



RECOVERING WHOLENESS / AN EDUCATIONAL COMPANION

Recognising Control · Returning to Truth

Grace honours humanity. Justice takes harm seriously. Trust responds to evidence.

Some methods of coercion used by traffickers can also appear in spiritually abusive settings. This guide compares methods of control; it does not equate spiritual abuse with trafficking. Examples are illustrative, not a diagnosis of a person or community.

Method of control	How it can appear in spiritual abuse	A truthful response
Making belonging conditional	“A faithful Christian would never question us.”	Questions do not cancel belonging to Jesus.
Exploiting indebtedness	“After everything we have done, you owe us obedience.”	Gratitude does not surrender conscience.
Threatening the person who resists	“God will punish you if you leave or speak.”	Claims of spiritual authority must be examined.
Restricting outside support	Discouraging independent counsel or portraying every outsider as dangerous.	Safe community makes room for independent help.
Reversing responsibility	Treating the person reporting harm as the cause of division.	Responsibility for harm belongs to the person who caused it.
Demanding silence	Using forgiveness to prevent disclosure or reporting.	Forgiveness does not require concealment.

Notice the pressure. Seek independent, trustworthy support. Choose a safe next step. If there is danger, prioritise safety and seek appropriate local help.

Sources: National Domestic Violence Hotline · What is spiritual abuse? | DHS Blue Campaign · COPS Office

magda@growthmindsetcoach.co.za

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