

Pastor or Conman? Church Leader Sentenced for \$500K Fraud Scheme

Another scandal involving a church leader has made headlines, and it's a sobering reminder of the need for integrity in Christian leadership.

Former Assemblies of God pastor Brian Keith Herring has been sentenced to 17 years of probation, 800 hours of community service, and ordered to pay \$100,000 in restitution after pleading guilty to stealing over \$500,000 from Harrison Faith Church in Arkansas.

As reported by "The Christian Post," Herring, who was also a former city councilman, was accused of stealing nearly \$525,000 in 2021. Court records show that an audit revealed he had taken funds through credit card purchases and other transactions. When investigators initially tried to contact him, his home was empty and listed for sale.

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What's concerning is how Herring framed his downfall. Instead of taking responsibility, he blamed a former friend, saying, "I remember when it all changed. I remember it was a board meeting... I had a close friend... that had some sin in his life, and I sat down and I said, 'We need to talk about some things.'" He alleged that this friend later turned on him and sought to have him removed from leadership.

Herring insisted that the accusations were unfair, claiming, "They never called me. They never asked my side of things... We were destroyed." He painted a picture of himself as the victim, even as financial evidence stacked up against him.

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When stories like this surface, it's easy to feel disillusioned. Pastors are supposed to be shepherds of the flock, not wolves in disguise. This is why Scripture is clear that those in leadership are held to a higher standard. James 3:1 warns, "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

At the same time, it's important to remember that church leaders are still human. They are not above temptation, and they need our prayers just as much as our accountability.

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