

Who can we **TRUST**?

In order to be trustworthy, the pastor must have Christ dwelling in his heart. This indwelling will manifest itself in the pastor's outward behavior. He will treat everyone with Christian dignity and politeness. His speech will be cultured, elevated and pure. He'll have patience with, and sympathy for, others. He'll have a consecrated desire to serve others, not himself. As a true servant of God, he will be honest, faithful and loyal to his calling.

What is our **RESPONSIBILITY** to God?

Our responsibility to God is to uphold His Word as truth and to hold others accountable for their actions. After acknowledging the pastor's violation of sacred trust and authority, we must take responsibility for the situation. Truth and honest disclosure are crucial. This is a critical time and we cannot afford to go into denial or blame-shifting. The church has a responsibility to the pastor and his family, but the victim and her family should never be neglected.

How can we **HEAL** from this?

Only God can bring true healing from such pain and devastation. Pray for each other, the pastor, the victim and their families. Ask God to forgive and heal them, and to rebuild their marriages. Honestly discuss your feelings, hurt and pain. Reach out to others around you who are hurting and offer them support and encouragement. Ultimately, we must remember to look to God, not man, for spiritual wholeness.

THE **Hope** of Survivors

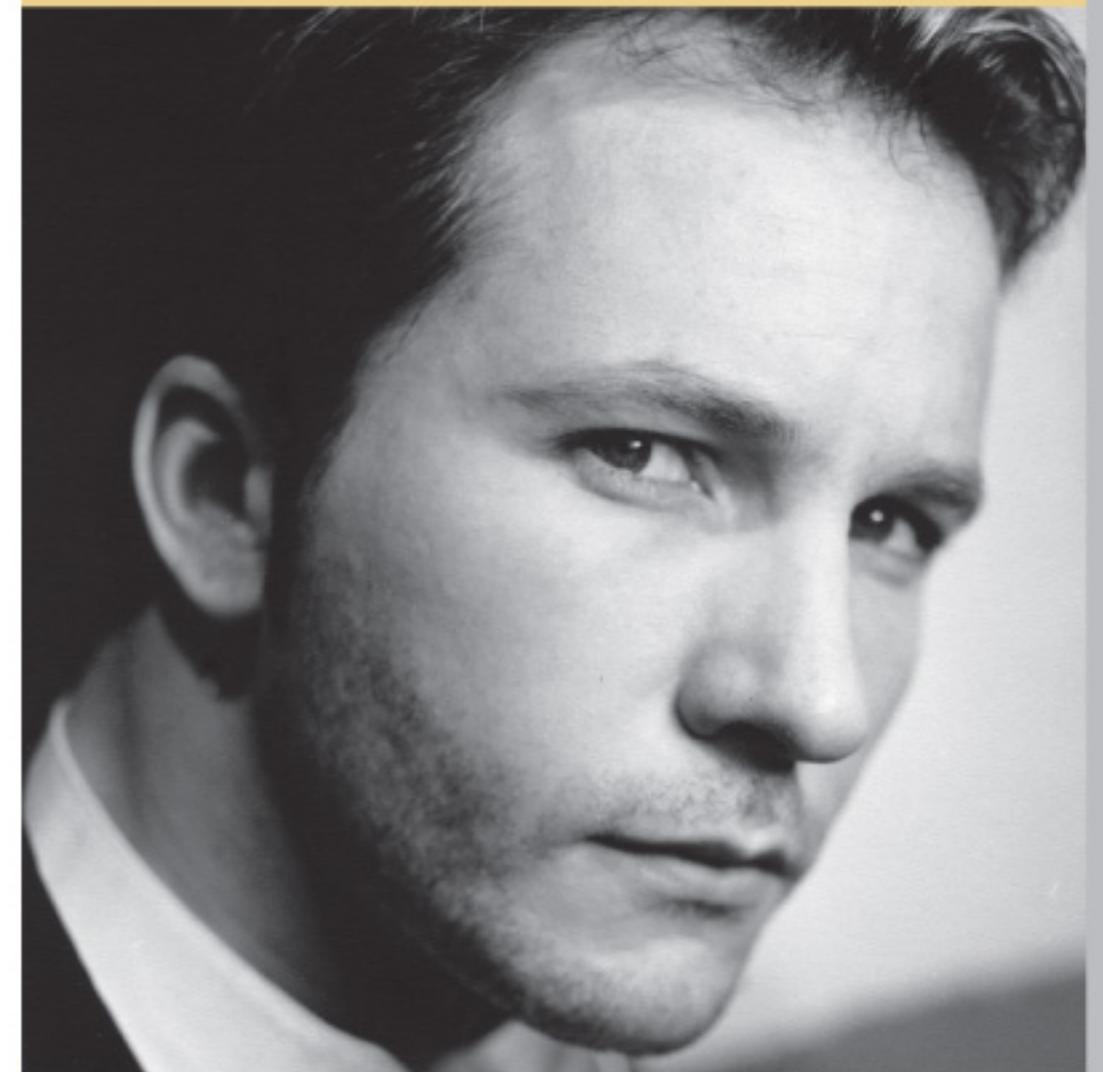
A ministry of compassion providing support, hope and encouragement for victims of clergy sexual abuse and misconduct.

How **SHOULD** the church handle this situation?

1. Inform the congregation of what really happened. This can be done tactfully and without intimate details. Full disclosure is important. The congregation should be educated to the fact that this was NOT an "affair" or a "consensual relationship" but, rather, it was an abuse of power.
2. The church has the responsibility to relieve the offending pastor of his sacred office immediately. If he is not repentant, further steps should be taken to disfellowship him.
3. If the situation is not known publicly (meaning outside of the church), then don't "air the church's dirty laundry" and bring shame and reproach on the cause of God. Handle the situation truthfully and tactfully within the proper organizational structure.
4. The church should make provision to assist the pastor, his family and the victims in getting proper counseling, and provide the opportunity for them to heal spiritually and emotionally.

For more information, please contact us at:
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Our **PASTOR** has
FALLEN. What can
our **CHURCH** do?



Do we **FORGIVE**?
Can we **FORGET**?

Did our pastor have an **AFFAIR?**

No. An affair implies mutual consent, equality and agreement on behalf of both parties. This equality does not exist in a pastor/congregant relationship.

When a person in power or authority abuses the trust placed in them to suit their own purposes, it is not considered “mutual consent.” It is abuse, not an affair.

Why is this **ABUSE?**

It is abuse because there is a tremendous imbalance of power authority, knowledge (Biblical training), experience and responsibility (and often age), between a pastor and a congregant. Due to these imbalances, there can be no mutual consent to a relationship of any kind, especially not a physical one.

“When ministers thus take advantage of the confidence the people place in them and lead souls to ruin, they make themselves as much more guilty than the common sinner as their profession is higher.”—Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5

Is there a reason for this **IMBALANCE?**

Even though God designed the church to

have a spiritual leader, someone who stands as a representative of Christ is never to use his position to violate others. These imbalances exist because the pastor is the one in a position of authority and is spiritually in charge of the church.

This also creates an automatic level of trust which can make someone vulnerable to a pastor’s inappropriate suggestions.



How can this **HAPPEN?**

During a counseling session or when working together, the pastor may begin by sharing his feelings for the woman, sometimes even creating

problems in her marriage, then subtly twisting Scripture to encourage or justify his wrong behavior.

How could we have **KNOWN?**

There are usually indicators in the pastor’s life if something is off course. Outwardly, the pastor may be overly friendly, flirtatious, controlling or manipulative. He may counsel women alone, or make inappropriate comments toward or about women. His sermon content and style may suddenly change, as well as his social activities.

These are some of the outward signs of an inward struggle that may be the result of the pastor neglecting prayer and his own devotional life.

“...the mind must be constantly going out after God. If worldliness is allowed to come in, if we have no desire to pray, no desire to commune with Him who is the source of strength and wisdom, the Spirit will not abide with us.”—Our High Calling, page 154

Satan is constantly seeking to destroy God’s messengers and children. This is why we need to continually lift up each other in prayer for God’s guidance and protection.

Did this occur in the **BIBLE?**

“Many who profess to be the ministers of Christ are like the sons of Eli who ministered in the sacred office and took advantage of their office to engage in crime and commit adultery, causing the people to transgress the law of God.”—The Sin of Licentiousness, TSB 99.2

Shouldn’t we, as Christians, **FORGIVE** and forget?

Yes, but no matter how much you may want to forgive the pastor and put this behind you, there are several things to be carefully considered first.

You need to recognize that the pastor has violated a sacred trust and ministry that God has called him to uphold. The pastor is the shepherd of the flock and, as the shepherd, it is his duty to guard all of Christ’s sheep. However, if he has abused his position, he has become a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Given the enormity of the violation and the breach of sacred trust, the pastor can NEVER expect to have the trust or responsibility of God’s people again.