

Should You Expose a Church Leader in Sexual Sin?

With so many pastors caught in adultery and other sexual sins, congregation members face a seemingly impossible decision: Expose the leader or keep their mouths closed.

John Piper says the leader must be exposed, but there is a caveat:

“So if someone was claiming Christ and His gospel, leading in the church, yet living in sexual sin, are we supposed to do something about that? The answer is a resounding yes from the Bible,” Piper says in a recent podcast transcript.

The Bible cautions against sexual sin and darkness within the church in many places, like Ephesians 5, Ephesians 11, 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 5.

Piper is far from the only pastor to consider the subject.

In a new report produced by LifeWay Research, 73 percent of protestant pastors said they believed the allegations of pastoral misconduct should be kept in confidence.

“You are walking a tightrope in those early days,” said Frank Sommerville, a Houston-based attorney who specializes in legal issues facing churches. “It’s easy if the pastor says, ‘Yes, I had an affair.’ If the pastor denies the allegation, you need some kind of investigation to figure out who is most likely telling the truth.”

If the pastor has already been disciplined for the misconduct, however, 86 percent of fellow pastors believe the details can be shared with the congregation.

“Pastors believe church leaders should be held to high standards,” said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay

Research. “They also want to protect themselves against allegations that could be false.”

He continued: “The Scripture says pastors must be above reproach. So it’s not surprising that some want to see fallen pastors banned from ministry. Still, pastors are also people who talk about forgiveness regularly and, by and large, they want to see those who fall have a chance at restoration.”

NewSpring Pastor Perry Noble says sexual sin must be confessed or else pastors cannot experience freedom.

In a blog posted to [NewSpring](#), Noble writes how pastors and church members can conquer sexual sin.

“Sexual sin is not something that can be ‘prayed away,’ nor can we simply read Bible verses about grace after committing it in order to feel better. NOR can we simply promise God over and over that we won’t do it again (how’s that working for you?). We CAN be set free from it ... but it will not be pretty. It must be confessed (James 5:16) and repented of (Rev. 2:21-23!). (I did not overcome my nearly 20-year battle with pornography until I confessed it and asked for help!),” Perry writes. “YES, it may ‘cost you’ when it comes to your reputation ... but remember, the costs of concealment are far greater than the costs of confession ... and repentance is WAY more important than our reputation.”

Overwhelmingly, pastors agree sin should be addressed. However, as Piper writes, Timothy warns church members not to spread gossip “willy-nilly.”

“Now, how you go about exposing something you have discovered will depend in part on the nature of the relationship you have with the person caught in sin, and I would say the closer the relationship, the more personal and private the initial rebukes and exposures will be. But since it is a leader who is involved, it cannot remain private or merely personal, because there are too many other people’s lives at stake,” Piper

writes.