

Are These Christian Bloggers Tearing Down the Body of Christ?

There seems to be an overwhelming fascination in evangelicalism with what is wrong. What do I mean by that? It seems that we are more than happy not just to report, but to share, like and comment whenever we see any Christian leader fail in any type of way. The Christian media is often happy to promote these attention-grabbing pieces. Like feeding fresh bloody fish to a group of swarming sharks, the frenzy ensues as web links are made and a new viral news article is born at the great expense of the character of a Christian leader as well as the testimony of Christ.

Perhaps you think I am being too critical, but we should think about what we are doing. There is a lost world looking on as we quickly share articles that accuse brothers and sisters of things that are not, in many cases, provable facts. And, more importantly, we never pray or fast for these individuals, we simply feed on their demise for our daily entertainment.

But it gets worse. Many modern Christian news outlets find their sources with independent renegade bloggers who start blogs in order to criticize and find fault with others, especially a ministry or pastor that has hurt them somehow in the past. The internet is used for many constructive, beneficial things, but sadly, it is also used for many hurtful activities, one of them being to tear down the character of an individual or organization.

This could be expected among unbelievers. We think of national tabloids such as the *National Enquirer* where they look to find the most outlandish accusations or photos and make jest at people's lives. Yet, within the Church are we to do the same

practices? Unfortunately, there are a host of Christian bloggers who are engaging in these activities and, worse yet, mainstream Christian internet news have embraced them as the most credible sources of information for the next failure of a Christian leader or organization.

Judge, Jury and Executioner

These bloggers consider themselves judge, jury and executioner at the same time. In almost every case where they helped to bring about the demise of a Christian leader, their appetite is never filled, and they continually ask for more punishment, retribution and supposed justice on the individuals. Essentially it is never enough, because some of the main motives behind their accusations are things like self-promotion, unforgiveness or seeking popularity and acclaim. Once their articles are published, and they receive the attention of thousands of Christians praising them in their work to destroy the character of a leader, they are propelled into a never-ending pursuit, enjoying all the attention they have received.

Yes, I have been personally guilty of reading many of these blogs and at times reading them for no other purpose than entertainment or fascination in what is happening. But as Christian believers, we should be much higher than such things, since Scripture clearly tells us to not entertain a gossip or person who slanders. Not long ago, I published an article titled, "Francis Chan warns against division in the church." In the article, Pastor Chan gives a great warning from the Scriptures where God says, "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:17). The word picture Francis depicts is someone by the words of their mouth in gossip and slander (or words from their blog) taking a sledgehammer to the very temple of God, which all true Christians are a part of. Imagine, in light of the Scripture shared, what God's response is to one who continually

participates in such activities of tearing down another.

Are We Lacking Mercy?

St. Polycarp, the second-century bishop of Smyrna, says, “Not quickly crediting an evil report against any one, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin. If then we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God.” It was part of the DNA and essence of the early church to not slander, gossip or be quick to condemn others. St. Polycarp was discipled by the same apostle John who exhorted believers to “pray” (1 John 5:16) for others who commit a sin, that God would give them life. He did not say write a blog against them or verbally accuse them before others, but pray directly to the heavenly Father who is merciful on them and also on us for all our own failings.

What comes up in the mind of many is the question, *Can't we judge others or correct them when they sin?* My answer is yes and no. Yes, church leaders can be corrected, but it has to be done in the right spirit and the right way. There is not one New Testament Scripture that gives any believer license to gossip, slander or criticize others. Any Scripture relating to correction is through ordained church leaders correcting other leaders and that done in gentleness, prayer and a spirit of humility, realizing we will be judged by the same measure in which we criticize and judge others. A common Scripture is Matthew 18 which instructs us to tell the sins of others “to the church” (Matt. 18:17). What a modern believer conjures up in their mind is the ability to post the sins of the individual on social media and the internet, exposing them to the entire world-wide church, for doesn't the passage say “to the church”? Sadly, that is so far from the truth of what was meant in that passage. Telling it “to the church” was to address it to the ordained leaders and, specifically in this case, to the bishop of the region of the church. To publicly defame other brothers and sisters before all is not only a

shame to them but to ourselves for entering into such activities that God does not condone.

Another famous passage of Scripture is found in the writings of St. Paul to Timothy, a young apostle: "Those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone" (1 Tim. 5:20a, NIV). Many take this passage as a personal liberty of a Bible-believing Christian to publicly defame a Christian leader without remorse, thinking, "I am just obeying the Bible!" Again, this passage has nothing to do with Christians speaking before "everyone" about the sins of others but is a clear command of St. Paul to St. Timothy (an ordained apostle) on his authority as a church bishop to bring correction to other ordained leaders in the church. To correct before everyone is a last effort to bring someone to repentance and change. A correction by such leaders is not to see harm but should be done within the context of a local church to bring one back to his senses and right conduct. In no way can this passage of Scripture mean that one can tell it to "everyone" in the world. Rather, the word "everyone" in clear context of this passage is those in a local body of believers.

Jesus, Have Mercy on Me!

The question we need to ask ourselves is: Are we showing the mercy to others that Christ shows to us? Imagine for a moment the spotlight of God put to your life before the whole world. Picture, if you will, that penetrating light exposing your own sins and failings in the exact measure and in the same manner that you may have exposed the failings of others. The Scriptures do not tell us to criticize church leaders but to pray for them. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8, MEV). That Scripture is not only true for us as believers but also for all church leaders. No one is without fault. Therefore, everyone is absolutely in need of God's mercy continually. Let's be conscious of our own failures and call out personally, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner!"

The next time we visit our favorite Christian news website or blog, before we click on the comment button, we should pause to consider whether we are lending our voices to the accuser of the brethren or to the one who is ever interceding for the souls of men.

Listen to Francis Chan responding to criticism about spending time with false teachers in this podcast:

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