

A Word of Encouragement for Those Rocked by the Allegations Against Mike Bickle

It was absolutely shocking to learn this past weekend that serious allegations had been brought against Mike Bickle, senior leader of IHOPKC. (This stands for International House of Prayer, Kansas City.)

Mike is a personal friend and, to my knowledge, a beautiful example of devotion to Jesus. He spent hours daily in prayer and the Word, lived very simply, donating large amounts of money to the gospel, and always embraced a message of repentance and purity. How could the charges be true?

Right now, we must pray for everything to come to light through proper, due process, and no conclusions should be drawn until then.

If the charges are true, focus must first be put on the victims themselves, working for their full restoration and healing. They are often forgotten at times like this, which only adds sin to sin and hurt to hurt. As for Mike, if he were found guilty, the focus should be on his personal, spiritual restoration, not on discussion about ministry restoration.

As for everyone else affected, let me speak as a father and elder, knowing how much mercy the Lord has had on me and knowing that none of us can boast in our own righteousness. All of us stand by grace, and none of us are too big to fall.

Let due process be done, whatever the consequences might be. But don't throw stones, as if nothing like this could happen to you. Better to stay low and examine your own life. As Paul

wrote, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

What about those who were touched by Mike's ministry? What about those who joined the 24/7 prayer movement because of his example? What about those who love Jesus more today because of one of his books or messages? What if the charges against him are true? Was it all a sham? Were your prayers in vain? Can any leader be trusted?

Again, we wait for due process to run its course before coming to conclusions or asking deeper questions about Mike's own life and walk with the Lord.

Yet the truth be told, without throwing stones at those who fell, we have had all too many scandals in recent decades, bringing deep reproach to the name of the Lord and leaving many hurt and disillusioned. What do we do at times like this?

We start with this biblical principle: "What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge'" (Rom. 3:3-4, quoting from Ps. 51:4).

No matter who fails, God remains true.

No matter who falls short, God remains the same – perfect in His goodness, His righteousness, His justice, His mercy and His love. Only God is God!

If Mike's writings helped you draw closer to Jesus, be thankful for that. The closeness you enjoy is real.

If Mike's example motivated you to live sacrificially and devote thousands of hours to prayer and worship, be glad. Your prayers were not in vain. (And they were directed to the Lord, not to people.) Your worship did reach the throne of heaven.

(You weren't worshiping Mike; you were adoring the Creator and Redeemer.) Your sincerity has not changed.

And, at the end of the day, none of us are indispensable in God's kingdom. To quote Paul again, "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor. 3:5–9).

That's also why (as my wife, Nancy, has often pointed out) Jesus never overpraised people. We often do, but He did not. As John explained, "Now while [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs He was performing and believed in His name. But Jesus would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for He knew what was in each person" (John 2:23–25).

His glory is housed in the tents of our human bodies, and everything good thing we have is from Him. As David himself wrote, extolling the mercies of the Lord, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:13–14).

On our end, as we serve the Lord, some of us at great cost, even to the point of martyrdom, we are only doing our duty. As Jesus taught, "when you have done everything you were told to do, [we] should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

We also have to understand that human nature is very complex,

and we can struggle between serving the Lord and yielding to the flesh or between faith and doubt. That means that someone can write a beautiful song of praise to the Lord in the midst of a protracted struggle with doubt. They emerge from a season of doubt with beautiful words of adoration and worship, only to fall back into doubt again. But that worship song was real, and we can sing it to the Lord even if the writer ultimately fell away.

The same thing could hold true with a leader struggling with sexual sin (or gambling or drinking). They download porn, they weep in repentance, then they get up and preach a powerful message, expositing the Scriptures with accuracy.

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That message still stands and inspires even if the person who delivered it fell short (or if their repentance was only short lived).

We also know that people can operate in supernatural power while living in sin, like Samson when he uprooted city gates of Gaza on his shoulders and carried them off shortly after sleeping with a Philistine prostitute (see Judges 16). As stated in a different context, the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). Perhaps the prophecies and visions and words were real, even if the human vessel was falling short.

This is a chilling warning for those of us who point to the success of our ministry or the anointing of God on our lives as proof of divine favor. Careful! God knows our hearts.

As to whether you can trust your pastors or elders or spiritual leaders (after all, you think, if it turns out Mike Bickle was leading a double life, how do I know that others are not?), let me say three things.

First, the great majority of leaders are not involved in sexual or moral scandals. If they were, the church would have collapsed and died centuries ago. It makes good sense to believe the best unless there is evidence to the contrary.

Second, trust the leaders to the extent they have earned your trust. As far as they have modeled a godly life before you (or, before those who know them best), you can trust them accordingly. As Hebrews states, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7; see also 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:9-10).

Third, don't exalt people. Don't make servants of the Lord into superstars. Don't give them status that belongs only to the Lord.

In the end, there is only one Savior, and His name is Jesus. Looking to Him, we will never be disappointed, and only He can bring life out of death and light out of darkness.

Our eyes are on You, Lord! {eoa}

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