BG's urgings. Emily and I fervently prayed and sought the Lord's direction daily for over a week while there. I never once felt His directing me to leave her there. I also think God put a couple of people in our path at Verity who warned us to proceed with caution.

Well, all of the turmoil of that first year of homeschooling (me learning the ropes and trying to figure it all out, too), and all of the family trauma—church change, husband and daughter going wild—

was stressful enough for Emily that she became ill, and we do believe the stress did cause her to develop Crohn's. Stress can cause bacterial imbalance, alter the immune system and make our bodies vulnerable ultimately to digestive disease—particularly for those of a “delicate constitution”, as Emily is. That is what led us to the Total Health Conference at ITC in 2006 where BG first “eyed” Emily. I could be wrong, but I believe he actually requested that we be seated with him at dinner that evening. We were directly across from him. I was very leery of the idea of her going to Mexico with them in a year—Crohn's Disease and Mexico don't mix.

Every year thereafter at the conferences, he would approach Emily, but this past summer, 2011, he was the most persistent. One night he prayed to discern God's will and actually flipped a quarter three times (like OT priests drawing lots). He got two tails and one heads, which he interpreted to mean, “no for now, but come later”. Then as we talked, he suggested Emily just come up for a couple of weeks to get some counseling to learn how to deal with the stress. He asked permission to call my husband about it, and told my husband he would like to “help Emily learn to be more respectful of him” and would like her to come to HQ for a month or so. Emily and I both were alarmed and felt like we had been baited and switched. His intent was for Emily to ride back to HQ that night with the staff, but Emily wanted to stay for another music training session near Verity, so I said I would bring her to Chicago myself in a week. We determined to stay for the shortest time possible, closer to the two weeks he initially offered.

As the week unfolded, it became clear that he had every intention of my leaving Emily there for an extended period of time. I actually called my husband and had him call BG and tell him we were to come home right away as he never understood this to be a long-term arrangement. It was very hard for both of us, because BG had offered to disciple my husband and help him restore our family, but the condition was that we leave Emily there. I refused to leave Emily, primarily because of her health issues, but Emily also wanted to go home to her life there, and neither of us had peace from God about her staying. So, feeling rather defeated, we came back home wondering what to do next. I told Emily that God had been around eternally, and he was helping people in their hour of need for millennia, even before BG was around and that He could help whether or not it involved BG's assistance. We had asked Him for help, and He was not limited in His capacity to do so.

He did answer our prayers. After arriving home around the end of August, I was going through my emails and found one from another ATI mom who shared about Ken Nair's ministry. I went to the Nairs' website and read their testimony. Ken had been on staff in Oak Brook HQ in the late 70's. You should read their testimony at www.lifepartnersministries.com because his light bulb moment from God resulted from BG telling his wife that she was making Ken a prisoner of her expectations. She stood BG down and won. I ordered his book and began reading it. EVERYONE should read Ken's book, *Understanding the Mind of a Woman*. Our church did his weekend video seminar this past February, and it is transforming marriages in our church. Total opposite of just about everything taught nowadays concerning husband/wife relationships, leadership and submission. Highly recommended. We are going to do a further study of the materials as a church. If anything can reach my husband, it will be this. That was half of the answer to prayer—the half concerning how my husband treats us.

The second half of our prayer, how to help Emily deal with emotional stress, came when we were given the book she mentioned, *Who Switched Off My Brain?*, by Dr. Caroline Leaf. Another must read for anyone tainted by ATI mental/emotional overload. You will learn how to release forever the scarred thinking patterns developed in abusive situations and renew your minds Biblically. So God did answer our prayers for direction even w/o BG's input. When he called us in January to see if Emily would come up to work in the newly revised health ministry, I told him about both Ken's and Caroline's books, and I told him we felt like it was God's answer to our cry for help.

In summary, I wanted to share that these kinds of dysfunctional patterns can develop in any ministry that gets out of balance. One thing stressed at the conference last year was that parents have too long taught their children to fear them, when they should teach them to fear God. Then when the parents are gone, they will still fear God. That was what I wanted when I pulled my kids from Christian school and joined ATI. Secondly, there are some ATI parents out there, like myself, who have not drunk the legalism Kool-Aid. My husband relied too heavily on the church and

Christian school standards to do the job he should have been doing himself, and when it fell apart, he fell apart. Thirdly, I didn't know much about the courtly behavior of BG with the girls until Emily shared it with me yesterday. I had just seen grandfatherly admiration and approval, but apparently most of this took place out of my presence. I'm not sure I can judge the man's motives in this area, however, I was disappointed by the persistence in trying to get my daughter to relocate there, especially telling her that the family was OT and the church was NT—relying on the scripture where Jesus says, who is my mother, my brother—these (the believers) are my mother and brother. I felt like he was taking my daughter's heart, when long ago I heard him say that his goal was to turn the hearts of fathers to their children.