

Victims Allege Christian Ministry Hid Sexual Abuse in Multimillion-Dollar Lawsuit

Five women filed a lawsuit against a Christian ministry earlier this week, suing for millions because the board members of the Institute in Basic Life Principles refused to acknowledge their abuse, their lawyer says.

“These ladies did not want to end up in litigation,” says their attorney, David Gibbs III. “(They wanted to) sit down, help work through issues with board ... but the board chose to ignore the request of the ladies and handled it rather disastrously. They feel rather forced to bring forward litigation to protect others.”

The lawsuit says the women were the victims of sexual abuse, sexual harassment and inappropriate/unauthorized touching, many times while they were minors, at the hand of the IBLP.

According to their website, IBLP was established for the purpose of introducing people to the Lord Jesus Christ and is dedicated to giving individuals, families, churches, schools, communities, governments and businesses clear instruction and training on how to find success by following God’s principles found in Scripture.

IBLP seeks to accomplish these goals primarily through seminars, educational programs, printed literature and the operation of centers to facilitate training.

The lawsuit is not the organization’s first brush with sexual abuse allegations.

IBLP was founded by Bill Gothard, who resigned amid molestation allegations last year.

Charisma News previously reported that Gothard's resignation from the Institute in Basic Life Principles, according to a letter sent to families affiliated with the ministry he founded, came a week after he was put on administrative leave. According to an organizer involved in the whistle-blowing website *Recovering Grace*, 34 women told the website they had been sexually harassed; four women alleged molestation.

Gothard's ministry had been a popular gathering spot for thousands of Christian families, including the Duggar family from TLC's *19 Kids and Counting*. Gothard's Advanced Training Institute conferences were also popular among families within the Quiverfull movement, who eschew birth control and promote big families.

Since Gothard's resignation, the Duggar family weathered more sex scandals after eldest son, Josh, admitted that he molested five minors and cheated on his wife.

The current IBLP board consists of Joh Stancil, Anthony Burrus, Gil Bates, Timothy Levendusky, Charles Stephen Paine and David York.

Since the filing of the Oct. 20 suit, Gibbs says more women have come forward with abuse allegations.

The attorney is also investigating claims children were forced to do manual labor for 50-70 hours a week and were paid \$50 in cash under the table.

"The more we dive in, the more unusual it becomes," Gibbs says. "One of the problems of total institutions (is) these victims have no place to turn. (They are) leaving an abusive home environment and have a person of trust over them (who will) isolate them, victimize them and then cover up victimization."

Gibbs continued, "We wanted the board to step forward and do the right thing—at least talk to these ladies. It's

heartbreakingly sad and should never have ended up in court, but that's where the IBLP people wanted it."

In addition to the abuse allegations, the lawsuit claims IBLP is attempting to liquidate more than \$100 million resources to relocate from Illinois to Texas.

IBLP could not be reached for comment.