

An Answer to a 2016 Question from Steve Isitt

In 2021, I was very surprised to happen upon a Local Church Discussions (LCD) forum private message (PM) from Steve Isitt to me that was sent in 2016. In it, he asked me a question. His question concerned an apology to my wife and me that he had made public in 2016 via the LCD forum. In the PM, he asked me if he was "deficient" in his public apology.

When I followed the link in the PM and read his apology, even though it seemed positive, I found it very disappointing because Steve had neglected specific written requests that I had made in prior letters to him about problems between us. In particular, I noted that he hadn't addressed a serious offense that I pointed out to him in my last letter in 2011. It seemed to me that if he was really serious about not wanting to be "deficient" with his apology, he would have simply addressed all I had asked of him in prior years' correspondence, instead of addressing only part of one letter and then asking me if he was deficient.

Back in 2011, when Steve abruptly broke off communications with us, I came to believe that we had done all that God expected of us with regard to trying to reconcile with Steve. By that point, we had tried to communicate with him three different times without success (in 2006, 2008, and 2011). Still, it was difficult to treat as mere coincidence my running across his 2016 PM at this point in time in 2021. This was especially true because of the contents of the book my wife and I had just published (*Return To Follow the Rightful King*) and what I had just posted on the LCD forum's "Good vs. Lee's Trees" thread about how important it is to go the distance to have right relationships with others in the body of Christ.

As I considered the matter, some thoughts and questions came to mind: Maybe Steve had been sincere about reconciling in 2016, but instead of addressing the actual offenses toward us that I had explained in detail in prior letters to him, he had thought it was enough to apologize according to his own perceptions and recollections. Was God bringing a five-year-old communication from him to my attention now in this unusual way so that we would offer Steve another opportunity to make things right with us? Was I willing to answer Steve's question about his public apology now, even if it turned out that others misunderstood and criticized my attempt to do so?

On one hand, neither Jane nor I wanted to have another time of difficult communication with Steve, while on the other, we both knew that there should be genuine reconciliation with Steve for his sake, for the Lord's sake, and for His body's sake. We are all members of the body of Christ, after all; and we are to love others, even when doing so involves having difficult communications with them. So ultimately, after much prayer and consideration, and fellowship with Jane, I came to the conclusion that God did want me to respond now to Steve's question about whether his 2016 apology was "deficient."

Was Steve Isitt's 2016 apology "deficient"?

From this point forward, I am addressing you, Steve. I am responding publicly because you made your 2016 apology public. The simple answer to your 2016 question is, "Yes, your apology is deficient." However, the fact that it is deficient does not diminish the fact that you did make some apologies. We want you to know that we are grateful that you addressed some of the past matters after so many years. We want you to know that we

appreciate and accept your apology to the extent that it went, and we forgive you accordingly.

There are, however, deficiencies in your apology that cannot be simply overlooked if we are to be truly reconciled. As you may remember, we wrote to you a number of times in great detail a decade and more ago; and from our perspective, it seems that either you have been unable or unwilling to properly respond to all that you did against us. We have spent many hours in the past trying our best to communicate with you thoroughly, so I am not going to write again all that I have painstakingly written before. You can re-read those letters to find the other deficiencies in your 2016 apology that are not covered in this letter.

In this letter, I have decided to spend time to write in some detail about one particular deficiency. That deficiency is that you completely ignored the last sin that I brought to your attention in my final 2011 letter to you. You did not respond to anything in that last letter. Instead, you just stopped communicating with us. I hope to bring this particular sin into focus for you by telling you something you don't know—the story of how it played a key role in bringing huge, negative, long-lasting harm to our family. Perhaps this account will make an impression on you about how serious that sin was. If you can acknowledge and repent for it, maybe that will help you to understand, acknowledge, and clear up the other sins we have told you about that you didn't address in your 2016 apology.

I pray that this story will sober you and that it will shine light upon the absolute necessity of addressing any sins committed against others and of removing them in a timely manner by specific admission, repentance, and doing whatever is possible to set things right. At the very least, I hope that you, and anyone else who reads this account, will realize how the devil can use believers who have unresolved sins in their lives, especially sins against others. The devil can employ such believers unknowingly to assist him and his dark forces in their persistent war against the members of the body of Christ.

The story I am going to tell you is a sad, personal one that concerns Jane and her birth family. In it, you not only will see how much your last sin against us hurt us, but also how it hurt others whom you didn't even know. I hope that you, and anyone else who reads it, will realize that seemingly small unrighteous actions can have large evil impacts due to their ripple effects. (All names used in this story are pseudonyms except for yours and ours.)

A 2011 evil ripple effect

In 2011, during the time that Jane and I were writing back and forth with you, Steve, some important things were happening in our lives. These things were related to a long-term problem in Jane's birth family, one which had resulted in Jane not having private access to her mother for many years. Before I come to the part of the story that involves you, it is necessary that I first present some background detail about this problem.

Shortly after their father's death, Brenda, one of Jane's younger sisters, took control of their aging mother and moved her in to live with her. At one point, Brenda told Jane that she would not allow her to have private conversations with her mother as long as her mother was under Brenda's roof. Jane stood up to Brenda about her unrighteous proclamation, and they had a big argument. When Brenda would not budge, Jane told her that, until she changed her position, she would not come under Brenda's roof again.

Not long after that, Brenda picked up and moved to another state and took their mother with her. In doing so, she doubled the distance that Jane and Nancy (Jane's other younger sister) would have to travel to see their mother. Whenever Jane attempted to communicate with her mother via phone or mail, Brenda listened in on phone calls and insinuated herself into her mother's answers to Jane's letters. In one letter to Jane from her mother, Brenda managed to persuade Jane's mother to accuse Jane of being after her money. (Actually, time would prove that it was Brenda who was after their mother's money.)

In her quest, Brenda kept a steady drip of self-serving propaganda against Jane going into their mothers' ears and also into Nancy's. (Nancy had turned a blind eye to what was happening to Jane and had not challenged Brenda for fear of losing her own access to their mother.) Over time, Brenda's propaganda succeeded in damaging Jane's relationship with her mother and also Jane's relationship with Nancy. Jane attempted numerous times to state what was true and to persuade her mother and Nancy to stop enabling Brenda's bad behavior, but she never succeeded. Eventually, Jane gave up and years of estrangement ensued. This is a very brief summary of a tortuous time in Jane's life that lasted over a decade and was filled with heartbreak and many tears.

Hope on the horizon

Then, in 2011, almost miraculously, Nancy and Jane reconnected and reconciled. It was truly a God thing and an answer to many prayers. Jane was very happy about the breakthrough, and so was Nancy. Over time, as Jane and Nancy talked in detail about what had happened in the family, they gradually were able to put their individual pieces of information together and see how the devil had been at work to destroy their family relationships.

After coming to understand what had really happened, Nancy became determined to get Jane back into her place in the family and into her rightful relationship with her mother. She went to great lengths to persuade Jane to go with her on the long trip to Brenda's house to see their mother. Nancy succeeded in convincing Jane to go under Brenda's roof even though previously Jane had told Brenda that she would not do so. Brenda fought against her two sisters coming, but finally had to yield because their mother wanted to see Jane after all the years that had passed. Things were looking good for the trip: The airline tickets were purchased; all plans were in place, even including them staying at Brenda's house; and their mother was excited that they were coming.

Then, things took a turn for the worse as a result of two strange happenings: The first involved Bob. The second involved you, Steve. Anyone who reads the remainder of this story and doesn't believe in the specific activities of demons among believers will be hard pressed not to start believing.

The first strange happening

From the time that Nancy and Jane reconnected, and especially when Nancy succeeded in arranging the visit with their mother, Brenda began to do her best to find a way to hurt the restored relationship between Nancy and Jane and also to stop the upcoming trip. Not many days before Jane and Nancy were to leave on the trip, the first strange thing happened. Brenda called Nancy and told her that she had "proof" that Jane could not be trusted, that Jane was not a good person, and that Nancy was being misled by Jane. Brenda had basically

said, "I have heard from someone else that supports what I know to be true about Jane. I'm not the only one who sees what Jane is like." Nancy asked who the other person was, and Brenda told her that it was someone named Bob.

The storyline now becomes a little more complicated by events taking place on another track, one on which we find Bob, someone named Susan, and you, Steve. This track eventually intersects and detrimentally impacts Jane's family story.

It is necessary to tell about the strange happening with Bob in some detail because it leads to your entrance into the story. First, a little background regarding Bob: John and Jane had known him and his wife for many years in the Local Church. By this time, however, they were living in different cities and had not had contact for many years. An important thing that Jane did not know was that Bob had become offended with her some years before and had not told her and cleared up the matter as the Bible instructs. So how did Bob come to be involved in this picture after so many years? Well, he woke up one day in 2011 with a thought, seemingly out of nowhere, that he wanted to find someone from his past—Susan. He had known her in the Local Church several decades before. He wondered how she was doing and began searching for her contact information.

Jane knew Susan well. They had been childhood friends, and Jane had brought her into the Local Church in 1970. After leaving the Local Church in 1989, Jane had tried unsuccessfully on and off for twenty years to find Susan. Then in 2011, she found her. So here we see something very unusual: Within a week or so of Jane locating Susan, Bob was suddenly motivated to start looking for Susan, someone he hadn't thought about for decades! Then Bob just happened to remember that Susan had been roommates with Brenda (yes, Jane's sister) many years before in the Local Church. So Bob found Brenda via the Internet, called her, and inquired about Susan.

As it turns out, Brenda had just heard from her mother, who had just heard from Nancy, who had just heard from Jane, that Jane had just found Susan. Thus, Brenda told Bob to call Jane, but Bob (because of his harbored offense) told her he didn't want to call Jane. A conversation ensued in which Bob and Brenda ended up talking about Jane and passing back and forth some biased, false, and defamatory information about her.

Next, Brenda, loaded with new material she could use against Jane, passed it on to their mother. Then she phoned Nancy and also used what she had heard from Bob to try and influence Nancy's opinion of Jane for the worse. Nancy and Brenda's phone conversation turned into a huge argument as Brenda did her best to try to persuade Nancy not to trust Jane, and also to cancel the trip. In the heat of their argument, Brenda suddenly blurted out words to this effect: "You and Jane don't need to come here anyway, because it's too late to change the will back now! Mother has made up her mind, and she doesn't have that much money anyway!" Nancy was stunned and upset by this. She had no idea that anything had been done to their mother's will, which had stated, according to their deceased father's wishes, that the estate was to be divided equally among his three daughters. Nancy also knew how much money her mother had, because she had done her best to make sure it was not spent wrongly by Brenda and would last to meet their mother's needs. Thus, Nancy held her ground, stating facts she knew to refute Brenda's claims about Jane and about their mother's money. Finally, Brenda became so frustrated that she hung up on Nancy.

Nancy then called Jane and asked, "Do you know someone named Bob?" Jane did, and she was surprised to hear this name coming from Nancy. Nancy went on to say, "Well, you should know that he is not a nice man, not at all. Bob has called Brenda and made claims

about you that have really hurt us and our hope for family reconciliation. Things have taken a really bad turn." When Jane heard what had happened, she became very upset.

Afterward, Jane told me, "John, we have to go see Bob and find out why in the world he did this and why he said such awful things about me to Brenda. I am so offended with him!" Neither of us wanted to go see Bob and confront him with what he had done. As we discussed our options, finally, Jane said this to me, "We don't have a choice if we believe Jesus' commands about reconciling. If you can tell me one verse that shows me we don't need to go, I will drop the matter."

We made the long road trip and nervously knocked on Bob's door—unannounced. When he heard the story about how his poor speaking about Jane had affected her and her family, he admitted to the wrong he had done and repented. He also told Jane why he had been offended with her. They quickly cleared up the past offense, which basically had been a misunderstanding, and then they cleared up other things he had heard rumored about Jane and also had passed on to others. Finally, we all realized that it was the devil who was behind Bob's idea to find Susan, which led to him finding Brenda and saying hurtful things about Jane. We also realized the devil's ground to do this was Bob's unaddressed offense that he had held against Jane. Bob then promised to write a letter to Brenda and correct what he had done.

The second strange happening

Now we come to the second strange happening: While Jane and I were at Bob's house that day, Jane received another phone call from Nancy (who had no idea we were at Bob's house). Nancy had just had another very upsetting phone call from Brenda. This time, Brenda had told Nancy that she had evidence against Jane from a second person. Brenda had then tried to force Nancy to listen to parts of a letter she had acquired that was written to Jane from someone named Steve. Her purpose was to try and make Jane (and me) look bad to Nancy. Brenda had already used things in this letter to influence their mother's opinion of Jane. As Nancy resisted Brenda, another huge argument broke out. This time, the call ended with Nancy, outraged and in tears, hanging up on Brenda and calling Jane.

Before we left Bob's house, Jane managed to put two and two together and asked him, "Are you in communication with Steve Isitt?" Bob said, "Yes." Then she asked, "Have you received correspondence from him about us that you passed to Brenda?" He again answered, "Yes." Then Jane asked Bob to show her the correspondence he had sent to Brenda. Sure enough, Steve, it was a copy of a letter that you had just sent to us a few days before. It was part of our ongoing communications regarding reconciliation—correspondence that, according to our written request, was to be kept just between us and you while it was in progress! So now you know, Steve, how we learned that you didn't keep our communications confidential as we expected; and I will add that you also now know how God caught you in this wrongdoing in an almost supernatural way. By the way, Jane and I still wonder why you would have passed this letter to Bob, an uninvolved third party.

Can you imagine our shock, when we learned that a letter you wrote to us, one that was full of distortions and misrepresentations about us, which you had presented as if they were true, was now in Brenda's hands? Brenda, who had already manipulated things for her benefit and caused great harm to Jane, was using the false information in your letter to her own advantage and to Jane's further detriment. She was doing so at a very critical time when, at long last, hope had come that Jane could be restored to her mother.

The letter that Brenda had in her possession is the one in which you, Steve, had reacted badly to my straightforward, detailed letter to you about the things you had done against us up to that point. For some reason, in your response to it, you decided to cherry-pick some words from here and there throughout my long letter to you (as well as from another letter from me) and stick them together in one paragraph, out of context. What you did made it look like I had attacked you with an abusive diatribe about your person, when I had not. Furthermore, I was actually in the process of responding to that letter of yours and setting the record straight about your misrepresentations when we discovered that Brenda had a copy of it and was using it against Jane!

The devastating fallout

At the end of Brenda's phone call to Nancy, the one in which Brenda presented your distortions and misrepresentations of us to her, Brenda had given Nancy a long and severe tongue-lashing. That phone call had upset Nancy to such an extent that it triggered a sudden relapse of a chronic, debilitating physical illness she has (a relapse that lasted for weeks afterwards). As a result, Nancy was unable to make the trip for family reconciliation that she had worked so hard to arrange.

Nancy eventually managed to convince Jane to use the airline ticket to make the trip by herself and to stay in a hotel. The story of what happened to Jane on that trip is a terrible one. Without Nancy to help, Jane was alone at the mercy of Brenda, who, being in her own house, was able to take complete control of Jane's visit. (Jane stayed in the hotel for three days and got to see her mother at Brenda's house twice for a total of about 6 hours.) Brenda set things up to prevent Jane from talking alone with her mother, and she did this by having her husband sit with Jane and her mother and monitor their conversations!

Without telling the unsavory details of all that took place, suffice it to say that the purpose of the trip failed miserably. Together, Nancy and Jane would have had a real possibility of getting through to their mother. Their truth-speaking together would have gone a long way toward breaking through the lies about Jane that Brenda had been feeding their mother for years, and toward opening up communications between Jane and her mother again. By all of this, you can see, Steve, that your letter and its arrival into Brenda's hands (timed by the devil) was disastrous. As a result, Jane and Nancy lost ground in their quest to reconnect Jane with her mother—ground that they were never able to recover.

My point to you is this: The trip that Jane and Nancy were supposed to make together was pivotal. The appearance of your letter also turned out to be pivotal. It gave Brenda material that she used against Jane at a critical point in time. Nancy's health was pushed over the edge such that she could not travel. Thus, Brenda succeeded in her effort to stop Nancy and Jane from coming together to talk with their mother.

For years, I had watched Jane struggle to have access to her mother only to have that door close in her face. Then, when the door was opening for her to possibly reunite with her mother, your letter appeared like an evil wind and shut it in her face again. This was a terrible thing for her. It was also a terrible thing for Nancy; because from that time forward, Brenda began to treat Nancy the same way she had treated Jane for so many years with the end result that Nancy also lost her relationship with her mother.

As for the subject of the inheritance, the truth of the whole situation involving Brenda became apparent after their mother died a year and a half later in 2013. All of Brenda's secret moves against Jane over the years had served to put Jane out of the picture so that

Brenda could convince their mother that she deserved Jane's portion of the inheritance. When the door had slammed in 2011 and Nancy was left on the outside with Jane, Brenda also succeeded in talking her way into getting Nancy's share. In the end, Brenda, who believed she had actually earned the entire inheritance because she had served as the primary caregiver for their mother, succeeded in having their mother change the will accordingly.

So, first Jane had lost access to her mother, and then she lost her inheritance from her mother and father. Neither Jane nor Nancy inherited *anything* from their parents after her mother's death, not any money (which was a significant amount) or even a keepsake or an heirloom or a photo—not even items that their mother had promised to them individually. Our older son also lost his designated inheritance from his grandfather.

Obviously, you were not responsible for the larger problem in the family nor for Brenda's manipulation and theft; but that doesn't change the fact that the entrance of your dishonest letter was a door-closing turning point in the story. It served to stop any possibility of Jane being reunited with her mother and also any possibility of Jane and Nancy bringing into the light, and maybe even preventing, what Brenda had been up to concerning their mother's will.

Maybe now you can see the reason for my presenting such a detailed account. Could things have turned out differently if your letter had not landed in Brenda's hands? We will never know for sure, but we still think it is a very good possibility there could have been a different outcome.

I hope that you are sobered to learn about the far-reaching, evil effects of your deceptive writing about us and of your violation of our trust. I also hope you can feel sorrowful for the serious harm caused by your secret passing of this letter to Bob.

Conclusion

Please understand that the Lord has comforted Jane and helped both of us put to rest what happened those many years ago. My primary motivation for communicating with you now is that I believe God asked me to do so for your sake. It is not good for you to have this on your account, and it is not good for this breach between us to be present in the body of Christ.

I pray that you will go to God for the grace to do what you should do, as thoroughly as you should do it, and that you will do so without trying to rationalize or excuse yourself for what you did. If you decide to address this 2011 offense, please reply concerning it to my last post on the Local Church Discussions "Apologies" thread.

It would be helpful to us if you would make a clear statement of what you did that was wrong, including how you ignored us when we confronted you about it. We would also appreciate an admission and complete retraction of your false compilation of my words that you used to totally misrepresent me and Jane in the "breach-of-trust" letter you passed on to Bob in 2011. We also would like you to send your apology and retraction to all parties to whom you showed that letter and to copy us on each. It's too late to send it to Bob, because he passed away a few weeks ago. Instead, you could send it to Bob's widow, who witnessed what you did and how it impacted us. She was embarrassed and ashamed by her husband's involvement in all that happened and does not think well of you.

If you can clear up this 2011 matter with us, then this should help you be able to see and address the other deficiencies in your 2016 apology. I do hope that we can have thorough reconciliation to the point that there can be a feeling of restored brotherhood between us and you.

John Anderson
September 19, 2021