

Rob Bell's Dad Sentences Christian Sex Crimes Offender to 40 Years in Prison

After pleading guilty to charges of criminal sexual conduct for assaulting children earlier this year, John Balyo was sentenced to 40 years in prison—by the controversial pastor Rob Bell's father.

Balyo, 35, was an on-air personality at Cornerstone University's family Christian radio station, WCSG, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was arrested at the Big Ticket Festival, a faith-based festival in Gaylord, Michigan, in June. The Big Ticket Festival is a ministry of White Stone Project, a Michigan nonprofit whose focus is sharing the eternal message of Jesus Christ through innovative evangelism.

"Your honor, I'm standing humbly before you today really pleading for the opportunity, the chance, to have a life someday," Balyo told U.S. District Judge Robert Holmes Bell, according to . "I will not be a danger to society. I will not be in trouble again."

According to an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Balyo paid another defendant, who is the subject of a separate HSI child-exploitation investigation, to arrange sexual encounters with children.

"This was a repulsive act of adult sexual gratification on a very young boy," Bell said. "They had no choice. They really had no choice. Do you understand that?"

HSI special agents and officers with the Michigan State Police and Battle Creek Police Department arrested Balyo on charges of first-degree criminal sexual conduct in July. WCSG fired

Balyo after the incident was revealed.

"We sincerely grieve over these recent events, in particular the tragic impact on victims and their parents," Chris Lemke, executive director of Cornerstone University Radio, WCSG and Mission Network News said in a statement on the WCSG website. "The WCSG family is deeply aching and know you may be hurting as well. We know that no one, absolutely no one, is immune from falling into the darkness of sin. And yet, we have hope. Those who truly follow and live for Jesus Christ know He alone has the power to restore broken lives and broken trust.

This investigation was conducted under HSI's Operation Predator, an international initiative to protect children from sexual predators. Since the launch of Operation Predator in 2003, HSI has arrested more than 10,000 individuals for crimes against children, including the production and distribution of online child pornography, traveling overseas for sex with minors and sex trafficking of children. In fiscal year 2013, HSI special agents arrested more than 2,000 individuals under this initiative.