

A hard road to follow

Following Jesus can lead us along a hard road. His teaching and commands challenge us, and sometimes we can feel uncomfortable about what we may have to do to obey. In some cases, it can upset our equilibrium or even our wellbeing. We can ask the question why, and then hopefully put our trust in Him to provide the answer and see us safely over the hump in the road.

The teaching we receive generally comes to us through sermons and bible study, but sometimes through spiritual counselling and discussion with trusted companions on our journey of faith. But what happens when the instruction and teaching we are receiving begins to seem oppressive, unreasonable, and coercive? Can we be made to feel that we are failing in both our faith and Christian duty if we don't meet expectations? Is it making us anxious or unhappy? If so, we can then begin to ask whether this is an example of spiritually abusive behaviour.

The Methodist Church defines spiritual abuse as the inappropriate use of religious authority, oppressive teaching, or intrusive practices that cause physical, emotional, or sexual harm. As you might expect, the Church's safeguarding policies enable the investigation of such claims, aiming to support survivors, and build healthy, non-manipulative church cultures across its circuits.

This is an aspect of safeguarding policy and practice that has developed over the last 10-15 years, and the Church has rightly taken steps to heighten awareness of the topic. So, this is by means of a plug for people to sign up to one of the last two awareness raising sessions being held in the second half of the year. You can find full details through the link below. The Church sees this as a vitally important area to examine, to the extent that the new safeguarding training course for senior church leaders pays particular attention to this area of church life.

[Spiritual Abuse - The Methodist Church](#)

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