

Should Your Past Sins Disqualify You Today?

Supreme Court nominee Brent Kavanaugh has been accused of sexually assaulting a woman more than 35 years ago, a charge which he “categorically and unequivocally” denies. Also implicated in the charge was Kavanaugh’s teen friend at that time, Mark Judge, who also denies the accusation. But what if the charges are true? Do they disqualify Kavanaugh today?

To be perfectly clear, an accusation is just that: an accusation. It is not proof of guilt. And despite our desire to give alleged #MeToo victims the benefit of the doubt, Justice Kavanaugh remains innocent until proven guilty.

But what if he is guilty? Should the Senate Judiciary Committee vote against his nomination?

Let’s put our past sins into four different categories, responding to each category in turn.

The first category consists of the foolish things we did as teenagers and young people. But these transgressions are known, open and a distant part of our history.

For example, my personal testimony, “From LSD to Ph.D.” is well-known.

It is well-known that I was a heroin-shooting, LSD-using, hippie rock drummer before coming to faith in Jesus at the age of 16 in 1971.

It is well-known I broke into a doctor’s office with a friend and stole drugs.

It is well-known that I was a proud, angry rebel.

As our daughters grew up, I shared my story with them. Now my

grandkids know my story.

My story is known and out in the open, and it's a testimony to God's grace.

Since 1971, I have not used an illegal drug or abused a legal drug. And, despite drinking heavily at times in my teen years, I have not had a sip of alcohol since 1971.

If Brett Kavanaugh got drunk with his friends and assaulted another teenager, that would be grave and ugly. But if this was something that was known, open and unrelated to his behavior and conduct ever since then, it should not disqualify him from service today. (To be "known and open" would also mean that he had made things right with his alleged victim.)

Lots of us did stupid things when we were kids and teenagers. But as we became responsible adults, we put those things behind us.

Recognizing this, those who voted for Barack Obama to be president forgave him for his pot-smoking days. (In his words, marijuana use was "what teenage kids did at that age when I was growing up.")

Some of us even did reprehensible things as adults. But we made proper restitution, we were completely rehabilitated, and we have made something worthwhile out of our lives.

Such stories are noble and inspiring.

The second category consists of sinful behavior in our past that we covered over, hoping it would never be discovered.

What happens when these old skeletons are suddenly discovered in our closet? If the behavior was totally uncharacteristic, if it did not lastingly wound or injure someone else, and if it was never again repeated, you can make a case for overlooking it—but only if the response today was proper.

In other words, if it came to light that, when you were a 16-year-old boy, you had consensual sex with your 16-year-old girlfriend, but since then, your moral behavior was impeccable, you shouldn't be disqualified from public service today—but only if you responded properly when confronted.

A proper response would require full acknowledgment of guilt, not lying about the incident and pointing to the changes you made to live rightly ever since.

To say that these sins of our youth make us unfit to serve today is to render unfit a large percentage of the population. How many of us have an unblemished past?

The third category consists of lying today when confronted with sinful behavior from the past. That would be the bigger issue to me with Justice Kavanaugh.

Did he do something reprehensible as a drunken teenager? Perhaps he did, but again, that is just an accusation at this point.

The big question for me is: Is he telling the truth today?

We're not looking to confirm teenager Kavanaugh. We're looking to confirm Judge Kavanaugh.

His present behavior is far more important to me than his teenage behavior. Can the man be trusted?

The fourth category consists of sinful behavior in the past that still carries over until today.

If Kavanaugh did, in fact, sexually assault his accuser more than 35 years ago, does that reflect his attitude toward women ever since? Is he an abuser? Does he view women as sexual objects? Does he look on his alleged past transgressions as just a bunch of guys having fun?

Obviously, there are major reasons to question the validity of

the accusations, given today's political climate. On the flip side, Kavanaugh's accuser is herself a professor today, which adds credibility to her story. May the whole truth come to light.

But let's also remember that President Obama joked with students at the University of Chicago this past January, saying, "If you had pictures of everything I'd done when I was in high school I probably wouldn't have been president of the United States."

In the case at hand, the charges are more serious and more concerning, since they involved alleged sexual assault. But even if they were true, they do not automatically rule out present effective service today, even in the Supreme Court.

It all depends on which category, outlined above, these past (alleged) transgressions fall into.