

GRACE Board Members Take Up for 'God's Lambs' Following Tullian Tchividjian Sexual Misconduct Allegations

An organization to protect victims of sexual abuse in the church said Tullian Tchividjian's victims "exposed the deeds of darkness" when speaking out about the former pastor's sexual misconduct allegations.

Godly Response to Abuse in the Church Environment, or GRACE, Board of Directors said they felt compelled to release a statement on behalf of Tchividjian's victims after the allegations surfaced.

"The GRACE board is deeply disturbed about the revelations of sexual misconduct by Tullian Tchividjian. As an organization that deals with the abuse of God's lambs and the damage silence causes we feel compelled to speak. We believe that no material institution is more sacred to God than His lambs—be it church or mission or family. Institutions ordained by God were destroyed at His hand when they became corrupt. [We believe] we must be what He calls His people to be, or we too will have chosen silence and darkness over truth and light," the board wrote.

The Board includes Tchividjian's brother Boz, who founded the organization. Tchividjian's uncle is also on the board.

They continue:

Dear victims—and you are indeed victims. You have suffered, and we do not want to add our silence to that suffering. Once again, one of God's shepherds used his position of authority, his gift of words, his intellect and personality to draw you

in when you were vulnerable and in need of care. All power belongs to Christ. Any power we have is derivative and sacred and to be used only for His glory and the good of His people. Anything less is an abuse of that power. You have been victims of the gross misuse of power God intended for your good. We grieve with you. We stand with you in the light. You have with courage exposed the deeds of darkness. Thank you, for we as the body of Christ need your voices but now that the light shines a failure to respond on our part means we have turned from the light you turned on. We pray for you, knowing full well that each and every one of you has a hard road ahead as you seek newness of life, healing and a restoring of your souls. We pray that the failure of a shepherd will not lead you to forsake the good and great Shepherd who turns tables over and cracks whips when those in His church rob His sheep and distort the truth of who God is. We also pray that God will multiply the fruit of your hard labor to step into light to cause the greater body to examine itself regarding the many silenced victims that live in its midst.

Tchividjian allegedly carried on multiple affairs while still married, eventually marrying Stacie Phillips after he divorced wife Kim.

He resigned his senior pastor post last year after admitting to an “inappropriate relationship.” He was later hired, and subsequently fired, by another church.

“As far as things that have been said and written about me (especially recently) some of them are true and some of them are absolutely false. There is nothing I can do about any of it. I cannot correct every falsehood and I cannot go back and right every wrong thing I’ve done or said,” Tchividjian posted on Facebook. “From the bottom of my heart, I am truly sorry for the pain I’ve caused and the hurt I’ve induced and I humbly ask you to please forgive me.”

Moving beyond Tchividjian's case, GRACE asked the Christian community to implement standards to protect people from sexual abuse in the church.

"There are many untended, discarded victims in our midst. We are called by God to stand in the light they have brought, tend their wounds, lift the fallen and tenderly carry those who cannot stand. We are nothing like our Lord if we fail to do so. May the fruit of this grievous sin bring a sweeping of God's refining fire through the lives of His people across the globe," the board writes.

The reforms include:

1. Seminary education of pastors about maintaining appropriate boundaries.
2. Rigorous screening and selection of pastors or other church leaders who provide counseling.
3. Implement checks and balances to minimize abusive situations.
4. Implementing clear policies for responding to abusive conduct, including reporting abuse to the appropriate authorities, removing abusive pastors from any leadership role and, most importantly, supporting survivors. {eoa}