

Carl Lentz: Why Rushing Back into Ministry After a Scandal is a Huge Mistake

Former Hillsong pastor Carl Lentz spoke recently about fallen pastors returning to ministry, urging caution and emphasizing the hard work necessary for true restoration. In an interview on Lecrae's "Deep End" podcast, Lentz addressed the reality many pastors face when their moral failures become public, as well as the dangers of rushing back into ministry too soon.

"I will say that if you have a scandal or disaster, and you want to come back into a ministry role anywhere close to the [same] timeframe, I would ask you to reconsider," Lentz said. His reasoning? "Because you did not get to that complicated position, even if you think some of it is unjustified, there's 97 other leadership decisions you have made that put you in a position to be questioned in the first place."

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As reported by ChurchLeaders, Lentz, who was fired from Hillsong in 2020 for an extramarital affair and later accused (but not charged) of abuse, acknowledged that he was not a victim but rather a man who had made serious mistakes.

"Do you know how much work it takes to unwind bad patterns?" he asked. "I had some brokenness in my soul that ministry helped me cover." This admission is striking—it reveals a fundamental issue in church leadership today. Ministry can sometimes serve as a mask, allowing unresolved personal struggles to fester until they explode into scandal.

Lentz also rejected the idea that he is the scapegoat for fallen pastors everywhere. "No, I'm just—for our generation,

our era—I had a high, high profile,” he said. He acknowledged that his ambition played a role in his rise and fall, noting that when he moved to New York, he knew he was stepping into the spotlight. “I had no illusions that should something ever go wrong, I’m not going to be the guy that people are going to pat on the back.”

What Does the Bible Say About Fallen Ministers?

Scripture is clear about the qualifications for church leadership.

First Timothy 3:2 states, “Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.” Titus 1:6-9 echoes this, emphasizing integrity and godly character. When a pastor falls into sin, especially moral failure, they disqualify themselves from leadership, at least for a time. While redemption and restoration are always possible through Christ, leadership is not a right but a responsibility.

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Galatians 6:1 teaches us, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” Restoration should be handled with wisdom, accountability and genuine repentance—not a quick return to the pulpit.

Lentz's words serve as a sobering reminder that no pastor is beyond temptation, and that failure—when it comes—demands deep, thorough healing. It's easy to criticize fallen leaders, but we must also pray for them.

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