



THE
PASTOR'S
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SERIES™



Ministering to the
Needs of Your Minister

A photograph of a stone path made of flat, rectangular stones laid out in a winding pattern across a grassy area. The path leads from the foreground towards the background, flanked by trees and foliage. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day.

Pastoral Restoration:

The Path to Recovery

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Pastoral Restoration: *The Path to Recovery*

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Foreward

In November 2006, I was sitting in my room at the Mount Hermon Conference Center in Northern California. The phone rang, and it was an attorney who was representing New Life Church in Colorado Springs. He introduced himself and then proceeded to ask me if I would serve on the restoration committee for fallen pastor, Ted Haggard. I was shocked by the invitation, but honored to be included with such highly respected men as Pastor Tommy Barnett and Pastor Jack Hayford.

I asked the attorney for some time to think and pray about the assignment. I met with Focus on the Family President Jim Daly and our founder, James Dobson. They agreed it would be a challenging opportunity, but urged me to join the team of restorers. Time alone will tell if we have been successful in our efforts to return a man and his family to emotional and spiritual stability.

The request to aid the Haggard family was unique due to the high profile media coverage it had received, but it was not unique to our team in Pastoral Ministries, which deals with these kinds of issues nearly every day. It is because of our calling to support clergy members and their families worldwide, and out of love for the local church, that this publication of “Pastoral Restoration: The Path to Recovery” is made available to you.

It seems today that the church and its leaders are experiencing a genuine and increasing attack by Satan. It is difficult to know why this could be happening. It might be due to stress or burnout in the lives of clergy, or it

could just be carelessness. Whatever it is, it is sin and it must be addressed. What we have found most often is that moral or ethical failure can be categorized in three phrases:

1. A lack of accountability and too much power.
2. Unresolved conflict at home.
3. Limited time spent alone with God.

I, in no way, mean to simplify a complicated issue, but the truth is that failure to address any one of the three challenges I have mentioned can lead to great sorrow and ministerial failure.

Most of you who read this booklet will either be Christian leaders or officials in the local church. Please read our words carefully. They are not comprehensive or completely definitive, but they will prove helpful and seasoned, due to long hours of dealing with men and women who have failed both God and one another.



This will be true even though our suggestions will not apply to every situation—due to the differences in church structure, bylaws and personalities. “Pastoral Restoration: The Path to Recovery” is also intended as an alert to both the clergy and church leader to be vigilant and pro-active when it comes to any indication or revelation of an indiscretion. Remember,

it is not just about one family or one church. When one of our leaders falls, it sends shockwaves throughout the Body of Christ, and all of us pay a very high price.

On our own, it is unlikely that any of us will be able to withstand the onslaught of the enemy, but there are precautions we can take. For instance, we can, each day, put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). James reminds us to resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you (James 4:7).

Howard Hendricks once said, “Satan will lie in the weeds for forty years to entrap one of God’s servants.” He is patient, he will wait and he will watch for just the right moment—a moment that will do the greatest damage to the Kingdom of God.

As I talk to clergy around the world, I remind them that our greatest defense is intimacy with God and right relationships at home, at church and with colleagues. A busy pastor must get adequate rest and encourage honest accountability from one or more of his fellow pastors. Ministry must be meaningful and filled with joy and thanksgiving. Every servant of God must have a vigilant spirit. The Apostle Paul writes, “Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).

I would like to acknowledge and express appreciation to our Pastoral Ministries team—Dan Davidson, Roger Charman, John Barner, Alex Person,

Ralph Kelly and George Stahnke—for their input and research into this piece; and to Chris Fabry, our expert writer and friend, for putting all of the words in the right places; and to you, who like watchmen on the wall, stand guard against the enemy’s attack on the church and those who lead her.

H.B. London Jr.
Vice President
Pastoral Ministries
Focus on the Family

Introduction

This booklet’s purpose is to help church leaders deal with the trauma of a pastor’s spiritual or moral failure. A resource of this size is not an in-depth manual, but we at Focus on the Family® believe it can help point toward a process of restoration for the leader.

The experience of failure in a leader’s life, whether it is sexual, ethical, financial or some other type, not only affects the fallen leader, but the family and everyone in that person’s sphere of influence. Like a tsunami crashing onto the shore, the waves of hurt, shame and disbelief pummel the unsuspecting and can lead to lifelong devastation.

However, we believe God is the healer of broken lives. He delights in restoring those seemingly damaged beyond repair. Isaiah 61:1, 3 captures the essence of this, and it’s the same passage that Jesus quotes about Himself in Luke chapter 4:



The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners . . . and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

David and other Old Testament saints experienced God's compassion and grace. Indeed, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness" (Exodus 34:6, NASB). This is His nature. His compassion, grace, mercy and love will guide and comfort you during this painful season. He will ultimately bring healing and renewal. He can use the event of a leader's fall to strengthen and nurture the body of Christ.

Above all, as you go through this process, know that there is hope. Though the valley you walk through may feel very dark and lonely, trust in God and lean on His understanding. Our prayer is that this booklet will help you accomplish the task of restoration.

What to Do First

At first, it's just a rumor. People act aloof or whisper in small groups. Details are sketchy and the first response is to dismiss and deny the news. "Not him/her!" you think. Or, perhaps the news falls like an avalanche, covering you and your congregation via the news media.



In order to handle such a spiritual crisis, it's helpful to have a response team in place. You cannot afford to simply turn away and hope things will "blow over." Depending on how your church constitution is set up, the church board (or governing body) should choose several trusted members to prayerfully come together, submitting to God and to each other.

It will be helpful to have one or more members of the team who have the spiritual gift of discernment.

The Issue of Discovery

As a team, identify the problem. Did the leader confess to some indiscretion or was he accused? No matter what the charge, take it seriously and investigate exactly what happened. Go over the time frame—does the accusation seem plausible? Interview each person individually and pray for God's guidance. No matter how much you may trust an individual's reputation, strive to discover the truth.

If the charge seems true, notify the leadership of the denomination or ruling body. Prompt notification is vital to keep the communication lines open in all aspects of this process.



Keep a written record of all discussions, decisions and actions taken by the team. This will help greatly if the matter escalates into a lawsuit. A written record protects the church and provides a framework of details for those seeking answers.

Depending on the nature of the failure, you may need to contact the police or other authorities. In one story detailed in an article by Mike Woodruff and Dennis Kasper¹, a youth minister approached the church leadership and confessed to using alcohol and drugs with teens in his care. Later, the teens accused the youth minister of molestation. The church responded swiftly. From their crisis experience come these eight recommended steps:

1. **Immediately seek legal counsel.** Consult someone who specializes in crisis management. Discuss issues of how to protect the work of the team under the attorney/client privilege.
2. **Determine if a criminal report is required.** Many states require the reporting of incidents involving minors. Failure to do so may lead to a lawsuit.
3. **Advise the accused to seek an attorney.** If the allegation is criminal in nature, the church cannot offer the accused legal counsel.
4. **Contact the church's insurance company.** In order to ensure coverage, notify your insurer as soon as possible.
5. **Assign liaisons.** A representative from the group should provide pastoral support for the victim and victim's family. A separate person should provide the same support for the accused.

6. **Develop a communication plan.** A point person should be selected who will communicate with the congregation, the media, the authorities and the lawyers. Agree upon what communication will be offered.
7. **Investigate further.** It is not the church's duty to investigate the guilt or innocence of the accused. Criminal investigation should be left to the authorities. However, the church must determine if there are any other victims.
8. **Make counseling available.** Prepare to supply counseling to any and all who may need it.²

After the team's initial interviews, the truth should become clearer. Depending on the denominational association and rules of order, it may be helpful to put the pastor or leader on administrative leave. This may be a paid leave, depending on the situation.

If the team cannot discern the truth or a division springs up, seek outside help. You are not abandoning your duties by asking for assistance. Turn to denominational leaders for a referral or to another church body that has gone through a similar experience.

The Issue of Proper Communication

It's important to determine as early as possible what to share with the congregation. Remember, the possibility of a lawsuit looms, so the assistance of legal counsel will help you decide when and what you may share. This may take the form of a special meeting with members. A letter keeps



communication lines open, letting members know appropriate information. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that this communication be as honest and open as possible, without jeopardizing legal principles. There exists a strong potential for gossip, rumors and even a church split if this communication is not handled well.

Also, consider pulpit supply. Who will care for the congregation during this difficult time? Another pastor on staff may feel inadequate to carry the assignment. If so, an outside pastor should be sought. If, however, an associate pastor feels confident and the team agrees, the congregation may feel more at ease with a familiar face than a stranger. The goal of this process is how to best communicate with and care for the congregation.

The Issue of Family Care

Of paramount importance is nurture for the leader's spouse and children. Many times, the situation is so painful that these dear ones suffer silently, unnoticed and abandoned, not only by their family member, but the church body. Take special precaution that the spouse and children feel loved. Provide counseling and other care, if needed.

For smaller congregations, many of these recommendations will seem daunting. Hiring lawyers, counselors and conducting investigations can become costly. There may be a lawyer or counselor in your church or a nearby congregation who would be willing to assist in this process for a reduced fee. You might even call our Pastoral Care Line at Focus on the Family for more information. The toll-free number is 877-233-4455.



Network with other pastors and churches for a referral that fits your needs.

Relevant Scriptures:

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, NIV).

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:1-2, NIV).

Restoration of the Pastor

Few aspects of church ministry are as difficult as the topic of pastoral restoration. Who can be restored? To what position may they be restored? While these questions are important, it is vital to recognize that restoring the leader to the original leadership position is not the team’s primary concern. Directing the leader to fellowship with God, care for the spouse and family, and healing those who have been wronged are the most important tasks. If, on rare occasions and after careful examination, it is possible for the leader to be restored to the pulpit or original position, may God be praised. However, if that does not happen, it does not mean the team’s efforts have failed.

If, after thorough examination, the accusation against the pastor is found to be true, the leader should be confronted. (This may be by the “team” or a church board, depending on the governing structure.) There must be, on the part of the leader, a genuine show of repentance and remorse—and not simply as a result of being *caught* (see 2 Corinthians 7:10). It’s a good sign if a leader acknowledges the sin and voluntarily submits to the authority of the governing body, willing to take any and all steps, and assenting that the congregation’s health is the highest priority. If, however, the leader waffles, chooses the role of “victim” and does not take responsibility, this is a warning

sign that the leader is not ready for the restoration process to begin.

In the online resource, *The Healing of a Warrior* by Michael L. and Sharon P. Hill, the authors suggest a step-by-step process of identifying real repentance. If these are not present, there may be little hope for restoration:

1. **Confession.** Sincere regret and an acknowledgment of the magnitude of the sin and why it was wrong.
2. **Change of attitude and behavior.** A shift from blaming others to a willingness to bear the blame.
3. **Following a plan.** A willingness to follow a written contract detailing steps for restoration.
4. **Accountability.** A willingness to meet with one biblically grounded mature believer each week who will prepare a report of the leader’s progress. It will be important to have access to all e-mail and Internet accounts.³

If the above conditions are met, restoration is possible. If there is a sense of brokenness before God and a willingness to have His will in the situation rather than a grasping for “everything to be like it was,” this is a good sign. However, if the leader balks at such a process and does not see the need of further discipline, restoration may be impossible.

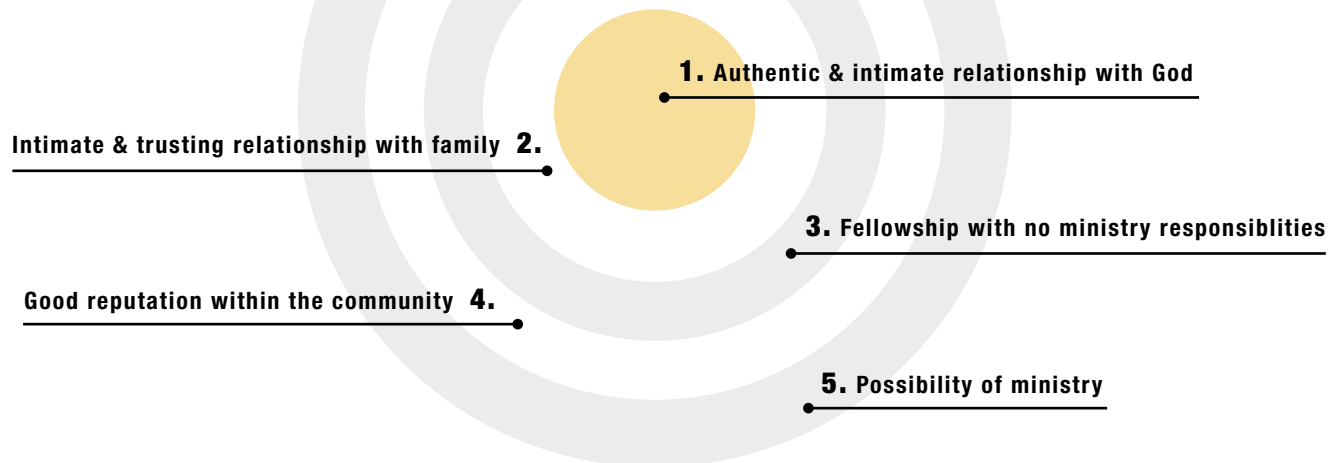


Targeted Progressive Restoration

The purpose of this chart is to diagram a prioritized biblical progression of restoration. Misplaced priorities in the process invite disaster. Too many times the focus is “how quick can I get back into ministry?” rather than “how do I renew my relationship with God, family, congregation and community?”

Impatience is the enemy of restoration. It takes time to restore those who have fallen. It takes time to prove the authenticity of repentance (Matthew 3:8, Acts 26:20). It takes time to rebuild broken relationships. It takes time to regain a lost reputation.

You can't rebuild in a day what years of neglect have produced (Nehemiah 4:10).



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Early on in the restoration process, it is a good idea for the church to provide the fallen leader with professional counseling and/or an evaluation by a professional Christian counselor. Such a psychologist will help sort out, from an objective viewpoint, what has led to the failure and what steps may need to be taken for personal wholeness. This can be an invaluable resource for the healing process.

In many cases, there will be pressure from the congregation to restore the leader fully and quickly. They will point to the leader's "anointing" or the numbers of people who have grown under the pastor's leadership. They may push the committee by asking questions about how many days or weeks it will be before the leader returns. It must be communicated up front by the leadership that the process will not be hurried, will remain open-ended and that full restoration to the original position will be rare.

On the opposite extreme are those who will want the fallen leader to be "cut off." They will seek immediate termination—no severance, no counseling and no recourse for restoration. Again, with the proper help, time can heal these deep wounds inflicted in the church body.

Both of these extremes are based on emotion and a lack of a biblical understanding. Moral failure by church leadership on any level must be dealt with in a scriptural manner if the ministry family and church body are to survive the trauma.

Before discussing proper discipline and restoration further, look at God's

immutable standards for church leadership. 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 provide a framework for choosing leaders. These qualifications must be evident in all overseers.

"An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." (1 Timothy 3:2-7, NASB)

"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:6-9, NIV)



If a minister is to follow the guidelines God has given, these qualifications must be met.

There are many pitfalls for a leader—embezzlement, spousal abuse and others. However, in a majority of cases of moral failure, sexual temptation seems to be the primary factor involved.

If a leader has been sexually involved with anyone other than his or her spouse, or has been frequently involved with pornography, he/she is biblically disqualified to serve. Sexual sin is not an isolated issue by itself, but rather a cluster of character flaws culminating in corrupt sexual expression. He must be removed for the following reasons:

He is guilty of infidelity. He has sinned against God, sinned against his spouse, broken faith/trust with his leadership team and with the congregation who put their confidence in him. (*Matthew 5:27-28, 2 Peter 2:14, Hebrews 13:4*)

He is no longer blameless (Greek: unrebukeable). There should be nothing in his conduct on which someone could ground a charge or accusation—having unquestionable integrity, being irreproachable, not able to find fault with, or deserving of censure. (*1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6*)

He no longer has a good reputation. There is no longer an excellent testimony and reputation with the non-Christian community. A church leader must be a respected person “on the job” as well as in the church. (*1 Timothy 3:7*)

He is not a man of good behavior. He does not have a modest, orderly

(disciplined), respectable lifestyle. He is no longer honorable, dignified or decorous. He does not exhibit good deportment, has become forward, boastful, arrogant, presumptuous or not well-behaved. (*1 Timothy 3:2*)

He is not temperate (Greek: self-controlled). This denotes keeping oneself in hand, disciplined, self-restrained, self-controlled over appetites and affections. (*Titus 1:8*)

His behavior is not holy. He is no longer devout, pious, pleasing to God and set apart for His service, as opposed to being worldly (carnal) and not totally dedicated to God. (*Titus 1:8*)

He has been self-willed. Church leaders cannot be dominated by self-interest, be self-pleasing, stubborn or arrogant. They must be submitted to proper authority, seeking to please God and others, and not ‘set’ in their own ways. (*Titus 1:7*)

He has not been sober in his thinking. That is, he hasn’t been sober-minded, prudent, sensible, discreet, having a sound mind. He has been given to fanciful thinking or emotional irrationality, not using sound judgment. (*1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8*) ⁵

Here are some recommendations, if such a circumstance were to happen to your congregation:

- Begin immediate administrative leave, the length to be determined.
- Keep copious notes of all related meetings, testimony, counsel, etc.
- Seek legal counsel if infidelity involves another person. Offer counseling to all persons involved—not just the ministry couple.
- Contact the legal department of your insurer, as a lawsuit could ensue. They will explain the provisions of your policy and



hopefully give you good legal counsel.

- Begin intensive counseling for at least a week or two. Don't just send the offending leader. Insist that both husband and wife go together for counseling. Referrals are available upon request from the Counseling (719-531-3400) and Pastoral Ministries (877-233-4455) departments of Focus on the Family.
- Prepare a written statement of the situation to be read to the congregation. This will keep you on track with what needs to be communicated initially and help you avoid inappropriate details. Do not simply "shoot from the hip" or "let the Spirit move." Your words are important and deserve detailed attention.



- Formulate a restoration plan whereby the leader is restored to Christ, spouse, church body—and, only rarely, to ministry.

This must be done with much counsel and care. The marriage relationship has been seriously damaged. Healing and rebuilding trust will take time and must be proven to be valid (Acts 20:20, Matthew 3:8, Ephesians 4:28). Many believe this process can take a *minimum of 6 to 18 months* to rebuild. Under no circumstances should the man be placed back into any position of leadership until this has taken place, and even then it should be rare. The marriage and the individual pastor are the primary concerns, *not his ministry!*

- Determine a severance package and follow through with the restoration plan where possible.
- Begin the process of finding a new leader to fill the void.⁶

Agreement in the leadership team is absolutely critical. Any division will further weaken the team's ability to function and care for the congregation. "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" (Amos 3:3, NIV). "If a house is divided (split into factions and rebelling) against itself, that house will not be able to last" (Mark 3:25, AMP). If the team is not united in its understanding and approach to the crisis, another team skilled in conflict resolution may need to be brought in.

Restoration of the Church

God has chosen to use fallible human beings to build His kingdom. That they fall grieves Him, but does not take Him by surprise. Because He is all-powerful, He can take a devastating situation in a congregation and turn





it into a glory to His name.⁷ Take heart in the Lord and in the power of His might. It may take time, but God can not only lead you through difficult times, He can pull His people much closer to Himself through those deep waters.

Continue the difficult work you've already begun through the process of restoration with the leader by communicating well with the congregation. Your point person for the restoration team should provide the body with discreet updates about the process. The church staff can also model the grief and recovery development through their own counseling and working through the problems themselves.

Helpful ideas include:

- Grief counseling—for staff members, as well as the congregation.
- Congregational meetings for the purpose of communication and healing.
- Small group meetings to help work through issues.
- Sunday school classes on recovery and restoration.
- Getting outside help from a team of individuals committed to the health of the body.

Congregations can add to the pressure and discouragement of a pastor when they bring up unhealthy or unrealistic expectations. The restoration team can help, not in blaming a congregation, but by tenderly preparing the congregation for the typical permanent removal of the fallen leader or for the rare re-entry to ministry. Just as we are told in Scripture to “restore him gently,” speaking of a church leader,⁸ so the congregation must be led into a gentle

healing. However, they must understand that restoration to the pulpit after a moral failure should happen on very rare occasions, and only after much prayer and firm assurance that the fallen pastor has truly found healing and forgiveness from God.

In the book, *Restoring the Fallen*, the authors point out that there are three general responses to a fallen leader: “Cheap grace” that is quick and non-confronting; a legalistic approach that banishes the offending leader; or (most frequent) simply ignoring the problem. But a fourth alternative exists that is comprehensive and involves accountability, commitment to all members of the body and, often, a public disclosure. “In studying Scripture, we notice that teaching on discipline and restoration is always tied to a local fellowship and not simply to a group of well-intentioned friends.”⁹

This same resource lists eight traits of a restoring church. A restoring church is:

1. **A safe place for people to be real.** Too many times, church is a place to hide our faults and failures. We need to foster a climate of openness and honesty about our weaknesses and sins.
2. **A place where godly judgment is administered.** The church should be sensitive to sin and committed to dealing with it. A church that looks the other way and does not confront sin is not a restoring church. The goal is not to blast sinners, but to gently draw them into fellowship and forgiveness.
3. **A place where grace is extended.** Jesus extended grace to the woman caught in adultery, but did not ignore her sin (John 8:11).



The church should be a model of this type of love—where we are committed not only to justice, but to mercy as well.

4. **A place for discipline.** A restoring church is not afraid to enter into loving but firm church discipline. And, where there is no repentance, the church is instructed to extend discipline.
5. **A place for accountability.** Having someone committed enough to ask hard questions—such as, “Have you read, seen or listened to anything this last week that was sexually inappropriate?”—can have a freeing effect. It helps us understand we are not alone on this journey.
6. **A place where truth-telling is practiced.** Ephesians 4:25 says, “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” Telling the truth silences rumors. It also helps us open our lives to each other and helps us curtail sinful patterns that destroy.
7. **A place where the restoree is validated for return to ministry.** Restoration to full ministry should be rare and may require an advocate who has walked through the process to speak on behalf of the leader’s complete healing. Just as Barnabas spoke about Paul and assured believers he had met Jesus and had changed, so a church body can speak of the change brought about in a restoree’s life.
8. **A place that is a haven for the fallen person’s family.** Too often, the spouse and children of the offender are treated as if the sin was their fault. Perhaps people don’t know what to say to them or feel

uncomfortable at first. Realize it is extremely important for the church to stand with them in support during this traumatic time.

Root Causes and Prevention

Many leaders ask, “Rather than waiting for a pastor to fall, what can we do now to prevent such failure?” Prevention is always preferable to waiting for a problem to arise. Here are a few ideas along those lines.

Keeping Our Priorities: First Things First

“The question is not whether we fail again and again—that is a given; the question is whether, over a period of time, we are developing a practiced habit of divine fellowship.”¹⁰

When a life is driven by the responsibilities, desires and expectations of others, leaders can get lost in the time demands and complexities of ministry. Leaders must establish and hold to biblical priorities and goals.

Our first responsibility is to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind.¹¹ “Intimacy with Christ is the essential element and necessary for useful ministry.”¹² To build intimacy with the Lord requires that we spend time in His presence. The spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, fasting, study, sharing our faith, etc., help each of us to maintain that cutting-edge first love.¹³ Developing an intimate relationship with God and family includes rest. Perpetual labor is not a sign of devotion or spirituality. Jesus rested and



encouraged His followers to do the same. Jesus said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31, NASB).¹⁴

Encourage your pastor to:

- Take a day or two of rest to unplug each week.
- Spend quality time with his family each day.
- Date his spouse weekly.
- Get away with his spouse once per quarter for at least two days.
- Attend at least one seminar every six months for mental stimulation and spiritual renewal.
- Build lasting memories with his family by prioritizing birthdays, anniversaries and other important family events.
- Take a family vacation at least once per year.

Dealing With Temptation: Deal or No Deal

“No matter how many pleasures Satan offers you, his ultimate intention is to ruin you. Your destruction is his highest priority.”¹⁵ Many leaders live like a TV game show—how much risk can I take and still win the prize? Encourage your pastor to heed God’s instructions to “keep alert and pray, otherwise temptation will overpower us.”¹⁶

Recognizing Root Causes for Failure

The root causes of moral and spiritual failure are many. It may stem from the leader’s family of origin. There may have been abuse in the leader’s background. Whatever the reason, it is no excuse to keep on sinning. That’s why it’s so important for the leader and the people who love that

person to seek help immediately.

Other root problems may include a lack of depth in the leader’s relationship with Christ. A man is often able to compartmentalize his life and justify sin. If a leader does not cope well with stress, that inability will lead to some action detrimental to his spiritual or physical health.

There may be a marriage problem, a flawed concept of success, a poor devotional life, a lack of personal discipline or the sin of pride and ego. Whatever the root cause, it is imperative that the pastoral care team or someone appointed by the board intervene so that these destructive behaviors are identified and the leader can be helped before a crisis arises.

Warning Signs of Impending Failure

- Pay attention to signs of burnout and stress.
- Behavioral changes, such as a lack of Bible reading or prayer can be outward signs of inner turmoil.
- Note personality changes, such as mood swings, lethargy and anger.
- Watch for sermons becoming less about the Bible and more about the pastor.
- Be aware of rude behavior, sarcasm and defensiveness.
- Consider unusual absences or unavailability.
- Be cautious of an inability to stay within a budget—e.g., spending sprees.
- Do not tolerate inappropriate touching of the opposite sex.
- Warn against closed-door, one-on-one counseling sessions with the opposite sex.

What the Church Can Do

At all times, the church board or those in pastoral oversight should, in love, hold the pastor accountable concerning his schedule, his budget and his personal purity. Have checks and balances in place so that the pastor doesn't have sole authority concerning budget, schedule or church decisions where a problem might arise.

A crisis response team should be in place, along with written procedures to follow. The board should appoint a pastoral care team to monitor (for too many or too few) vacations, days off, health issues of the entire family, travel, conferences and retreats, and time away from home. It is also helpful to have a system in place where members can report anything that seems amiss to those overseers.

Conclusion

We pray that your congregation will never be forced to go through a pastoral restoration process. It is never easy and it always leaves scars. For this reason alone, it is worth every effort by your church to be vigilant and preventative in its long-term care of your pastor(s) and their families. It is also worthwhile because you just may save one of God's called leaders from shame, failure and disqualification for ministry, a situation that always gives the enemy a source for discrediting God's church in the eyes of a secular society.

Unfortunately, statistics suggest that the day may come when you must face such a bitter moment. If and when that day comes, we hope this booklet

will give you some sense of direction in how to handle it, some steps and guidelines to follow and, most of all, some hope for that leader you love and his family. God is a God of miracles, forgiveness and healing. He will be there for your congregation and for your beloved, but fallible pastoral family. Be patient; lean on Him in every way, and not on your own understanding.¹⁷

May God bless and protect you, your co-leaders, your pastoral staff and their families as you make decisions that will in time have eternal ramifications.

Once again, if we who serve the church and its leaders through the Pastoral Ministries division of Focus on the Family can assist you, please feel free to contact us toll-free at 877-233-4455, by e-mail at pastors@family.org or through our web site, the Parsonage, at parsonage.org

Footnotes

1. Adapted from "Confronted With the Shameful" by Mike Woodruff and Dennis Kasper, BuildingChurchLeaders.com, ©Christianity Today Intl.
2. Ibid.
3. Adapted from *The Healing of a Warrior*, a Cyberbook publication, ©2000 by Michael L. and Sharon P. Hill of The Dove Center, thedovecenter.org
4. ©George Stahnke, 2006



- 5 “Dealing with Church Leadership and Infidelity,”
©George Stahnke, 2005
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Romans 8:28
- 8 Galatians 6:1
- 9 Adapted from “Restoring the Fallen” by Earl & Sandy Wilson, Paul and Virginia Friesen, Larry and Nancy Paulson. ©1997 by Earl and Sandy Wilson, Paul and Virginia Friesen, Larry and Nancy Paulson. Used with permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515. ivpress.com
- 10 Richard Foster
- 11 Matthew 22:37-38
- 12 *The Shepherd’s Covenant for Pastors*, H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, Regal, 2005
- 13 Revelation 2:2-4
- 14 Mark 6:31-32
- 15 Erwin W. Lutzer
- 16 Matthew 26:41
- 17 Proverbs 3:5

Relevant Resources

Books

- Carder, Dave, with Jaenicke, Duncan. *Torn Asunder: Recovering From Extramarital Affairs*. Moody Press, 1995.
- Cloud, Henry, and Townsend, John. *Boundaries: When to Say YES, When to Say NO, To Take Control of Your Life*. Zondervan, 1992.
- Hamman, Jaco. *When Steeples Cry*. Pilgrim Press, 2005.
- Hill, Michael L., and Sharon P. *The Healing of a Warrior: A Protocol for the Prevention and Restoration of Ministers Engaging in Destructive Behavior*. Cyberbook, 2000.
- Job, Rueben P. *A Guide to Retreat for All God’s Shepherds*. Abingdon Press, 1994.
- London, H.B. Jr., and Wiseman, Neil B. *Pastors at Greater Risk*. Regal Books, 2003.
- London, H.B. Jr., and Wiseman, Neil B. *The Heart of a Great Pastor*. Regal Books, 1994, 2006.
- London, H.B. Jr., and Wiseman, Neil B. *The Shepherd’s Covenant for Pastors*. Regal Books, 2005.

MacDonald, Gordon. *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. Thomas Nelson, 1988.

Pedigo, Reverend Thomas. *Restoration Manual: A Workbook for Restoring Fallen Ministers and Religious Leaders*. [Online] Available from Winning Edge Ministries. at win-edge.com/Restoration.shtml

Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Baker Books, 2004.

Schaumburg, Harry W. *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction*. Navpress, 1997.


Swenson, Richard, M.D. *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*. NavPress, 2004.

Swenson, Richard, M.D. *The Overload Syndrome*. Navpress, 1998.

Wilson, Friesen & Paulson. *Restoring the Fallen*. InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Other Resources

- *Family.org/lifechanges*. “Danger Signs of an Affair” and other articles.

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- “When a Leader Falls,” copyright 2004, Christianity Today International.
 - *Parsonage.org*, the Internet home for ministers and their families maintained by Focus on the Family’s Pastoral Ministries department.
 - *PureIntimacy.org*. Help with Internet pornography.
 - *Pastors.com*, notable for Rick Warren’s Ministry Tool Box.
 - Online Pastoral Care Directory, found on *Parsonage.org*.
 - “Ebbing the Flow of Moral, Marital or Ministry Burnout” by Jack & Trisha Frost, Shiloh Place Ministries.
 - “Public Perfection, Private Despair” by Lee Sparks, *Rev!* Magazine. Jan/Feb 2007.
 - Dr. David Whitaker, Care Clinic.
 - “Reducing the Risk of Sexual Misconduct: A guide for pastors and staff members who work with adults” by James Cobble, by Christian Ministry Resources.
 - “Assessment for Moral Purity”, a warning sign checklist, by George Stahnke.
 - Dealing With Church Leadership and Infidelity, George Stahnke.
 - “Restoration” by Earl and Sandra Wilson in the *Soul Care Bible*.



Notes



The Pastor's Advocate Series is intended to assist congregations in better understanding the needs of their pastors and pastoral families, in better caring for the personal welfare and professional well-being of these leaders, and in better teaming with them to maximize their united ministries for Christ.



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