

# A Warning about Doug Phillips, Vision Forum, and the Integrated Church

January 14, 2014 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org)

Vision Forum has shut down because of the immorality and shady dealings of its founder --  
<http://www.visionforumministries.org/>

In a report entitled "Doug Phillips' Mentor and Spiritual Father Speaks Out," December 19, 2013, <http://jensgems.wordpress.com>, Pastor Robert Gifford testifies as to Vision Forum founder Doug Phillips' error, deception, and infidelity. Phillips had claimed Pastor Gifford as his mentor.

Following are some excerpts to this report, followed by my own warning about Vision Forum and Integrated Church.

"I grieve over the way Doug Phillips has misrepresented me. But that doesn't bother me the most. God will vindicate me. What bothers me the most is how Doug has defamed the testimony of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It breaks my heart the way he's discredited and maligned the Word of God. He twisted the Word of God for his own advantage. I also grieve that so many people have been harmed by Doug's teachings that I think it's necessary for me to speak out. Doug has a dual personality. He's been leading a secret life. It's like the movie *Catch Me If You Can*."

"I was supposedly Doug's spiritual father, but he invited this man, John Thompson, to come and instruct me about marriage and family. Doug knew I'd been teaching what the Word has to say about marriage and family for years. I had over a hundred messages I'd given on marriage and family. Doug orchestrated this whole evening so that Thompson could indoctrinate me in Patriarchy. We sat around the table while everyone listened to this man lecture me. After he got done Doug had us all move into the living room where the men all sat down on the couches. My wife sat next to me; but I noticed all the other women stood behind their husbands, including Beall. It was very strange. They just stood there the whole time behind their husbands. I thought we were going to have a nice conversation. But it wasn't a conversation, and it was very uncomfortable. This guy Thompson took over and started asking me questions. The last thing he asked me was, 'If you were in a grocery store and your children started to act rebellious, how would you respond?' So I said, 'I don't go shopping. My wife shops. Honey, what would you do?' So my wife starts to answer and this Thompson guy cuts her off and says, 'Excuse me! I'm speaking to the men!' At this point I really had to hold myself back. Doug just sat there the whole time and said nothing. It was obvious that Doug set this whole thing up. At this point we got up and left."

"When Doug left Virginia to move to San Antonio to start Vision Forum, I warned him to stay away from John Thompson and Patriarchy. I told him 'It's a tyrannical way to lead the family. It's not biblical.'"

"I think men like Doug get into Patriarchy because they're weak insecure men. So they gather a bunch of other men around them to figure out how to make their wives do what they want. They don't know how to *lead* their wives. All they know how to do is *force* them. A man is supposed to lead his wife lovingly, sacrificially, unreservedly. It's clear from Ephesians 5. The Bible calls the wife a 'helpmeet'. What that means is that she's a counselor. She's supposed to give counsel to her husband, and the husband is supposed to listen to her. I've taught this for years. We men have blind spots. We need godly women to give us counsel. She's a counterbalance to us."

"Doug was going around behind my back in my church telling people that Sunday school was evil. I confronted him about it and he lied and said he hadn't. But I confronted him with the fact that ten families had come to me and told me he'd told them that Sunday school was sin. He told me, 'I never said that. You're misrepresenting me'. Doug was very divisive of the church. Several families left because of him, but I was able to prevent a

church split. But that's only because I put a stop to what he was trying to do behind my back. I kept catching him doing dishonest things like that where I'd confront him for something and he'd lie about it. It happened four times in a row."

"It's not a sin for a woman to work outside the home. In fact there are times where it may be necessary for a woman to work outside the home to show her love for her husband and to complement him. This idea that a woman has to remain within the four walls of the home is nowhere found in Scripture."

"Doug has misrepresented me in the worst sense. He's made me out to be a Dominionist. He's put it in print. He's said it many times. It's libel. Dominionism is completely contrary to everything I taught. I think that much of Doug's views of Dominionism came from the Shepherding movement. There's a lot of similarities. He also teaches the same thing the Muslims teach which is you take over the world by having lots of babies. You establish an army through your children. It's important to understand this. If you look at Doug through all his advertisements, the Vision Forum, he's got his kids on the covers dressed in armor. This is what they're doing. They're forming armies through their families. I'm just the absolute opposite of all that."

"Doug and his brother Brad came to my home and told me, 'Pastor Gifford, we believe that the qualifications for membership in the church are wrong. We believe that only home schoolers should be members of the church'. I told them, 'Do you realize what kind of elitist attitude you have? Do you realize what you're doing? This is totally anti-biblical. This is the problem that the early Jewish converts had when they thought only they could be members of the church and the Gentiles had to be excluded. What you have is an elitist mentality, and it's going to turn into a cult if you're not careful'. It was over that issue that Doug left my church and moved to Texas to start Vision Forum and his own church."

"All the these issues cause me great heartache, but nothing is so dreadful to me as Doug's infidelity. In his pride Doug came to believe that he could live like a king with no accountability to anyone, even to God. The result is always immorality. Doug was taught in word and deed to live a pure and holy life that honored our triune God and His Word. He's 'turned from the holy commandment delivered unto him' (1 Thes 4:1-8) to a system of belief and practice that justifies immorality. May the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ quicken Doug and bring him to a place of *true* repentance and faith."

The previous quotes are from "Doug Phillips' Mentor and Spiritual Father Speaks Out" by T.W. Easton, December 19, 2013, <http://jensgems.wordpress.com>.

## **THE INTEGRATED CHURCH AND VISION FORUM**

**By David Cloud  
November 29, 2011**

[http://www.wayoflife.org/index\\_files/a\\_warning\\_about\\_doug\\_phillips\\_vison\\_forum.html](http://www.wayoflife.org/index_files/a_warning_about_doug_phillips_vison_forum.html)

I am writing about the Integrated Church Movement and Vision Forum in one report, because they are so closely tied together. While the Integrated Church Movement is larger than Vision Forum, Vision Forum is probably the most influential part of it.

The Integrated Church Movement (ICM), also called the Family Integrated Church, is defined as follows:

"The family-integrated model jettisons all age-graded ministries. Those who adhere to this model view each family unit (single or married, with or without children) as one 'block' that comprises the local church. That is, they view the church as a family of families. They view the church's purpose as equipping the parents, primarily the fathers, to evangelize and disciple their children" (Terry Delany, "Three Perspectives on Family Ministry," March 18, 2009).

It is not an organization but a philosophy, and there are many varieties of Family Integrated churches.

## **THE GOOD**

There are many biblically-sound things that are emphasized by the Integrated Church movement.

It emphasizes building godly families and it resists the cultural way of parents abdicating their responsibilities to government schools and church programs.

It urges fathers to take their rightful place as committed and involved leaders and instructors.

It emphasizes separation from the world's philosophies and ways.

It exposes the danger of the typical segregated church ministry that follows the world's pattern by putting young people together too much to be influenced by their peers and does not emphasize enough parental responsibility in training, perhaps even detracting from that responsibility.

The Integrated Church material has many helpful statements on these particular issues.

## **THE DANGERS**

But there are also some serious dangers represented by the Integrated Church movement.

### **1. The Integrated Church has often led to the downplaying of the importance of the biblical church.**

This is not always true, but it is often true. Vision Forum warns about “nomadic families that flit from church to church, or renegades who refuse to place themselves under the accountability of a local church,” and adds, “God requires His people to be under biblical local churches with biblical preaching, biblical church government, biblical ordinances, and biblical discipline.”

This warning is an admission that this is a problem.

In fact, the movement is rife with this error. Many have replaced a biblical church with “home church” where the fathers are the pastors. Others have tried to start “churches” with a few home-schooling families though they aren't qualified and divinely called to the task.

The Integrated Church movement has turned the church into a “family of families,” but the church is much more than a “family of families.” The apostle Paul wasn't married, and he emphasized the importance of the unmarried condition (1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 25-35). The church's main task is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), and when the gospel is preached effectively, the result is the salvation of single people and those from all sorts of broken families. If the emphasis is on the ideal family, on the church being “a family of families,” a great many are left out.

We see this in our church planting work in South Asia. One of our churches is eight years old, and a high percentage of the members are either unmarried young people or are men and women representing broken homes. Several of the women have unsaved husbands. Some of the husbands abuse them and try to hinder their faith in Christ; at least one is an abusive drunkard. The wife of one of the male church members left him after he came to Christ. We have only a handful of families so far that are composed of both husband and wife that are saved and are trying to raise their children right. In many cases the wives can't read and the parents have only the slightest clue of how to raise their children for Christ, though we are trying to train them. If our emphasis were on “a family of families,” we would be a very discouraged group.

Our goal is definitely to produce godly Christian families, but our church is not a family of families. It is a church! We are busy teaching the people how to build godly homes and discipline their children biblically, but it is very slow and somewhat discouraging work, because it is all brand new to them. The Hindu culture knows nothing about such things. Most of our church members had never even seen a Bible until they heard the gospel through our evangelistic ministries. The vast majority are first generation Christians, saved out of endless

generations of pagan darkness.

What we need are New Testament churches that seek to build strong families and that do not hinder the families by such worldly things as entertainment-focused youth departments. To that degree we agree with the Family Integrated philosophy, but only to that degree, because that is as far as the Bible allows us to go.

## **2. The Integrated Church lacks understanding about the danger of New Evangelicalism.**

The Integrated Church is largely an evangelical movement rather than a fundamentalist one. Popular speakers at their conferences include Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis and other New Evangelicals. You will find frequent positive references to evangelical leaders. There is little or no call for ecclesiastical separation.

This is no light matter, as the Bible emphasizes the doctrine of separation from false doctrine and compromise (e.g., Romans 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Timothy 6:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 3:10). (See “New Evangelicalism: Its History, Characteristics, and Fruit,” which is available from Way of Life Literature in book and e-book formats.)

## **3. The Integrated Church neglects the Great Commission.**

If you look through Integrated Church literature and web sites, there is little emphasis on the Great Commission and preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth. I am not saying there is nothing at all, but there is far more emphasis on the family and other things. Their conferences are not missions conferences or evangelism conferences but family and dominionist/reconstructionist conferences (emphasizing the building of the kingdom of God in the here and now). Preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth is not even mentioned in Vision Forum’s mission statement.

There are exceptions such as Antioch Community Church in Elon, North Carolina, which lists the following as two of their distinctives: “commitment to local and world missions” and “planting other churches.”

This church appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

The family is not an end in itself. The objective of both family and church should be the fulfillment of the Lord’s Great Commission, which He emphasized greatly after He rose from the dead and before He ascended to Heaven (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

The book of Acts models the working out of the Great Commission rather than the Family Integrated Church model. Though we believe in a strong emphasis on godly families, this should not be an end in itself. Paul, a single man who could not model the strong family emphasis, preached the gospel and started churches. Paul took the young Timothy away from his family and discipled him apart from his father and mother and grandmother, and there is no evidence that Timothy ever married.

## **4. The Integrated Church is legalistic, having gone beyond the Bible in making rules about family and church.**

The Integrated Church tends to be very legalistic. There is much liberty within the biblical model for both the family and the church, and it is legalistic to make laws that go beyond the biblical bounds.

For example...

*To read this article in its entirety, go to:*

[http://www.wayoflife.org/index\\_files/category-warning.html](http://www.wayoflife.org/index_files/category-warning.html)