

Statutory Rape: An Immoral Reality in the Church

The church world is getting rocked by yet another **sex scandal**. But this time it's not a high-profile leader who has fallen into adultery or homosexuality.

No, this time it's an "average Joe" churchgoer who is accused of raping a 13-year-old girl. And he's not the only one.

I've been reporting for the past few days on rape allegations at Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Okla. A then-employee, Chris Denman, allegedly raped a girl in the stairwell during church summer camp. He was charged with several felonies, including first-degree rape, forcible sodomy, lewd molestation and use of a computer to facilitate a sex crime.

The 13-year-old girl's mother just filed a lawsuit accusing four adult leaders at Victory Christian Center of intimidating the child victim so as to conceal her rape from the public and parent. Two of the adult leaders allegedly told the child victim the assault was her fault.

As horrific as this news is, it's hardly an isolated incident. The parents of a 14-year-old rape victim last week filed suit against Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Taylor, Texas. That suit alleges the pastor and other church members opened the door for statutory rape. The music minister at the church was convicted in April for aggravated sexual assault of the girl during a sleepover with other church girls at his home.

Statutory Rape Reports in Church

I'm not here to weigh in on whether or not Victory Christian Center employees tried to cover up the rape or if the family is just so distraught (and rightly so) that it is lashing out at the church. I'm not here to lay blame or point fingers at

anyone (except maybe the sick-minded wolf in sheep's clothing who would use a position of authority in the church to rape a child).

I am here to point out an immoral trend of statutory rape in the church. I'm here to sound the alarm in hopes that someone will wake up and **pray** with me. I'm here to expose the spirit of **sexual immorality's** work to attack our children.

The two incidents I just mentioned aren't the only two recent church rape cases. In July, a Memphis minister was brought up on charges of aggravated statutory rape and sexual exploitation of a minor. He was accused of having sex with a 15-year-old girl, while another 15-year-old girl took pictures of the act on her cellphone. Although it didn't happen in the church, one of the church's preachers was the culprit. Also in July, a Sunday School teacher at First Baptist Church in Whitwell, Tenn., was arrested for statutory rape.

The list goes on and on—and these are merely the cases that made headlines. How many other cases didn't make the news? How many other cases were never reported to the police? According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 54 percent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police. About two-thirds of assaults are committed by someone known to the victim and 44 percent of rape victims are under age 18. Every two minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted, and some of them are youth in the church.

Why are there so many instances of statutory rape in churches? What is going on? Rape has been a harsh reality since Old Testament times, but I believe the rise of rape merely mirrors the rise of **sexual immorality** in our culture.

We live in a sex-charged society. Highway billboards display half-naked women. Prime-time commercials often contain so many sexual innuendos that I have to turn my head. That's not to mention the actual programming, some of which glamorizes sex

in many of its forms. All of these are manifestations of the rise of the spirit of **sexual immorality** in our nation.

Pastor, Speak Up!

This is a topic the church needs to address. Clearly, **sexual immorality** is wreaking havoc in our pulpits and our pews. If more pastors addressed the rise of sexual immorality, exposed the spirits behind it, and offered counseling and deliverance to those who need it, would we see fewer church sex scandals? I think the answer is yes. We can't ignore this problem.

The Bible has plenty to say about sexual immorality. Paul warned not to keep company with sexually immoral people (1 Cor. 5:9) and to flee **sexual immorality**: "Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

Spiritual leaders should refuse to tolerate any hint of **sexual immorality** in their congregations. Revelation warns us not to tolerate **Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce God's people to commit **sexual immorality** and idolatry (Rev. 2:20). And Paul boldly confronted sexual immorality head on:

"It is actually reported that there is **sexual immorality** among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

As the church, we can't bury our heads in the sand, shy away from these embarrassing topics, and hope for the best while young girls are being raped by members of our own

congregations. We need to get in the trenches and battle against the spirit of sexual immorality that is ruining lives through all manner of sexual sin. Amen.

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