

Stephen Strang: Let Investigation Find the Truth on Mike Bickle

Some leaders at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City have called for an independent, third-party investigation into charges of “clergy sexual abuse” brought last week against Mike Bickle who founded the ministry.

I wholeheartedly agree with the need for an independent investigation because the truth must come out, and often it’s hard to find the truth when those investigating have a vested interest in the outcome. Mike Bickle and IHOPKC have stood for holiness and seemed to be a paragon of virtue in a culture (and church) that has seen too much compromise.

The charges seem serious, yet at least two, who were originally thought to be “victims,” say it isn’t true. While I am not doing an investigation and I’m certainly not judge and jury, I hope what I’ve found so far will at least show there is “another side” and urge Christians not to rush to judgment. By no means am I seeking to hurt, victimize or minimize those who have come forward. Rather I am seeking to provide some personal context and insight into a very emotional and confusing moment for so many. I shared this in my Strang Report video podcast you can watch [here](#).

I have known Mike Bickle and his wife Diane since the 1980s and we have become friends. I am also his publisher. The first thing I thought was “oh no, not again, and not Mike, too.”

Emotionally I’ve been numb, not wanting to believe this is true of such a respected friend. I immediately reached out to Mike via email but I’m not surprised he hasn’t responded because he has a policy of not defending himself. He’s been criticized many times, the most recent in a documentary called

“Cessationist.” But while others in the movie defended their beliefs publicly, Mike refused to do so.

I know Mike as a humble man who lives a modest lifestyle and didn’t take royalties on his teaching or make money like some Christian leaders do who have big followings. There’s not necessarily anything wrong with that, but Mike said early in his career he should avoid even the appearance of evil regarding money.

While at IHOPKC I got to meet several of the key leaders whom Mike mentored. They seem to be solid men of God who learned well. Now they are the ones who are trying to navigate what would be a nightmare for any ministry but especially for one that put such an emphasis on holy living and extreme devotion in terms of study of the word and prayer for hours a day. Since it started in 1999 IHOPKC has had 24-hour-a-day prayer and worship even during snow storms and power outages. They called it harp and bowl and modeled it after the tabernacle of David.

As his friend, I never saw anything that would have hinted Mike had a double life regarding what he’s been charged with. Having said this, I believe when credible charges are brought they must be taken seriously to protect those victimized. It’s like with the police. If charges are brought to them about a crime, they must consider it to be true. If there is enough evidence, then an indictment is issued and the case is tried in the courts. Those accused are innocent until proven guilty.

While this is not in the courts it is playing out in the court of public opinion. Even some Christian media seem to be piling on. People are talking about it. One of my friends calls this “failure porn”—an expression I’d never heard before. But basically when a failure happens, all sorts of righteous people who would never look at porn delight in the salacious details that come out of the scandal.

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We mustn't let that happen. But we mustn't be glib because sadly the charges might be true. There's a saying "where there is smoke there's usually fire." But there are cases of false accusations even in the Bible. The best known is Potiphar's wife falsely accusing Joseph.

When they were nominated to the U.S. Supreme court, both Clarence Thomas and Brent Kavanaugh were charged with sexual misconduct by opponents trying to derail their nominations. Apparently the charges were entirely fabricated and both conservatives jurists were approved by the Senate.

In the church, we must hold up a high standard of morality because the Bible commands us to, and the world is watching. And Dr. Michael Brown discussed how clergy wrong-doing must be handled if the charges are true. (He made clear that he hoped the charges against Mike aren't true.) Now, information is coming out that this may not be a black and white issue. Only time will tell, but several close to the ministry who I know personally say they are standing with Mike until they see absolute proof the charges are true. Some have told me off the record that some former leaders have been gunning for Mike to remove him from leadership.

In my long career I've seen charges of clergy immorality both in the Pentecostal movement as well as in evangelicals circles, the Roman Catholic church and even among Southern Baptists. Usually the leader leads a double life and is finally caught and within a day or two admits it is true.

I've known Mike well for many years and I've never seen anything to suggest he has any sort of double life, and so I am choosing to stand with him, recognizing that we still don't know what is the truth and we must be careful to defend those

who may have been victimized in some way.

Why do I say this? According to reports there are 8 “victims,” yet two have come out saying the charges (involving them) are entirely false. One is Misty Edwards, probably the best known worship leader to come out of this ministry. In a post on Facebook (you can read [here](#)), she said she was very sorrowful about the charges and she wasn’t commenting on any of the women, but she wanted “to make it clear, I am not one of them. I have worked with Mike for 25 years and in my personal experience he has only been godly. I have been sent several social media posts speculating differently and I want to boldly say, those are lies and entirely based on suspicion. I have never been sexually or spiritual abused by Mike Bickle.”

Another Facebook post by April Rose (who I do not know personally) was even stronger. She said she was solicited by some former leaders based on something said about her secondhand “years ago” that she was one of Mike’s victims. “This has NOT been my experience with Mike. I’ve only known him to be a God-fearing man who genuinely loves Jesus (with all of his heart) and is living for eternity. I have not witnessed any duplicity. In the years that I have known him, he has always been consistent with how all of us know him...” (You can read her two-page statement in its entirety [here](#)).

She went on to say she was outraged to learn that her name was added to the list of victims anyway and she says it in very strong terms. That makes me know something strange is going on. Time will tell what, if anything, Mike did improperly. But I’m urging the Christian community to not jump to judgment. There seem to be two sides. We need a thorough investigation.

What spiritual lessons can we learn?

My friend Malachi O’Brien has been part of IHOPKC and a close friend of Mike Bickle’s for several years. Here is what he posted on X Sunday afternoon:

- What has come out (recently) does not discredit the prayer 24/7 movement, the labor of IHOPKC and its thousands of faithful missionaries and the tens of millions of people who have been impacted by Mike Bickle, the worship from IHOPKC, the miracles, the prophetic promises, and the innumerable hours of prayer.
- We know that Jesus is faithful when people are not. Remember, God blesses His Word and work because of what He desires to do on the earth. His blessing has more to do with His character than the character of leaders.
- There is a tension between innocent until proven guilty and the need to validate and care for victims of any and all kinds of abuse. Mike has denied the allegations and I choose to believe he deserves the benefit of the doubt and I fully believe credible accusations must be taken seriously and victims deserve to be taken seriously without repercussions and character assassination.
- We need to view all situations through a higher perspective. What does Father God think, feel, and see in this situation? What God wants is repentance, healing, and restoration.
- Truth is our ally and we must pursue it with patience and no bias—not the version we want but the version of truth and wisdom that identifies reality. Good or bad, we seek the truth and the appropriate response to it.
- Finally, let's reflect on our lives and draw closer to Jesus.

Wise words we all must take to heart. {eoa}

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Stephen Strang is the bestselling author of *God and Donald Trump*. The founder and CEO of Charisma Media, Strang was voted by Time magazine as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America. He has interviewed four U.S. presidents and has been featured on Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, CBN, Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and in many Christian outlets.