

Ravi Zacharias: I Did Not Solicit Inappropriate Pictures

Note: Ravi Zacharias published this statement on his website in regard to recent sexting allegations.

In October 2014, I spoke at a conference in Canada. At the conclusion of my talk, I met a couple who expressed an interest in our ministry. The wife asked if I would reach out to her husband because he had questions about the Christian faith. As requested, I followed up by sending an email and a book to him, and invited him to consider attending one of our educational programs at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM).

Some months later, I traveled with my wife and one of our daughters to another part of Canada for a speaking engagement. The couple attended this event and invited my wife and me to dinner at a local restaurant afterwards. That was the second and last time I was ever in the same room with either of them.

Subsequently, she began to contact me via the email address I had used to contact her husband after first meeting them. My responses were usually brief. Then, last year, she shockingly sent me extremely inappropriate pictures of herself unsolicited. I clearly instructed her to stop contacting me in any form; I blocked her messages and I resolved to terminate all contact with her.

In late 2016, she sent an email informing me she planned to tell her husband about the inappropriate pictures she had sent and to claim that I had solicited them. In April 2017, together they sent me, through an attorney, a letter demanding money. I immediately notified members of my board, and as they advised, I personally engaged legal counsel.

In response to the demand for money, my attorneys filed a publicly available lawsuit under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). The other side requested mediation rather than going to trial. We agreed to mediation, and we reached an agreement in Nov. 2017 to resolve the matter and dismiss my lawsuit. All communication with both of them has concluded, and the legal matters have been resolved. However, at this time, unfortunately I am legally prevented from answering or even discussing the questions and claims being made by some, other than to say that each side paid for their own legal expenses and no ministry funds were used.

I have learned a difficult and painful lesson through this ordeal. As a husband, father, grandfather and leader of a Christian ministry, I should not have engaged in ongoing communication with a woman other than my wife. I failed to exercise wise caution and to protect myself from even the appearance of impropriety, and for that I am profoundly sorry. I have acknowledged this to my Lord, my wife, my children, our ministry board and my colleagues.

Let me state categorically that I never met this woman alone, publicly or privately. The question is not whether I solicited or sent any illicit photos or messages to another woman—I did not, and there is no evidence to the contrary—but rather, whether I should have been a willing participant in any extended communication with a woman not my wife. The answer, I can unequivocally say, is no, and I fully accept responsibility. In all my correspondence with thousands of people in 45 years of ministry, I have never been confronted with a situation such as this, and God and my family and close friends know how grieved I have been.

In my 45 years of marriage to Margie, I have never engaged in any inappropriate behavior of any kind. I love my wife with all my heart and have been absolutely faithful to her these more than 16,000 days of marriage, and have exercised extreme caution in my daily life and travels, as everyone who knows me

is aware. I have long made it my practice not to be alone with a woman other than Margie and our daughters—not in a car, a restaurant or anywhere else. Upon reflection, I now realize that the physical safeguards I have long practiced to protect my integrity should have extended to include digital communications safeguards. I believe—and indeed would counsel others—that the standards of personal conduct are necessarily higher for Christian leaders.

The Lord rescued me at the age of 17, and I promised to leave no stone unturned in my pursuit of truth. He entrusted me with this calling, it is His; any opportunities I have been given are from Him. My life is not my own; it belongs to God. As long as He gives me life and breath, I will serve out this calling He has given me. I am committed to finishing well, using whatever years He grants me to share His love and forgiveness, truth and grace, with people everywhere who are looking for meaning and purpose and hope. I bear no ill will toward anybody. God is the God of healing, and He promises a new day. May that be true by His grace. {eo}

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