

My name is Jacob Ross. I was Pastor James personal assistant and security from August 2014 until I resigned around May 2015. Previously, I was the general manager for a private sports performance facility in Highland Park, IL named EFT Sports Performance. I began attending Harvest when my wife and I were dating and we became engaged members at Harvest Niles once married. After volunteering to help construct the new Niles campus and serving as security at Harvest Niles, Pastor Mo and Jim Rowan recommended me for a new dual role position as personal assistant and personal security for Pastor James. I accepted and changed career paths in hopes of becoming a pastor. Initially, the plan was for me to serve for 2 years in this capacity before enrolling in seminary and shifting to a pastoral role. I texted Pastor Mo last week and described my desire to provide the information I knew in a helpful, constructive way. My goal being that the vast majority of staff, elders, and members of Harvest were not privy to many of the situations I will highlight below. No one over my time at Harvest was with James more than I was and had a the level of access that I did. Those who are seeking to make the correct decision regarding the future of Harvest Bible Chapel simply can't without the correct information.

My primary responsibilities were

- Be a buffer between James and other staff outside of the XLT. My direct superiors were Pastor James and Scott Milholland.
- Schedule and provide travel for Pastor James to the majority of his destinations including, services, meetings, speaking engagements, conferences, and some personal business. Scott Milholland gave me a \$1000 a month car allowance with the expectation of purchasing or leasing a luxury SUV to drive James to the majority of his daily destinations. I traveled and stayed with James on every trip that was related to church business or his own speaking engagements around the US and internationally, including the Harvest missions trip to Israel, Malaysia, Nepal, South Africa, Kenya, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.
- Assist James in day to day business in an effort to decrease his workload and interaction with others. This included arranging some meetings and phone calls (in coordination with Chiquita Brown - his administrative assistant from August of 2014 until she was fired around March of 2015), handling the transfer of information for him through me to others, attending and engaging in many meetings and phone calls, and taking care of any task that James would ask me to do to ease his workload.
- Helping with personal matters such as driving him to meetings around and at the construction of his new house, maintaining and cleaning his truck, ordering food, picking up a car that he bought and had transferred to Elgin, accompanying him on several hunting trips, and running errands for Kathy and some family members
- Providing personal security through becoming a licensed armed security guard in IL and obtaining my conceal and carry permit. I was armed during every service and when appropriate for other engagements.

When I began my job, Kathy and James encouraged me to start fresh with them and not listen to or read about any previous issues with them and the church. They assured myself and Chiquita that this was a new structure and a fresh start to better serve James and the church. I had not attended Harvest previous to the incidents surrounding the initial creation of the Elephant's Debt website and was not aware of any previous issues.

Shortly after my employment started, I began to notice a pattern of duality in James. One side - a passionate pastor who diligently prepared and agonized over every detail of his sermons and how they were delivered. The other side - an irrational and ugly temperament of angry outbursts that would guilt and shame those it was directed towards. Also, he was a meticulous planner, who often used his influence to manipulate outcomes to fit his desires. James often told me he "never goes into a meeting that he doesn't already know how it will end." James would often in private criticize unfairly others, calling them idiots, stupid, among other names. While publicly pretending to like them and being nice to them.

Over my employment with James, I witnessed too many troublesome situations to recount here. It quickly became a normal pattern for those who fell on the

wrong side of James and for myself and Chiquita. Seemingly without reason or merit, regardless of our job performance. I will do my best to write a few of the situations that I witnessed that were particularly troubling to me. Many of these were also troubling at the time of my employment and were when I resigned directly to Scott Milholland- but they were met with a gag order and accusations of "bashing my pastor." I'll also do my best to categorize them.

Financial -

During my time, Scott and James had shifted structure so that James would not have to interact with anyone he chose not to, and only be "accountable" to Scott and Fred Adams. For example, James had a church credit card that was given outside of normal church protocol- set up directly through Fred. Myself and Chiquita Brown were issued a secondary card linked to that account in addition to our normal employee Harvest card that went through normal channels. I was instructed to put anything related to James on James' card. At the end of the month, the bill would come directly to our office, and I would go through my statement and James' statement and mark to the best of my ability what every charge was related to. Any charge that I didn't know the origin of, I was instructed to leave blank and give the statements directly to Fred. No one outside of James, myself, Chiquita and Fred had access too or was aware of these statements. The monthly charges were regularly in excess of \$10,000 and occasionally \$20,000 to over \$30,000 a month.

On our missions trip around the world, James had planned for us to stop in South Africa for him to participate in a hunting safari while traveling in between Nepal and Kenya. Pastor Jeff, Pastor James, and myself flew separate from the group on this trip. The safari was set up in a way which they had a price catalog of animals you could shoot and the respective price to do so. Initially, James had arranged a small budget with Fred of around \$5000 for this trip. During the trip, James decided he wanted to shoot a high value animal, a sable to be specific, which costs \$15,000 to \$20,000 to shoot. James called Fred and had him wire the money from the church to the safari company citing his stress from the trip and need for a relaxing vacation doing something he enjoyed. Fred wired the money. We also had a 3 or 4 day stay at a resort in the Dominican Republic in between Kenya and Haiti in which Pastor James, Pastor Jeff, and myself stayed and our wives flew in to join us. Again, James justified this expense as the result of the extreme stress he was under on the trip. The rest of the support staff on the trip did not attend.

We traveled to the studio in Aurora weekly to record for Pastor James TV program, often on Tuesdays and Thursday. I would pick James up at his house between 8 and 8:30am and drive him to the studio. Usually a 30 minute trip. After a period of time, James became tired and frustrated at traveling to Aurora to record. Shortly after, he instructed Fred to find over \$100,000 to build a studio in the undeveloped space on the Elgin campus so he wouldn't have to ride to Aurora. He believed his time was "too important and valuable to be wasted" in that fashion and that should justify the expense.

Shortly before New Years in 2015, James instructed me to call and book a room at a resort in Naples for himself and Kathy. He authorized me to spend whatever was necessary and put it on my credit card. He told me he'd call Fred and his friends on the elder board to justify the expense as necessary due to the tough year he had and the toll it took on him. The expense for the reservation to the best of my memory was in excess of \$20,000.

James also wanted to renovate his office and the entire executive floor of the Elgin campus. During the process of designing and bidding, James has Maida picked as the contractor for his office, his personal designer and builder of his new house, even though cheaper bids were offered. Many expenses on this build exceeded reasonable in my opinion, including my desk, which was a custom built in hardwood desk that cost several thousand dollars.

The expectation for booking travel was to book first class, nicer hotel rooms, and Tahoe or Suburbans as a rental car, even if it was just James and I. He also had me valet my Tahoe at Ohare for almost every flight we took. An unreasonable expense in my opinion considering we could have someone else drop us and avoid paying hundreds of dollars to park the SUV. James disagreed on grounds that it was more convenient for him and okay for the church to pay that, and many of the high travel expenses due to the stress he carried.

Pattern of Manipulation, Fear, Guilt, and Intimidation

I witnessed countless incidents of people on the wrong side of James at the wrong time and the anger, guilt, and shame that James heaped on people in these situations. I will speak to a few situations that I personally witnessed or that happened to me directly. Again, this was a normal pattern, occurring weekly or multiple times weekly.

Pastor James at his office and later at his home pressured me to admonish another Harvest employee for him, as a way of teaching me how to "get things done" and to keep him from scrutiny. I refused to do so, citing my belief that you don't have to be that way to manage employees. James became furious and physical - pushing me and yelling that "I'm not a man" "I'm a coward" and "I don't know how to do anything right." I chose to leave his house without saying or doing anything in order to prevent the situation from escalating further.

During our visit to Harvest in Hickory, NC - James met privately with then the Pastor of Hickory Kirk Gebhards. Kirk told James about the problems he had been having within his church and his elder board. James assured him that he was a talented pastor and "too good" for Hickory and that he had a plan. James had privately for sometime complained to myself that Pastor Dave Learned was "failing miserably" as the campus pastor at Rolling Meadows and something had to be done. According to James, Dave didn't have the leadership, passion, or people skills to lead Rolling Meadows. On that trip, James began to orchestrate the removal of Dave with the intention of bringing Kirk to Rolling Meadows. James acknowledged to me that he had to be very careful in doing this to not upset those at Rolling Meadows who were close to Dave but acknowledging that leveraging Hickory's internal trouble as a great chance to make it happen. He then bragged that "he should be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company" and "can you imagine how ruthless I'd be if I wasn't pastoring a church." This is one example of James working behind the scenes, avoiding proper channels, to move people in or out of various positions. To recount any more to that level of specificity would be difficult, as James was often on the phone and I would only hear James speak, not the other person. In my opinion, no one should be fired or moved without a valid reason, agreed upon by a group of leadership as to why and when it would happen. Rather too many times James would make a call and someone would be let go or moved shortly thereafter.

On our missions trip around the world, Kirk VanMaanen's role was to proceed Pastor James, Pastor Jeff, and myself to ensure that every visit to a church or church related activity was set up and designed to optimize James' time. In Nepal, we had a question and answer session with the pastors of the Nepal churches. The goal was to have scheduled, private time where they could ask James anything. James privately didn't believe that all of the pastors were real and had real churches. During the Q&A - the pastors did their best to ask questions related to their journey and their church. On top of the language barrier (we had a translator), James was infuriated during and after that the pastors hadn't asked "better questions" and "didn't realize how valuable his time was and how lucky they were to have a man of his experience there to question." He then blamed Kirk for "not doing enough to properly prepare them to understand how significant his being there was" and asking "terrible questions" and "wasting his time." That night James had Kirk come to dinner in the public courtyard of our hotel in Nepal. James then dressed down Kirk publicly for over an hour, yelling, infuriated, that in James' opinion his time had been wasted. Kirk was in tears, broken down crying multiple times. He continued to offer his apologies to James but James didn't let up until he felt like it. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to witness. The anger, the tone, the utterly horrible treatment of Kirk for no reason other than James ego had been hurt. And to continue to witness Kirk's humility and brokenness at James' outrage, and James continuing to lay into him in a public place. Had we not been in Nepal I would have resigned that day. On the same trip, two more very similar incidents happened again to Kirk and to Dan Lidstone. Both times, the level of anger from James and how he spoke to them is difficult to describe and hard to think about.

I began to get more and more depressed. Often I would stay at work much longer than I was supposed to out of fear, bc if James was working on something

till 6:30 or 7pm and I wasn't there when he needed me, James would promptly let me know how worthless I was. James fired Chiquita for her "incompetence". Jen was moved over to be his new assistant from Pastor Rick - because James didn't believe that Pastor Rick "really did anything anyway" and he needed an administrative assistant more than he did. My wife noticed how stressed I was constantly. I began to hate waking up and going to work. I was never off. James would text or call all hours. And I never did enough, regardless of how much or how well I did it.

I believe the vast majority of people I worked with at Harvest would speak to my competence, work ethic, and character. Even Scott told me "I was the most talented person he had ever worked with" and "I had the potential to do anything at Harvest." But yet I found myself more and more on the receiving end of James' anger. One Saturday evening after service, I was driving James from Rolling Meadows to a wealthy donors house for a private dinner. In the Rolling Meadows parking lot, James wanted me to cut through the traffic leaving to expedite our arrival so we wouldn't upset this donor. I turned the wrong way in the parking lot and it took us an extra 5 minutes to leave, as we were in traffic with other members leaving service. James proceeded to yell at me for the next 20 minutes about how "stupid" and "incompetent" I am. I was in tears in shame, anger, and frustration. But I knew that saying anything would only prolong it. James had me wait outside in the car while he had dinner. Not sure if that was punishment, but it sure felt like it. Normally I was invited into meetings like that.

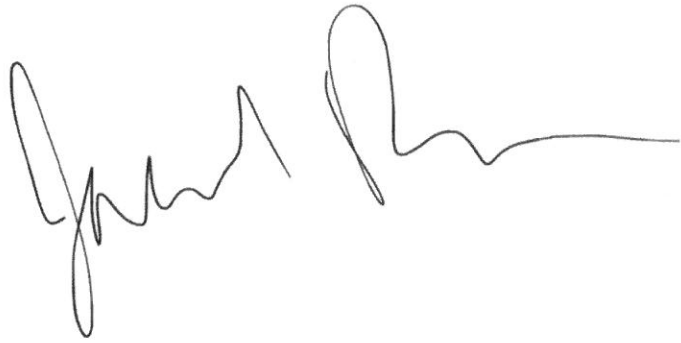
The day I resigned was a Sunday, James asked me to take his name off the ADT call list for the pastor house and Camp Harvest as the alarm had went off the night before. I was the secondary person on the list. Per ADT protocol, the only way a primary person could be taken off the list was if both the primary and secondary persons got on the phone and confirmed the switch. James was very frustrated that day and had already lashed out pre service at a few people and then instructed me to try and make the switch instead of sitting in the first service, performing my security role. In between services I informed him that I can't make the switch without him getting on the phone, simply because I can't be myself and pretend to be him on the same call. He proceeded to yell that I'm "worthless" and "of no use to him" and "I should just go home" - so I did. I went and packed up my office, notified Scott Milholland of my immediate resignation, and left.

The next morning, Monday, Scott and Jeff were at my door by 8am. They wanted to see what they could do to get me to stay. They told me how much I was helping James and the church and while James had his flaws, what he was doing was important. I told them the only person who needed to be there wasn't and he lived 5 minutes away. I told both Scott and Jeff some of what happened. They made it clear that they didn't want to hear it. Scott emailed me a few times about why I was leaving and asking me to stay. I told him a bit more and then abruptly replied "Stop bashing my pastor." Scott and I met one more time as I turned over my pistol that I had bought and Harvest reimbursed me for. After that I never spoke to James, Scott, Jeff, Luke (who was my small group leader), Landon, or any other Harvest employee I had worked closely with over my time. It was like my family had been shunned.

Pastor Mo did reach out, I told him a few things, but not much. Honestly at the time, I wasn't sure who I could trust and honestly didn't want to do anything to harm my church. I believed in it then and believe even now that God reigns, not man. God WILL make all things work together for His purpose for those who love Him.

I hope this information is helpful. It gives me no joy to write this. Or even think about it. For the most part, this is stuff I have tried to forget. I had no desire then or now to go public, even though I was forced to sign a non disclosure and threatened on it before leaving. I pray that this information is constructive and shared in a constructive way. The culture of secrecy and protectionism has to end.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacob Ross". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jacob Ross
2/3/2019