

BIG SANDY REPORT

By *Natanael Garcia*

Hello, my name is Natanael Garcia and I am the son of Mauro and Liz Garcia. My dad is a Pastor in Toluca, it's a town 40 miles south/west from Mexico City. We went through our first Basic Seminar 20 years ago, and the teachings and guidelines which the church is based on are the Commands of Christ and Principles of Life. We have been very immersed in the ministry God has given to Mr. Gothard.

In 2008 I met him personally on a trip he made to Guadalajara city. He invited me to come work at HQ but for various reasons I was not able to make it to Headquarters until the fall of 2013, I worked there for a few months then went back home. I kept in touch with Mr. Gothard through periodical phone calls and emails.

On March of 2014 the news spread of him leaving the Institute after almost 50 years of ministry. The news traveled fast all the way down to Mexico (where I live). As soon as I heard the news I called him to find out what had happened. What I found was a man with calmed spirit, with a trust for God plans, and love for people (even for those who were doing him wrong!). I kept on calling him once or twice a month just to check how he was doing and praying with him. In one of those calls he said something amazing after I questioned if all this stuff going on wasn't making him feel down, frustrated or angry? He said, "Nate, myself and the Institute are going through fire for purification, which means, what has to be gone will be gone and only the pure will stay for God!" That amazed me so much and asked if there was anything I could do to help him? (I was thinking, maybe answering some emails or typing stuff all the way from my house) and he said, "Can you be my new personal assistant?" I was in shock, I told him I needed to pray and talk to my parents about it. I was not expecting that at all. When I was praying I said to the Lord, "God, if you want me to go to Chicago make my parents respond with the same exact words when I tell them about Mr. Gothard's petition."

Later that day I talked to my parents and told them everything Mr. Gothard had requested, (this information was completely new for them, as well). They looked at each other and say, "yeah I think 2 months will be a good amount of time." These words came out of their mouths at the exact same moment, they looked at each other once more and laughed. I was amazed because it was an impossible task that I asked and God had made it happen so easily!

Long story short, those "2 months" have become 4 years. Since my family lives in Mexico and I still want to keep myself under my parents' authority I travel back and forth from Chicago to Mexico City. Many times, I would just come home for a couple of weeks or less than that just to fly back to Chicago right after.

I have been very close to Mr. Gothard over these 4 years, spiritually as well as in a labor way. Close, meaning, hearing stories that no one has ever heard, to having ALL his passwords and access to all documents and emails, as well as hearing first hand phone calls and seen with my own eyes letters, mail and donations as a direct response of his petitions to God.

Mr. Gothard has been trying to get back as president of the ministry the Lord gave to him 50 years ago after watching that his temporal resignation has not been considered. He wants to talk to the seminar alumni and ATI families, but his personal computer was taken away from him by orders of the

President of the Institute, and carried out by a former assistant of Mr. Gothard's. After he left IBLP He just had a few contacts on his personal contacts book. All his personal belongings like letters of gratitude from men and women (even some of the plaintiffs falsely accusing him) that were blessed by God through Mr. Gothard's life were destroyed and many other things got moved out and he doesn't know to this day where they are at. Even, one building got sold by the board with everything inside of it, many of those things were also Mr. Gothard's belongings. He's been pushed away by most of the board members and I can recall hearing with my ears one of them saying to him, "Bill take a time off, don't do anything, don't even write, just take a time off and leave." Just to prove this, Mr. Gothard has written 30 books in these past 4 years and not even one of those books was printed in the Institutes print shop, we have had to send the books to be printed in Indiana. Mr. Gothard like to give away books to the people he's counseling. I remember one day that he had ran out of books to give away, so he called the Institute to order a few books. I remember the Lady at call center charge full price, then he said "Hey, don't I get a discount? I wrote that book!" He was kind of laughing and amazed, so he requested to talk to the Publications Director, he also said "sorry sir, that was Tim's orders!" (Many more stuff like this where the Board and the staff have been turning their back toward Mr. Gothard has happened, but I will use another moment to write about those many occasions.)

Mr. Gothard strongly felt the urge to talk to the people he has dedicated his life to serve and teach and let them know everything that has been going on. So, a couple of years ago Mr. Gothard and I talked and decided to personally show up to an ATI conference, so he called Dr Paine and told him he would be going to the Sacramento conference, then they replied he must not do it or they would use the necessary force to get him out of there! This was ridiculous!!! There was no real reason he should not be welcomed at an IBLP Conference! After everything Mr. Gothard had personally done for all those members we did not think they could be serious. So, Mr. Gothard booked a flight to Sacramento and at that time I was supposed to go back home to have some rest and I asked him if he wanted me to go with him? He said he would be fine by himself, that I should go get some rest.

When I arrived in Mexico I called him every day just to find out that a couple board members accompanied by a department director and a former Mr. Gothard's assistant went to his room to tell him that he should fly immediately back to Chicago or they would call the police! Mr. Gothard also had an invitation by the Pastor of the Church where the conference was being held. Therefore, there was no real reason why they should call the police on him! In order not to make a big deal Mr. Gothard decided not to show up at the conference, and a few days later he flew back to Chicago without being able to talk to all the alumni. But fortunately, he did get to speak to about 50 or 60 who gathered at a conference room at the hotel. They said they would rather hear Mr. Gothard speak than watch the videos.

A couple of years later, this past April, Mr. Gothard and I finally talked again to going to the Big Sandy conference without telling anyone. I took a plane and met with him in Chicago, we made all the preparations and on April 22th we departed and drove all the way down to Big Sandy, TX. It was a 15-hour drive. After spending the night on Memphis, we arrived the next day in Big Sandy around 3:00 p.m. When my parents and a dear couple from our church in Mexico heard we were going to go to Big Sandy, they decided to not let us go by ourselves and drove all the way from Toluca, Mex. which is around 16 hours away from Big Sandy. When we arrived, they were waiting for us there at the hotel. What a big confidence and comfort that was! We got ready to go to the conference at 6:00 pm.

We were on our way to Alert Academy and after all these years Mr. Gothard was finally going to be able to talk to the people he loves. As soon as we walked into the building we headed to the register table, 6 of us signed up, but they only charged for 5. When people started to notice Mr. Gothard they all got so excited and started to crowd around him. All of them said how much they have missed him and how happy they were because he was coming to the conference, one of them said "I'm glad you are speaking!" he responded "oh, I am sorry, but no, they did not even invite me to come." Many couples as

well as single mothers came with their sons and daughters to greet him and have a little chat with him. Without a shadow of doubt, I can say that 100% of the people came thanking him for his life and ministry (because I was there and heard it all).

10 minutes after we arrived, Tim Levendusky, Stephen Paine, and Gil Bates showed up and told him they needed to talk immediately in a private room. I let them know there was no way I wasn't going with him, they just started walking so I followed them to the small room.

We all walked in, the 3 board members, Mr. Gothard and me. The ambient was feeling very tense. Tim Levendusky was the first to speak and said "Bill what are you doing here? We have talked this before in Sacramento, and you cannot stay! We are going to get some plane tickets for you to get immediately back to Chicago" Mr. Gothard replied, "I can't, I came here driving because I brought a book to give away to people" One of them interrupted and said "you cannot stay here, you have to leave" then Mr. Gothard said, "There is also another important stuff related to the institute that I need to talk to you about, many people are not happy on how some decisions are being made and are taking matters into their hands if you don't bring me back as president, and those things will not be beneficial for you gentlemen." (one document that Mr. G. brought was a letter from the former chairman of the board Ralph Hudgens, telling the board that the actions that were doing were shameful and not suitable for children of God, and were also illegal)

At that moment I was really in shock of what I was witnessing. One of them replied, "well, there's a conference about to begin, so we can't talk right now, and if it is so important, we will talk after the meeting but you cannot stay" – "I'm sorry, but I'm not going anywhere, I came here to see the people I have dedicated my life and ministry for!" Mr. Gothard replied. Then, Tim Levendusky asked "so, you are not leaving?!" – "No, I'm staying for them!" was Mr. Gothard's answer. Tim, Levendusky then said "Ok, we are sorry to hear this Mr. Gothard, but you give us no other choice, we are calling the police!" – "Do, what you have to do" Mr. Gothard replied, (there were a few more words and interaction that were said during the whole meeting in that small room by other board members, Mr. G and myself, that are not so relevant).

Then, we understood the meeting was over and that they were calling the cops, so Mr. Gothard was calmly walking out of the room when they said, "Mr. Gothard you can't leave this room!" and they started to shut the door. Obviously, Mr. Gothard and I did not want to stay in that room! And when the door was about to close I grabbed Mr. Gothard's arm and told him, "Sir, they cannot keep us here, keep waling" – "Bill you can't go out" one of them said. I kept on telling him "they can't keep us here, keep, walking, keep walking" and got him out of the room, then the board members walked out right behind us and Gil Bates told me, "son, don't do something you will regret later!" – "no, what you are doing right now is something you will regret" I replied.

My parents and the other couple had noticed that we headed to the room to talk to the Board members and they started to pray. at this point they had no idea what had happened there, but as soon as we got out my dad approached us. I had adrenaline rushing all over my body and told my dad that they were calling the cops on him. I was walking on Mr. G's left side still holding his arm and my dad started to walk by his right side and told Mr. G, "let's Go Sir to sit down, if they want to bring the police they will have to come through us and through all this people, then all the Alumni will know where the Board really stands." So, my dad led him into the very middle of the auditorium and sat down on one of the middle lines. We sat Mr. G. right in-between my dad and me, I don't know if others attending the conference knew the spiritual battle that was taking place.

The conference was starting at this point. Then we watched as the board members walked on stage to greet the people and introduce the conferences. The countenance that they showed in the room was a completely different one than they had on stage. They mentioned that the theme of the conference was love, yet they were calling the police on an 84-year-old, founder of the ministry and the same man that had helped them personally with their marriages and families! Someone that they once called as a spiritual father!

We kept on looking back to the check the entrance to see if the cops were coming. The first conference finally came to an end, by this time the word that that Bill Gothard was in the building had spread through the people attending. One family after another came to greet Mr. G. and were crowding around him that my parents, the other couple and myself had to move some chairs to make room for the people to get closer to him. They all were so happy to see Mr. G. At this point Mr. G was asking if they would like him to stay for the rest of the conferences? They would reply “why wouldn’t you stay? We would love to see you every day and even to hear you speak, please stay!”. The break in between conferences seemed like a few seconds since we were busy talking to people. All this time we had “alert guys” following us and checking closely what we were doing. It was very surreal. My parents and I could hardly believe this was really happening!

After the second conference was over, even more people came, I would say that around 300 people came to greet him that day, they took pictures and stuff. Almost an hour after the last conference which was the second Mr. G was still greeting and talking to people, many of them had already left. I was also talking to people and answering questions to the people who were waiting their turn to talk to Mr. G. they were so thrilled, and happy to see him there that just wanted to know more what he had been up to for these past 4 years. My parents also were there helping and greeting people. Most people do not know how the Board has mistreated Mr. Gothard and how they have kept him from the alumni and from the ministry.

Then, when I was talking to a family, I see my mom run while saying “NO, NO, Hey, wait!”, I immediately looked around to see what was going on. And it was Gil Bates sneaking Mr. G. away from the crowd. I immediately took off and put myself in between Gil bates and Mr. G, and asked him “Where are you taking him?” My mom was already holding Mr. G’s arm and bringing him back and Gil Bates said, (like if nothing was happening or had already threaten Mr. G to call the police) “I told him that if he wants to talk we will wait for him in the Administration building, we will turn on the lights for you all” I said, “No, you are no taking him anywhere!” then he said “hey man, we don’t want to hurt him, we love Mr. Gothard” immediately my mom responded “don’t JUST say it, DO IT!” so then Gil said “Well, if you Mr. Gothard want to talk we will be waiting in the other building, you all can come.”

After hearing all this, Mr. G was so happy that he finally was going to talk to the Board of directors since they would not talk to him for almost 4 years! He, with excitement said, “yes Nate, FINALLY!” My mom told him, “don’t you see Sir? This is a set up! They will not talk to you, they are just afraid of all the alumni and ATI families to know the truth! They just want to get you away from the people!” But Mr. G was so excited that he responded, “yes that could be a possibility, but I still want to give them the benefit of the doubt.”

So, there was us, driving toward the other building sensing in our spirits something was not right. When we arrived, they had chairs for us and stuff, then Mr. G sat down waiting for them to do the same, so they could start their long awaited “talk.” There was Gil Bates and Stephen Paine but there was no track of Tim Levendusky at all. Then Mr. G asked, “where is Tim? He needs to hear this as well. Gil Bates was the one that did all the “talking” if that’s how we can call it, because he let Mr. G know his

plans and said, “just give us all the documents you have, and we will go through them.” Mr. G amazed said “you told me we were going to talk!” – “No we are not talking, just give us your documents and we will go through them later.” Mr. Gothard had been tricked!!! At this moment a police officer was waiting in the door of the room where the “meeting” was being held. We were on our feet at that moment and Mr. G told them, that if they would continue on this path it would not turn out well for them because what they were doing was wrong, and he wanted to spare them of that! He said, “just bring me back and resign.” There was no response, Bates only said, “is that all you had to say?” Mr. G responded “yeah!” as soon as those words came of his mouth, Mr. Horsman an Alert Officer, approached and said, “Mr. Gothard, is it true that my officials asked you earlier today to leave the property and you said ‘no’?” Mr. G replied “Well, yeah” and as soon as that happened the Police Officer said, Mr. Gothard, please come with me I just heard you confessed you were asked to leave and you didn’t do it, so please follow me to my car, we have some papers to fill.”

When we were heading out there was no track of Bates and Paine, it was just Mr. Horsman and the Police officer. On the way to the police car I asked the officer “sir, may I video record what is going on?” – “Sure, go ahead” that was his response. My phones battery was dead so my mom and the other lady with us started recording. The police officer wrote on his report that Mr. G was asked to leave, and he refused. Mr. G kept on saying over and over again “please change it, because they promised me to talk later.” Then the officer proceeded to let Mr. G know that if he would be back in that property he could go to jail. Go to jail if he stepped foot on the property. Is that love?! They did NOT want Mr. Gothard anywhere near the people! The Board did not want the people to know the truth. Others wanted to thank him. Others had lots of questions for him. The Board did NOT want Mr. Gothard talking to his seminar alumni! The Board is keeping the people from the person who they would love to hear from. Then they asked me to drive Mr. G out of the property to our hotel. (I have the video clips that can shared)

I wanted to tell this story because I lived it first hand, no one told me, I was there flesh and bone and I also have learned that people from the staff and board members say it never happened. Others have said it and I agree. Tim Levendusky and the Board are bringing judgement upon themselves. My heart was broken and my parents’ hearts were broken to see the way Mr. Gothard, an elder, the founder of this ministry, a Christian brother, a friend, a spiritual father, has been treated by Tim Levendusky, Gil Bates, Stephen Paine and David York. It is ungodly and un scriptural. Few people know what is going on behind the scenes, I want you and the rest of his alumni to know the truth. The truth is, people want him back, he wants to get back and Tim, and the Board won’t let him back.

Let me tell you something, I’m here because of the truth, all these years I’ve been with Mr. G I’ve been volunteering myself, I don’t have a salary or get paid, I have to leave my job to come help Mr. G. I do this for Love of God and gratitude to a man whose teachings have changed my family and many other families all over the world, I win nothing by telling this story, I just want other people to open their eyes to what is really happening! Whereas, the Board and people at the institute have a financial motivation behind their actions.

God bless you all!

-Natanael Garcia