

"Covering" doctrine

This chapter taken from the book *When Faith Came* by Franklin Whittenburg © 1998-2006

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If I understand this "covering" doctrine correctly, it teaches that if I leave a local church or some pastor's ministry for awhile or I do not join a local congregation then I lose God's protection and blessings (covering). I am now open to all kinds of attack from the enemy and I am "on my own" in the world. I have many friends and I am constantly meeting new believers that have come out of the "cell / small" group churches and are worshiping alone in their homes. Because they are true Christians, they have a deep desire to fellowship with other true believers, but they are afraid of being spiritually abused by a church leadership. What is going to happen to these Christians? After being in the cell churches, and having the courage to come out, they are not going to be indoctrinated back in. Is God now rejecting them also? The true body of Christ is larger than any individual ministry. This "covering" doctrine has gotten so perverse that I know a pastor that has a large ministry and the people that are members of that church claim his ministry as their spiritual protection (covering). This pastor walks around with armed undercover bodyguards! He doesn't even believe in his own covering of protection.

This "covering" doctrine as I see it, takes the local church or whatever pastor's ministry and makes them the "vine" and me a branch of their ministry. If I leave their congregation or ministry, then I am a branch that is broken off the vine, and then I should wither and perish. Here is a radical idea (John 15:5). What if Jesus is the true Vine and I am a branch of Him? Then no matter where I went in this world, I would still be "in Christ" the Vine and my source of life would still be Jesus. Paul knew also where the true "covering" was.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38,39 KJV).

I don't think any local church or personal ministry "covering" could even come close to that. The Bible even says that each believer is given a ministering spirit (not a ministering pastor) to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:13,14)? Does this ministering spirit leave you at the door when you walk out of a local congregation or a certain ministry? God never left Paul in his travels without a ministering spirit even though Paul had rebuked congregations.

For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. (Acts 27:23,24 KJV).

I have heard of cults that use this covering type of teaching to scare members from leaving.

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