

The Church Can't Afford to Ignore This Destructive Sin Any Longer

One of the most ignored or tolerated sins of the church is the sin of schism: The formal separation of a church into two churches, caused by differences in opinion or belief. I have been a part of splits and, let me tell you, they are messy. No, messy is too nice a word. They are downright destructive—demonic. And, sadly, both sides usually are convinced they are on God's side.

Too often a disgruntled assistant pastor or lay leader feels he can do a better job than the pastor. He promotes his cause through gossip. Once his movement has enough steam he leads a coup against the senior pastor or starts a new congregation. Paul calls this "building on another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). It is also called rebellion, divisiveness, self-promotion, pride, gossip and more.

The fruit of schism is broken relationships. I have seen families split into two over congregational divides. I have seen lifelong friendships come to a halt. That is the demonic part. A spirit of division disguises itself as righteousness or godly boldness. It feels right. You're taking a stand. But rarely does the fruit of the split justify the pain it causes.

Yes, there are times to take a stand against a pastor or leader of a congregation. Sometimes, you might even need to warn people to leave:

1. Sexual immorality or other chronic sins (theft, habitual dishonesty).
2. False doctrine (to be clear, that means it goes against what mainstream evangelicalism considers broad orthodoxy, not just against your opinion).

3. Cult-like tendencies of control over the lives of the members.
4. Gross ineffectiveness—and, in this case, I would expect that you would have a group of elders who had already appealed to the ineffective senior leader.

Jesus Loves Unity

God puts a high price on unity. It was the thing that Yeshua asked the Father to establish in the body in John 17: "Holy Father, through Your name keep those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are one" (John 17:11b).

Paul rebukes the Corinthians for establishing cliques, and equates division to destroying the temple of God! And then, he warns them about what God does to the person who destroys His temple (i.e. causes division):

Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy. And you are His temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

What if two leaders simply can't work together? It happens, as we will see with two of our heroes. Sometimes, it is even God's way of moving someone out in a new direction. The question is: do you have the humility and love for the body to do it in a way that causes the least damage to the congregation. If you are the junior in the relationship, then it is incumbent upon you to walk away. When we seek to take others with us, it is often because we don't trust God to lead us in a new direction. We take people with us, so we can still have a congregation. We can easily disguise it, even to ourselves, as taking a stand.

Even Paul Was Part of a Split

Leaders are, by nature, a little strong-willed (read: hardheaded). We tend to think we are right. Even Paul and

Barnabas had sharp disputes that put an end to their ministry relationship.

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit our brothers in every city where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas determined to take with them John, who was called Mark. But Paul thought it was not good to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. Then there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brothers to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (Acts 15:36-41).

The issue was simple. John Mark left the team in the middle of their mission. Barnabas, who is more of a pastor in his gifting, has mercy on Mark and wants him to join them. Paul, who seems more prophetic in his calling, takes a hard line. *If he abandoned us once, how do we know that he will not abandon us again?*

This is such a big deal that they go their separate ways. It does seem that Paul and Mark worked out their differences, as Paul refers to him later in life. Through this example, though, we can learn from Paul and Barnabas how to disagree and, even separate, in a godly way. They did not let their split affect the churches they had planted or the people in them.

Who Has the Spiritual Authority?

When they first started out, Barnabas was the lead apostle. But, very shortly thereafter, Paul became the primary leader. When they separate, Barnabas goes to Cyprus with Mark to minister to the believers there. Cyprus recognized Barnabas as their spiritual father, as it was one of the first places they visited. Paul takes Silas and visits the churches they had

planted after Paul was the lead apostle.

They respected each other's apostolic fathership. You'll notice, there is no book of Cyprus from Paul. He had no authority to write it, as Barnabas was the father. Paul only wrote to churches he planted (except for Romans, and there was a reason). Whenever you find yourself in a situation where you have to break with another leader, the easiest way to know who needs to walk, is to ask, 'Who has the authority here?'

I Almost Caused a Split

I almost made this mistake after I first moved to Israel. I had a disagreement with my pastor, and there did not appear to be a solution. I wanted to start another congregation. Of course, if I did it in the same city, people from my former congregation might be tempted to follow. Some had already expressed interest. I felt completely justified (we always do), even though it went against everything I had learned and had taught. But I was deceived. I was completely unjustified. So, we had a disagreement. It didn't come anywhere close to the four reasons I stated above. In the end, thanks to godly counsel, we shut down our little group. A few years later, I reconciled with the pastor and, today, we have a great working ministry relationship.

And what is interesting is that by humbling myself—not what I wanted to do—God opened an amazing door in another city with far more influence than I had before. But it didn't happen until I committed to not start a competing ministry.

But, sadly, all over the world, splits are winked at when, in fact, the historic church looked at the sin of schism as a serious violation. We would do well to take it more seriously as well. {eoa}

Ron Cantor is an Israeli evangelist. He blogs at [http://www.roncantor.com](#), and you can get his book, *The Coming End-Time Awakening* free at [http://www.roncantor.com](#). Ron is on the leadership team of Tiferet Yeshua Congregation in Tel

Aviv and is also the director of communications for Tikkun Global. He is the author of several books, including Identity Theft: How Jesus was Robbed of His Jewishness.

This article originally appeared at .

Could This Tool Save Pastors From Experiencing Burnout, Depression?

Too many men and women graduate from seminary, get hired as pastors and mere months later, feel completely overwhelmed. Why? Because although they received a thorough theological education at seminary, no one prepared them for the practical leadership challenges of pastoring a church.

Lifeway Research found in 2016 that 25 percent of U.S. pastors who leave the pastorate do so due to conflict in the church and another 19 percent due to burnout. And that's not all—12 percent leave because of financial problems and yet another 12 percent of pastoral departures are the result of family issues.

But it's not just pastors who deal with these problems. It's worship leaders, board members, elders, church planters and Christian business leaders. Perhaps you've even wrestled with some of these same issues yourself. After all, each of us is a leader in some way or another.

That's why Dr. Mark Rutland, a man I greatly respect for his wisdom and leadership expertise, founded the National Institute of Christian Leadership (NICL). Dr. Rutland's heart

for the NICL is to take 50 years of bumps, bruises and life lessons and pour them into today's leaders—right now.

Dr. Rutland touches on a variety of leadership challenges, including management vs. leadership, strategic growth, selecting the right staff, maintaining healthy board relations, effective interviewing, the 10 stages of disloyalty, debt management and more.

He developed this course a number of years ago and taught it as part of a master's program at Southeastern University. Later on, he left that position, but because he had seen such success with the course, he felt he needed to continue teaching it. That's when Charisma Media partnered with Dr. Rutland. As a result, we've seen nearly 1,000 people go through the course and report what a blessing it has been to them.

David Manning, director of leadership development at Charisma Media, attests to how satisfied people are after experiencing the NICL.

"When people come out of his class, they look me in the eye, and they tell me, 'If I had learned this 20 years ago, how my life would be changed right now,'" Manning says.

I had the opportunity to witness Dr. Rutland's leadership skills when he was president of Southeastern University and, later on, of Oral Roberts University. Both schools were in desperate need of a turnaround—and I was impressed to see Dr. Rutland provide exactly that.

I actually went through his leadership training and, even though I've been in leadership for decades, Dr. Rutland not only reminded me of important principles but also helped me see leadership in a fresh way. Eight years ago, I also had several of my employees go through the NICL. As a result, we changed several things in our company and saw tremendous success.

Now, for the first time, Dr. Rutland's 60-hour course is available online at . When you enroll, you have complete, 365-day access. The neat thing about the online course is that when you sign up, your spouse also receives free access so you both can use the training at your own pace. And if you enroll by Sept. 30, you will get three bonus months free. (Manning tells me that's worth more than \$600!)

Listen to my podcast interview with Manning below to learn more about the benefits the NICL offers you.

I highly encourage you to sign up for the NICL's online course. The NICL helped me and my leadership team achieve a higher level of success. I know this course is life-changing and will infuse new energy into your ministry, your team and even your home.

Should Your Past Sins Disqualify You Today?

Supreme Court nominee Brent Kavanaugh has been accused of sexually assaulting a woman more than 35 years ago, a charge which he "categorically and unequivocally" denies. Also implicated in the charge was Kavanaugh's teen friend at that time, Mark Judge, who also denies the accusation. But what if the charges are true? Do they disqualify Kavanaugh today?

To be perfectly clear, an accusation is just that: an accusation. It is not proof of guilt. And despite our desire to give alleged #MeToo victims the benefit of the doubt, Justice Kavanaugh remains innocent until proven guilty.

But what if he is guilty? Should the Senate Judiciary Committee vote against his nomination?

Let's put our past sins into four different categories, responding to each category in turn.

The first category consists of the foolish things we did as teenagers and young people. But these transgressions are known, open and a distant part of our history.

For example, my personal testimony, "From LSD to Ph.D." is well-known.

It is well-known that I was a heroin-shooting, LSD-using, hippie rock drummer before coming to faith in Jesus at the age of 16 in 1971.

It is well-known I broke into a doctor's office with a friend and stole drugs.

It is well-known that I was a proud, angry rebel.

As our daughters grew up, I shared my story with them. Now my grandkids know my story.

My story is known and out in the open, and it's a testimony to God's grace.

Since 1971, I have not used an illegal drug or abused a legal drug. And, despite drinking heavily at times in my teen years, I have not had a sip of alcohol since 1971.

If Brett Kavanaugh got drunk with his friends and assaulted another teenager, that would be grave and ugly. But if this was something that was known, open and unrelated to his behavior and conduct ever since then, it should not disqualify him from service today. (To be "known and open" would also mean that he had made things right with his alleged victim.)

Lots of us did stupid things when we were kids and teenagers.

But as we became responsible adults, we put those things behind us.

Recognizing this, those who voted for Barack Obama to be president forgave him for his pot-smoking days. (In his words, marijuana use was “what teenage kids did at that age when I was growing up.”)

Some of us even did reprehensible things as adults. But we made proper restitution, we were completely rehabilitated, and we have made something worthwhile out of our lives.

Such stories are noble and inspiring.

The second category consists of sinful behavior in our past that we covered over, hoping it would never be discovered.

What happens when these old skeletons are suddenly discovered in our closet? If the behavior was totally uncharacteristic, if it did not lastingly wound or injure someone else, and if it was never again repeated, you can make a case for overlooking it—but only if the response today was proper.

In other words, if it came to light that, when you were a 16-year-old boy, you had consensual sex with your 16-year-old girlfriend, but since then, your moral behavior was impeccable, you shouldn't be disqualified from public service today—but only if you responded properly when confronted.

A proper response would require full acknowledgment of guilt, not lying about the incident and pointing to the changes you made to live rightly ever since.

To say that these sins of our youth make us unfit to serve today is to render unfit a large percentage of the population. How many of us have an unblemished past?

The third category consists of lying today when confronted with sinful behavior from the past. That would be the bigger issue to me with Justice Kavanaugh.

Did he do something reprehensible as a drunken teenager? Perhaps he did, but again, that is just an accusation at this point.

The big question for me is: Is he telling the truth today?

We're not looking to confirm teenager Kavanaugh. We're looking to confirm Judge Kavanaugh.

His present behavior is far more important to me than his teenage behavior. Can the man be trusted?

The fourth category consists of sinful behavior in the past that still carries over until today.

If Kavanaugh did, in fact, sexually assault his accuser more than 35 years ago, does that reflect his attitude toward women ever since? Is he an abuser? Does he view women as sexual objects? Does he look on his alleged past transgressions as just a bunch of guys having fun?

Obviously, there are major reasons to question the validity of the accusations, given today's political climate. On the flip side, Kavanaugh's accuser is herself a professor today, which adds credibility to her story. May the whole truth come to light.

But let's also remember that President Obama joked with students at the University of Chicago this past January, saying, "If you had pictures of everything I'd done when I was in high school I probably wouldn't have been president of the United States."

In the case at hand, the charges are more serious and more concerning, since they involved alleged sexual assault. But even if they were true, they do not automatically rule out present effective service today, even in the Supreme Court.

It all depends on which category, outlined above, these past (alleged) transgressions fall into.

Is Being a 'Good' Christian Preventing You From Overcoming Your Food Addiction?

" Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], *he is* a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]" (2 Cor. 5:17, AMP).

Spiritual Awakening

I was made new when I accepted Christ at age 7. Then, I grew up. I had already become a new creation. So I couldn't deny that I knew I wasn't allowing God to bring spiritual awakening into how I was eating.

It was as if what I ate was something I hid away and kept in a locked closet. I decided this part of my life was for me alone. No one else, especially not Jesus, was allowed into my closet.

I allowed Him into every other part of my life, but I would tell myself I needed certain foods to keep me anywhere near sane.

God had offered to make all of me new. He had given me this great gift of being joined to Him, but I kept one part back for myself. It was included in what Jesus offered me, but I rejected it.

The 'Good' Christian

I didn't want to be reborn and renewed in the types of food I ate. I didn't want that particular "old thing" to pass away. I didn't want to be spiritually awakened in that one area.

The truth is I couldn't see how to be what I considered a "good" Christian without food to comfort me, keep me from blowing my top in anger or screaming in frustration.

When I felt stressed and overwhelmed, how else could I celebrate and pat myself on the back without eating some great dessert Grandma had always fixed for me?

How could I have fun without going out to eat or making a huge dinner with all the trimmings? That meant love, family, fun and relaxation. I didn't know how else to enjoy life other than eating great foods.

I'd Rather Die

I didn't see sugar and high-carbohydrate content foods as my selfish indulgent pleasures. I saw them as a necessary part of life. As a matter of fact, I told myself I would rather die than not eat my favorite foods.

So when I ended up in the hospital weighing 430 pounds, a cardiac surgeon told me I had five years to live if I didn't lose at least 100 pounds and keep them off. I really didn't care if I went to heaven. I just didn't want my children to suffer.

God used that rude cardiac surgeon to get me to see, though, that what I was doing did not just affect me. It affected my entire family. For me to be gone before my children became adults would certainly be selfish. If I could stop them from suffering because their mom wasn't there, I wanted to do that.

Although I'd lost weight many times, the issue was this: I had not been dedicated to a total healthy lifestyle change, so I

never kept it off. I went back to eating the way I always had, and I gained the weight back plus more. I knew I had a choice: change or die. For me, to live meant I had to embrace change.

One of the first changes I had to make was to give up sugar. And to do that, I had to understand why foods made with sugar and flour meant more than life to me.

Forgiving Grandma

My Grandma was my person. To me, she embodied love and comfort. I began to see that the way she did that was to fix all my favorite foods and allow me to eat as much as I wanted, any time I wanted.

Her dessert table was a 24-7 smorgasbord, always open and available at my every whim. Food became my love language, and that overfull feeling, I equated with feeling alive.

I had always wondered why I felt as though I were living in the Romans 7:19 conundrum of "I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway."

I had an emotional attachment to food, and to break that meant I was going to have to confront my relationship with the person I had loved most in this world. Although she was already in heaven, I still knew that when I was stressed, frustrated or depressed, baking and eating her oatmeal cookies, banana nut bread or special cakes would make me feel as though I could face the world again.

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Teresa Shields Parker *is the author of seven books, all available on Amazon. Her latest book, Sweet Hunger: Developing an Appetite for God, is available now, and Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds is the No. 1 Christian weight-loss memoir. She is also a writing and weight-loss coach, blogger, speaker, wife and mother. Visit her online at to find her books, coaching programs and free gifts.*

This article originally appeared at .

Should Christians Protest Nike?

How should Christians approach civil unrest?

From Nike to Trump—does the Bible have answers? Yes it does.

Oscar-Nominated Angelina Jolie Film Gets Christian Sequel

Unbroken: Path to Redemption is the faith-focused sequel to 2014's *Unbroken*, which was directed by Angelina Jolie and nominated for three Academy Awards. The new movie tells the story of Louis Zamperini's journey of coming to faith in Jesus in America. Zamperini's story eventually leads him to a fateful Billy Graham meeting. Watch Movieguide's review [here](#).

The One Movie You Absolutely Need to See Next Month

On Oct. 2 and 4, Fathom Events will feature *The Trump Prophecy*.

"It's really a vote for America, a vote for, as Mary [Colbert] was really compelled to call for prayer, at such a time as this," Rick Eldridge says.

Eldridge is the CEO-producer of ReelWork films. He recently sat down with Colbert and the Bakkers on *The Jim Bakker Show* to discuss the importance of the film that tells the story of firefighter Mark Taylor's prophetic dream of Donald Trump becoming the president of the nation.

Eldridge says he believes the timing of the film is significant.

“Right before our midterms, [we need] to really come together and pray for our nation,” Eldridge says.

“We need to pray for that, that God would be healing our land,” he continues.

Watch the video to see more.

The Heartbreaking Deaths That Led Carrie Underwood to Pour Her Heart Out to God

Country music star Carrie Underwood recently opened up about how her faith has seen her through some of the darkest times of her life.

Despite selling more than 60 million records worldwide and being honored with seven Grammy awards, these past couple of years have been a real test for Underwood and her husband, former NHL star Mike Fisher. A series of miscarriages and dangerous accident caused her to re-examine her relationship with God and find hope when she felt all had been lost.

“2017 just wasn’t how I imagined it,” Underwood told *CBS This Morning*. “I’d kind of planned that 2017 was, you know, going to be the year that I work on new music, and I have a baby. We got pregnant early 2017, and didn’t work out.” {eoa}

[Click here](#) to read the rest of this story from our content partners at Faithwire.

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and angry. Sign up for the Faithwire Newsletter for encouraging stories delivered right to your inbox.

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Addiction?

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