

# Bill Hybels, Sexual Atheists and the Gospel of Luke

In the latest installment of *How the Evangelical World Turns*, the lead pastor and elders at Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago resigned Wednesday after admitting they mishandled the scandal involving church founder Bill Hybels.

In case you haven't been following this ongoing soap opera, the elders had overseen a series of inquiries, including one by an outside law firm, into sexual impropriety by Hybels and cleared him of wrongdoing. He resigned in April, but the accusations continued. *The New York Times* reported this week that his former assistant said he had repeatedly groped her.

This follows hundreds of women using the #ChurchToo hashtag to reveal their stories of sexual mistreatment in the church. Instead of leading the way in moral renewal, the church is copying the broken culture that spawned the #MeToo movement.

This has to stop. Leaders in the church need to model Jesus Christ's behavior. God's men need to support, nurture, serve and dignify people whom lesser men abuse, exploit or marginalize. They should be sons of Christ, not sons of culture.

But in reality, many of our Christian leaders in practice are sexual atheists.

In other words, God has nothing to say to them on that subject of any consequence or, at least, anything meaningful enough to dissuade them from following their own desires. It is the ultimate oxymoron. A man who at once believes in a wise, sovereign and loving God who created all things, can also believe simultaneously that He should not, cannot or will not inform his thinking and living sexually.

It reminds me of those famous red letters in Luke's Gospel where Jesus says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

There is a disconnect between public identity and private activity, and it is particularly egregious when it involves pastors and other ministry leaders.

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that there would be times in his ministry when clear and sound doctrine in Scripture would be defeated by broken culture teaming up with the ever-present and self-serving nature within every Christian. He accurately forecast a self-styled Christianity that reflected culture over the character of Christ in personal moral practice.

And nothing, from any frame of reference, is more personal and more moral than our choices regarding sexual expression. It's where the spiritual rubber really hits the road. Interestingly, Paul's counsel to Timothy when he saw that cultural disconnect was: "But be self-controlled in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, and prove your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Solid, timely and reliable advice like this was needed then and is really needed now. As God's men and women, we must graciously but prophetically call out the shortsightedness of ministers who are borrowing trouble sexually and sinning against God and others.

Christian leaders should serve as models for other Christians and the culture at large, not act like characters on a daytime soap opera. {eoa}

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