

Ruben Mata

I am writing this to offer my personal experience with this situation.

We were called in May 2000 by the older sister worker and were told that **Ruben Mata** was being put out of the work and sent home because it had been discovered that he had raped children in the past. We were told that the families in the area with children were also being warned. I'm not sure whether this sister worker told us this or not, but at this time we were given to understand that Ruben had turned himself into the authorities. This was presented as a very positive thing.

Shortly after he arrived at his mother's home, he called to let me know that he would be coming to our meeting and that he would not be leading the meeting. I told him that I knew why he was home and offered my help as a Christian brother. It was my hope and prayer that we might see a miracle take place like that mentioned in I Corinthians 6:9-11.

From the very first meeting, Ruben showed no sign of sorrow or repentance. This was a concern because it gave those who did not know the impression that all was okay when it wasn't. The joking that was a part of Ruben's normal persona just didn't fit the circumstances under which he had been sent home. Some of the testimonies he offered those first Sundays gave me the impression that he saw himself as a victim. For instance, he compared his experience with Job's.

His mother did not know why he was home and the workers told us that they were afraid that if they told her it would send her to the grave. Mrs. Mata is a tough elderly Mexican woman who has been through a lot in her life time. It was my opinion that if told, she would be a positive influence on her son. As it was, she was crushed because her only professing son had left the work. This choice to withhold the truth would later cause problems. When we suggested several times that Mrs. Mata be told the truth, an influential elderly sister worker over-ruled.

This went on for perhaps six months. During that time, we welcomed a five year old foster boy into our home with the intent to adopt him. However, I was asleep at the wheel. I should not have allowed Ruben into my home on the basis of being a foster home. But that changed sometime around the first of the year when we heard and understood the reality of what Ruben had done to these children. There was an explosion in the house. My wife rightly demanded that I act immediately to keep Ruben from coming to our home for meeting. Besides this foster boy, we had our own four children. This was a Saturday night; so I called the brother worker in charge of dealing with the matter that night and told him Ruben could not come back. He didn't know if it could be accomplished so soon but I told him I had a legal problem - I couldn't allow a known child rapist to enter my home - my foster child would be removed. Further, I told him that I could not allow for the sake of my own children's safety. I believe at that point that Ruben was asked not to come to meetings at all. However, one man continued to allow him to come to the union meeting in his home.

The perverted acts that Ruben performed on his victims do not bear writing or verbalizing. They were horrific. These things happened around the corner of the house, in the garage, in the back yard, in the bedroom on the other side of the wall where his companion was talking with the

parents.... This was told us by a mother of one of the victims.

Since not everyone knew why Ruben was home, there was speculation and rumor in the area. Since it was not to be discussed, this speculation and rumor created division.

How should it be dealt with? Should he come to meeting? All kinds of questions arose, without resolution. But plenty of behind the scenes talking.

I found myself on the opposite end of the spectrum from many. I believed that Ruben should be publicly rebuked (I Tim. 5:19-20). If an elder that sins is to be publicly rebuked, how much more a man who has pretended to be an apostle while raping children in secret for almost 30 years?? I believed that RUBEN should publicly repent before the church, given the nature of his abuse of the trust given him. I believed that this should not be dealt with in silence. How can true Christian love be expressed or true spiritual help be offered when the situation is a forbidden subject?

My wife tried to talk with other women who were mothers of victims. She was anxious to enable others to protect their children. She also wanted to be a help and support to the parents of the victims. She was publicly rebuked in a Sunday morning meeting. Her name wasn't mentioned directly, of course. But we knew exactly who was being spoken to. Others came up to me after the meeting and said they knew who was being chastised. And the chastising message came down to this - that my wife was being cruel to RUBEN by discussing the matter with others.

I later had lunch with this man in order to try to clear the air and find out why he chose to address us in this manner. He admitted that he had been addressing my wife in his testimony. I asked this man why we didn't follow the Matthew 18 instructions? Answer - an older brother worker had told him that we didn't do that. I asked why we don't pray over him, or gather the elders together to pray for him as commanded in James? Answer - We don't do that.

Several workers expressed to me that no one knew what to do. That floored me! How is it that with all these years of experience, and with all this spiritual wisdom, that no one knew what to do?? One of these workers told me that there was a worker meeting being scheduled to talk about the subject. I asked to be able to attend in order to give some on-the-ground real-time perspective. But...no invitation.

This same worker told me that the head workers knew about Ruben's perverted activities that were reported to them while he was in Mexico, but allowed him to stay in the work, while bringing him home to CA.

I requested of one of the older brother workers that the churches in the area, or at least the elders be gathered together to discuss the matter and get everybody on the same page. Answer - We don't want a meeting where others would offer their opinion on what should be done.

In early 2003, we found out that contrary to what we had originally been told, Ruben had not voluntarily turned himself in. Rather, he was being harbored here in Tulare County, away from

the counties in which the victims lived, and being given free counseling through the county. The deputy director of Health and Human Services is a professing man who often offers such services to troubled workers. Then, because of Ruben's reluctance to come see the counselor, the counselor had contacted the police. The workers then begged Ruben to turn himself in, in order to avoid a visit from the police. Being caught between a rock and a hard place, he turned himself in before the police could get to him. This destroyed any confidence I had in what the workers were telling me.

In April 2003, I was contacted by the Fresno County Sheriff's office...a detective. He had been given my name...he wouldn't divulge who...and wanted to ask some questions. I told him what I knew. He further asked me about the situation in Reno involving the young man who was jailed on rape charges. He asked me if I knew Ruben by two other Spanish names. He asked me if I was aware of other situations and investigations going on in California and Washington. I couldn't help much with these things as I only knew Ruben by the name Ruben Mata and had only hearsay knowledge of other things going on elsewhere. I gave him the name and phone number of an older brother worker currently at preps in San Diego. Afterwards, I was shaken when I realized how far ranging this man's knowledge was, and that other far ranging and deep issues were being investigated.

After about three years, things began to get worse. As I mentioned, Ruben's mother attended the Sunday morning meeting in our home. She spoke only Spanish. On union Sunday's, she attended the meeting where Ruben was still welcome. We went to another meeting. She began to speak out in her testimony that I was preventing Ruben from attending or speaking in meeting. The poor woman who was translating hardly knew what to do or say. One man who was in the meeting and understood Spanish contacted me and we began to correspond with the workers to try to get them to openly address the issue. Nothing could be done - utter gridlock. In fact, we found out that nothing could be done without word from the authority. We found conflicting stories about who said what, and who thought what should be done. We heard the local brother workers express that they could do nothing without direction from the highest authority...their hands were tied.

After several months of trying to get resolution, two other men and I determined to confront Ruben ourselves and proceeded to set it up. Ruben agreed to meet with us and brought his supporters. The upshot of that meeting was that Ruben refused to openly acknowledge his sin, would not tell his mother, etc., etc. His supporters made him out to be the victim and the victims out to be the criminals. It was a tense meeting.

After that, the workers finally stepped in and did something. They banned Ruben from attending any meetings. They also slapped our wrists for taking things into our own hands. "This is a worker matter" they said. In our meeting with them it came out that one prominent and responsible older brother, who had never showed his face in our meeting once to find out what the concerns were, simply expressed being tired of the affair and wanted everyone to get a life!

Convention messages during these years seemed to concentrate on forgiveness and restored fellowship, seeming to ignore the fact that the path to forgiveness and restored fellowship is the road of repentance and confession.

That essentially ended our involvement with the matter.

No, this situation is not the reason we left the fellowship. But it is just another disappointment that drove me to my knees for help. Those prayers were answered when we observed a "worldly church" in Texas lovingly and openly discipline and dis-fellowship a couple - the end of a careful Matthew 18 process. Not lashing out or calling the offenders unsaved, but simply warning them, calling on them for repentance, and earnestly praying for their restoration. What an astounding thing that was to observe. We heard the elders of that church openly acknowledge their accountability to the people they served. And you know what? That church had spent the entire Saturday before openly discussing the situation and the need to take action with all the couples in the church.

Something mentioned in that church was this - one mark of a false church is the lack of biblical discipline.

How should a church body of believers in Jesus Christ address this situation? What is the responsibility of the church of Jesus Christ to the world at large in this matter? What is the responsibility of the church of Jesus Christ to the civil authorities? The Scriptures do provide answers. This is a criminal matter that is within the jurisdiction of the civil authorities to try and punish, within the context of due process. However, it lies within the jurisdiction of the church to call for confession and repentance.

My understanding of Ruben's jail sentence is that he was convicted of crimes that happened after 2000...after he claimed to me in person that he had quit years prior. That is a sad and horrific commentary.

I understand that Ruben was arrested in May of 2006 and sentenced in San Jose, California in January 2007. I do not know what the sentence was. My understanding of Ruben's conviction is that he was convicted of crimes that happened after 2000...after he claimed to me in person that he had quit years prior. That is a sad and horrific commentary. He died in early November 2007 of some kind of cancer which took him quickly. My mother attended the ceremony and said that what little was said in English was just a history of the Mata family and very little of any encouragement, warning or other spiritual teaching.

May God instill in every true shepherd an over-riding sense to protect the little lambs from such wolves. May parents elders rise up everywhere to refuse fellowship to such wolves. And may these wolves be rebuked and reprovved and the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed to them, wherever they may be found. Perhaps God will grant them repentance and work His miraculous work of sanctification in their lives - to the glory of His grace. However, they may yet have to suffer the consequences of their actions in this life.

By: Scott Parish
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PS - Some think me naïve about the psychology of child rapists, naïve to think that there could

be any change without "professional help" being involved. Well, I am aware that there are those who think that all child rapists do what they do because they were raped themselves when they were children. The facts do not support this. There are others that say that child rapists cannot and do not change. That also is not borne out by statistics of recidivism among criminals. There are others who say that there is no psychology that can help them. That may be true...man's attempts to help with man's wisdom and pseudo-science do fail more often than not. Others make great boasts about how certain psychological models have helped such people. But the facts do not support such claims.

My naïve hope is in Jesus Christ. My naïve hope is expressed in I Corinthians 6:9-11 " Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

If washing, sanctification, and justification happened to gross sinners in Corinth in Paul's day through the agency of the Spirit of the living God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, before any "professional help" was available, then such can happen today. In fact, many gross sinners in prison have been saved from not only the guilt of their sin but also the power of their sin by the preaching of the true gospel. Do they need watching? Yes. Will they be tempted? Yes. Can Jesus Christ give them victory over even this sin? YES, and praise God! If not, no one has hope.

This sin (not sickness) is an expression of the depravity that lies within all. It is included in the giving over to the reprobate mind that God does to those who serve the creature rather than the creator. It is the end result, not of what parents, others, or the environment did. Rather, it is the end result of inner wickedness and rebellion against God and His righteous standard.

An interesting article written by psychiatrist Thomas Szasz can be found on <http://www.szasz.com> , which linked to <http://www.reason.com/news/show/28515.html>. This man is no Christian, but his comments are very penetrating as to the reality of what is commonly accepted today about such sins as raping children.
