

Convicted Pastor Breaks Down in Court – Reads Entirety of Psalm 51

A youth pastor and father of five in Kansas convicted of attempting to murder his wife and children and setting his home on fire read from the Bible during a public apology.

Johnson County District Court Judge Jason Billam sentenced Matthew Lee Richards last week to 353 months in prison for two felony counts of attempted first-degree murder, according to a report from the Johnson County Post.

The sentence, which amounts to more than 29 years, came after a plea deal.

Richards was initially charged in September 2023 with five counts of attempted premeditated murder, as well as one count of aggravated arson with risk of bodily harm, the Post added.

Richards had stabbed his wife and five children.

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Three of the children, along with his wife, were hospitalized with severe injuries.

The couple's other two children, a 19-year-old son and one other child, were also hospitalized with less severe injuries.

The former youth pastor at Crossroads Christian Church in Shawnee, Kansas, admitted to police, "I stabbed my kids, detective. I stabbed my wife."

One of the children later told officers that the family members were all in bed when their father started stabbing

them, according to a report from KCTV-TV.

Richards was taken to the hospital with injuries from smoke inhalation.

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Richards had been concealing financial troubles from his wife and family, who were unaware they were about to be evicted from their home.

"The defendant admitted to having the thought that it would be better if they all died rather than for his kids to have to deal with the trauma of finding out the truth and for his wife to find out the truth," an affidavit said, per the Post.

When asked in court to deliver a statement, Richards read from Psalm 51, which ancient Israel's King David wrote after sleeping with Bathsheba and facilitating the death of her husband, Uriah the Hittite.

The passage deals with mourning over sin and restoration after repentance.

Richards apologized to his family before reading the passage from the Bible.

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"Through my actions, I brought disgrace, shame, humiliation and dishonor on myself, our family, kids in classrooms and on the soccer field, trusted friends in my community," Richards said.

"This came from my own shame that kept me from revealing my faults and sins because I was afraid of the truth. I was

afraid to ask for help,” he continued.

“To my wife and kid and the rest of my family, I’m sorry for the multiple levels of destruction and pain,” Richards said.

“While I do offer a short apology today, the most important words in apologies will one day – hopefully soon – be shared and should be shared in private moments. I need to make those apologies to the people I love and hurt the most in private and when they’re ready.”

Richards added that “I hope to be like David and choose to try and use the failures to continue to improve myself and then, help those I have disgraced to recover along with me.”

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