

*Study Paper*

*for*

*Invisible Idol*

*Video 2*

*Audio 2 & 3*

*By*

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*The following pages are excerpts from the book “Toxic Faith”  
By Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton which have been  
Modified and adapted for the sermon  
Invisible Idol/Visible Man #2 – video and # 2 & 3 audio.  
By Fred R. Coulter*

### ***Ten Rules of an Addictive Faith System***

- 1) The leader must always be in control of every aspect at all times.
- 2) When problems arise, find a guilty party to blame.
- 3) The leaders do not make mistakes. However, if they do God only will correct them. No one else ever should.
- 4) Never point out the reality of the situation. Showing the truth is criticizing God’s appointed leader.
- 5) Never express your feelings unless they are positive.
- 6) Don’t ask questions, especially if they are tough ones.
- 7) Don’t do anything outside of your role—stay in your box!
- 8) Don’t trust anyone who is not in good standing with the hierarchy.
- 9) Nothing is more important than giving money to the organization. Members are not brethren in Christ but they are tithe payers.
- 10) At all costs, keep up the image of the organization, its leaders and hierarchy.

***All of this is based on pride and respect of persons.  
It is fundamentally political, not spiritual, in nature.***

***Characteristics of an Addictive Faith System***  
***The Signs of the Invisible Idol***

- 1) “Special” claims about character, abilities, or knowledge. Especially the leader/leaders.
- 2) Always trust and believe in the leaders as a sign of faith and acceptance in the group.
- 3) Everyone must submit to the leader as a sign of faith and acceptance in the group.
- 4) Dictatorial and authoritative leader.
- 5) An “us” versus “them” mentality.
- 6) Punitive, fearful and intimidating in nature.
- 7) Overwhelming service to the organization is required. Activity driven—keeps it followers busy in activities.
- 8) Followers are spiritually, mentally and emotionally in pain and abuse because of harsh leadership.
- 9) One way communication—only from the top down.
- 10) Legalism—strict and demanding, especially over little things.
- 11) No objective accountability.
- 12) Labeling, accusing & pigeon-holing.

***The Addictive Leader***  
***The Leader is His Own Self-idol***  
***“The Most Worshipful Ramrod”***  
***The Leader is addicted to Himself***  
***His Followers are Addicted to Him***

***Characteristics or Signs of the Addictive Leader***  
***Also called the Persecutor.***

- Is extremely self-centered.
- Frequently defends own problems.
- Feels the need to embellish the truth and make things appear more grand than they really are.
- Feels the need to be in control—always
- Seeks power and control
- Speaks boldly about sinful behavior, even when involved in that same behavior.
- Projects own wrongs onto other people. The members are always at fault. They are not praying, paying, staying and obeying—PPSO
- Sees things in terms of very black or very white.
- Believes people are extremely wonderful or bad, usually depending on the amount of support, praise & flattery offered to the leader.
- Has an attitude of superiority.
- Appears very angry with those involved in sin—no compassion or love.
- Often is motivated by greed and lust.
- Fears sexual inadequacy.
- Was probably born into an abusive or neglectful home which may have appeared wonderful to those outside the family.
- Feels owed something because of self-importance.
- Feels persecuted when faced with reality.
- Lives in a false world where the person is convinced that he or she is right—even when know is wrong.
- Usually possesses special talents.
- Contorts God’s Word to fit own beliefs (especially prophecy). Always finds a way to twist the Scriptures to justify self and beliefs.

- Surround self with people who are insecure and easily swayed—especially the first and second level of hierarchy.
- Manipulates others using guilt, shame and remorse.
- Blames others for own failures.
- Always makes other accept full responsibility for their own mistakes.
- Feels disappointed in God, self and others when things don't go his way.
- Always impressed with material goods and wealth and those who own them.
- Is very angry.
- Has compulsions in several areas—alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.
- Possesses an observable compulsion that appears admirable to the world.
- Possesses a hidden compulsion that would disgust most people if it were known.
- Places great value on performance.
- Deeply resents having to truly perform.
- Is not involved in any accountable relationships.
- When in a bind will ask for forgiveness and appear sincere when doing so.
- Fears not measuring up or losing image –by all means protect the image of the leader, the organization & hierarchy.
- Fears that if no longer able to perform for the masses will be useless to God.

***The Role of the Co-conspirator***  
***The Ultimate Team Player***  
***The Sycophant***

For every addictive leader there is at least one co-conspirator who manipulates, plots and plans to keep the addictive leader in power and position. The addictive leader/persecutor and sycophant co-conspirator work as a unit—they operate as one. Both are addicted to religion as the means by which they experience feelings of power, acceptance and significance—as well as wealth and fame.

In large organizations, there is usually more than one sycophant co-conspirator. Several sycophant co-conspirators work together to form a team of yes-men or yes-women (a board of directors or council of elders) that will

do anything to protect and defend the addictive leader/persecutor—his power, image and position. They feed into and off of the addictive leader/persecutor’s ego and further blind him or her and themselves from reality. When there is a conflict, they usually find a way to agree with the addictive leader/persecutor and support his or her position. They are loyal and supportive of the addictive leader/persecutor in every way. If it were not for them, the addictive leader/persecutor’s empire would fall quickly.

***Characteristics of the Sycophant Who is  
The Chief Enabler, An Addictee to the Proximity  
of Power of the Addictive Leader/Persecutor  
The First and Second Level of Authority in the Hierarchy.***

- Assumes the role of the ultimate team player.
- Shows total dedication and subservience to the addictive leader/persecutor and organization.
- Always finds a way to support the position of the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Feeds the addictive leader/persecutor’s ego. He exalts the leader and himself—push and leader higher, pull oneself up higher.
- Is addicted to the power granted by the addictive leader/persecutor using leader’s name with great authority.
- Keeps things going within the addictive faith system.
- Ensures that everything is taken care of responsibly.
- Typically is a small person who feels big when in on the action.
- Willingly deceives to maintain the addictive leader/persecutor’s power and position.
- Is good at lying—a master at “spin control.”
- Enjoys being rewarded for willingness to distort the truth—bonuses, higher rank and higher position of power.
- Usually felt inferior as a child.
- Ties personal feelings of value to another person rather than to God.
- Protects sense of self-worth by protecting the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Appears unassuming and grateful to be number two in the organization, or on a board of yes-men.
- Enjoys material things.
- Is sincerely deluded.

- Feels weak
- Lacks strong charisma and leadership abilities of the addictive leader/persecutor—mutual stroking and flattery.
- Feels extremely inadequate.
- Works as a single unit with the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Lives to be appreciated and recognized by the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Needs to feel safe in work and relationships.
- Is viewed by outsiders as trustworthy, conscientious, competent, mature and reliable.

### *The Role of the Enabler*

The role of the enabler varies from that of the sycophant co-conspirator. The sycophant co-conspirator is actively involved in the delusion and connives to keep the addictive leader/persecutor in power. The enabler is not as active in the deception; it is a passive role that allows, rather than promotes, victimization.

### *Characteristics of the Enabler*

- Allows victimization rather than promotes it.
- Supports victimization with silence.
- Is dedicated to not rocking the boat.
- Does not trust God enough to allow family turmoil or destruction of a ministry.
- Appears powerless.
- Receives praise for sainthood in being able to survive under severe persecution and being intimidated.
- Allows the addictive leader/persecutor to live in denial.
- Covers up the harm done to the family or the organization.
- Eases the addictive leader's/persecutor's pain.
- Outwardly appears loving and supportive of the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Inwardly is angry at living an unfulfilled life.
- As addictive leader/persecutor begins to lose credibility, will start to develop other skills, such as obtain a degree in counseling, knowing the system and the family may fall apart.

- Feels very little self-worth.
- Becomes a caretaker of addictive leader/persecutor.
- Is addicted to the addictive leader/persecutor and system.
- Has the primary goal of maintaining peace and status quo.
- Has great difficulty thinking for oneself.
- Goes along with group consensus.
- Acts to survive.
- Feels extremely responsible.
- If ministry fails, blames self and accepts guilt trips.
- Neglects personal needs for the sake of the ministry and the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Never stops hoping that things will change. “God will work it out.”
- Never stops fearing what will happen if things do change.

***Characteristics of the Victim  
The Exploited, Intimidated and Manipulated.  
Victims sacrifice their time and money  
And faith to support the system.***

- Makes tremendous sacrifices out of a combination of a desire to serve God and fear and intimidation.
- Wants to be a valuable part of something important—THE WORK.
- Was often victimized as a child.
- Looks for someone to make salvation easy.
- Often experiences loneliness.
- Actually believes money and effort will buy favor with God.
- Willingly sacrifices time, money and self for a cause considered to be of God.
- Is easily manipulated by addictive leader/persecutor and co-conspirators.
- Is spiritually molested and abused by addictive leader/persecutor and organization.
- Feels victimized when truth about the addictive faith ministry is revealed.
- Often abandons spiritual journey upon discovery of abuse by an exploitative, addictive leader/persecutor.



- Is often threatened by co-conspirators and addictive leaders/persecutors to keep the victimization a secret.
- Bears the pain of existing in a world of lies and deception, while passively hoping that God will work it out.
- Sometimes leaves one addictive faith system and moves to another.
- Frequently is very emotional in the practice of faith.
- Becomes isolated and lonely once he or she is disillusioned about a ministry or family.
- Though astute in business and other affairs, naively practices a blind faith in following the addictive leader/persecutor.
- Refuses to doubt questionable activities; instead rationalizes why exploitative things would be necessary for the ministry's survival.
- The more money given to the ministry, the greater the resolve to protect and defend it.
- Gives untold hours to develop the ministry and then sacrifices further in attempts to fix it.
- Sacrifices a wonderful family for the sake of an addictive leader/persecutor.
- Often has a martyr complex.
- May be seduced into a sexual relationship to meet "special" needs of the minister.
- Is reluctant to stop the victimization for fear of looking foolish—held captive by shame and guilt.
- Often is involved with the addictive faith ministry out of a desire to be or look important.
- Willingly pays a high price for acceptance even at the expense of personal morals.

### ***Addictive Faith System Pecking Order***

- The addictive faith system has its own pecking order and uses certain addictive roles for keeping that pecking order in place.
- The religious addictive leader/persecutor is bound by the fear of giving up the power-and-prestige position, lest he or she has to face failure and insignificance.
- The religious sycophant co-conspirator is bound to the system to have a purpose in life and to avoid the fear of letting the addictive leader/persecutor down.

- The religious enabler is bound by fear of ridicule and shame.
- The victim of religious abuse is bound to follow and blindly believe.
- The outcast is bound by the desire to let the truth be known and to be free from the addictive faith system.
- The roles, except for that of the outcast, are driven by the fear of not belonging to the addictive faith family. The only thing more fearful than not belonging to the family of the addictive faith, is the fear of not belonging to anything at all.

### *Characteristics of the Outcast*

- Is not a religious addict, but has true faith.
- Does not possess an addictive faith to the addictive leader or organization.
- Willingly stands alone.
- Speaks for the truth.
- Stands up for what is right and true.
- Is willing to be rejected by others in the addictive faith system.
- Can discern right from wrong.
- Commits to leaders having integrity.
- Refuses to be victimized by false teaching and lack of integrity.
- Usually loses a job within an addictive faith system over concern for it.
- Suffers rejection by friends after challenging the leadership of those within the addictive faith system.
- Often is treated as a leper.
- Is begged by others in the addictive faith system to support the leader.
- Endures shame for actions.
- Refuses to respect or be manipulated by those in the addictive faith system.
- Sees the truth and acts on it even if it produces great personal pain.
- Interprets reality for self.
- Is motivated to protect people from spiritual fraud.
- Is very dedicated to God and the people who seek a relationship with Him.
- Commands respect of others for courage.