

Eddie Long's Colleagues Speak Out on Scandal

Recent public statements by megachurch pastors in response to a scandal-ridden peer reveal differing perspectives on repentance, restoration and ministerial ethics.

Last September, four men—all former members of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta—claimed the church's pastor, Eddie Long, used gifts, trips and money to coerce them into engaging in sex acts with him. Although no criminal charges were filed, Long settled with his accusers last month, leading some church leaders who had previously reserved judgment to speak out.

On June 5, fellow Atlanta pastor Creflo Dollar urged his World Changers Church to refrain from gossiping about the Long scandal and warned disgruntled New Birth members that they would not find a listening ear at his church.

"That preacher's still anointed to do what he was called to. He just had a wreck. The blood will take care of his issue just like it will take care of yours," Dollar stated. "And I just can't believe that people would leave their preacher because he had a wreck, instead of praying for him."

When the allegations first hit the news last September, Dallas pastor Bishop T.D. Jakes encouraged his congregation, The Potter's House, to pray, saying: "When all this is over, one thing is for sure—somebody, if not everybody in it, is going to need the blood."

More recently, Jakes was interviewed by *The Christian Post* at the McDonald's Gospelfest on June 18 in Newark, N.J. When asked about the scandal, Jakes noted that New Birth should be allowed to address the situation within its own church structure.

"The New Birth church is a church unto itself who has a board and it has a membership. How they choose to handle their leadership issues it's not something that we can control regardless of which side you stay on that issue," Jakes said. "It is their church issue and their responsibility and their response."

The most direct statements have come from Bishop Paul Morton, who leads Greater St. Stephen Full Gospel Baptist Church in New Orleans and Changing a Generation Full Gospel Baptist Church in Atlanta. In a message posted online June 21, Morton called on Long to apologize to the men who sued him.

"If the settlement has already been made they can't sue you again, but you can apologize," he said. "Some people will stay with you, some people gonna leave you, but you've got to leave that up to God. Those are the consequences for the sins that we do."

Morton is the presiding bishop of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, the body that consecrated Long as "third presiding bishop" of the group in 1994 (a position now held by Los Angeles pastor Clarence McClendon). However, Morton appeared to be addressing Long as a fellow minister, not in a disciplinary function, and New Birth is not listed in the fellowship's directory of affiliated churches.