

Give Your Pastor Grace!

In any city on this globe, a young man finds his way to an altar, committing his life to Christ. His genuine salvation develops into a deep heart desire to become a servant to both God and humanity.

After a season he feels divinely directed to wonderful bible college, he later graduates and is on his way to answer the cry of a lost and dying world. Blessed with a beautiful wife, he works his way up the ministry ranks finding himself with his own pastorate.

Courageously, he takes on all of the challenges presented him and soon, with no one to really talk to, is encompassed by a nagging sense of isolation and insulation. As a leader, he can't be totally candid with anyone. He loves serving others, but people begin to see him as super human.

Our adversary is ever so cunning.

God's man now finds himself tempted in ways he never imagined for himself, possibly even bending his knee to sin. After seeing how others have been utterly destroyed with exposed fault, he repents; he covers his sin, trusting that God's mercy will protect him. But in time, it repeats. Before he knows it, his sin is completely out of control.

In solitude he cries out to God vowing to never do it again. Yet, he cannot relinquish Satan's talon-like grip.

"How did I get here?"

"How do I get out of this trap?"

Unfortunately, this scenario has been repeated all too often, casualties strewn across the spiritual battle plain.

Recent polls have stated:

- 38 percent of ministers have admitted to having a one-time or ongoing affair since they began their ministry.
- Even more have admitted to looking at pornography via their computers at home and or at their church office.
- 77 percent of ministers surveyed admitted that they do not have a good marriage.
- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches, never returning to the ministry.

(The above research was distilled from Barna, Focus on the Family, Fuller Seminary, Schaefer Institute, Josh McDowell, and , all of which backed up our findings and additional information from reviewing others' research)

Unfortunately, many parishioners are left feeling wounded and destroyed because of the personal failures of those they have trusted so deeply. For the first time in recent church history, we are finding that a greater percentage of born again believers are choosing not to regularly attend church. Yes, more Christians do not currently attend church than do. This has cost the church greatly in so many ways.

Many no longer trust God's leaders and are embittered because of their wounds. Churches are split and the finances in the church have dropped substantially.

Our very nation that has propagated the Gospel more than any other in the history of our planet is now in a season of complete chaos, crumbling internally. The American church is perceived as a hate group bowing before the gods of attendance and money.

We, the church, are in great crisis.

Now is the hour to begin a difficult conversation, to tip over the "sacred cows" of religious preconception. We must stop fearing the voice of the modern day Pharisee whose religious rhetoric sounds so 'right' yet leaves God's called in pain and

destruction, sacrificed across the sacred alters of salvation.

It's the task of our generation; to stop, seek His face, and take a second glance at what the previous generations have left us. Guarding the authenticity of the gospel, we must ask ourselves, "How many of these teachings are not based upon the principles of New Testament restorative grace?"

For instance, in the 1980s, we began the precedent of how to handle ministers who fail morally. Instead of using the principles of the New Testament, we used the philosophies of ancient Greece and the teaching of Aristotle who stated, "If you fail once, your whole life has been a fraud." This teaching is in direct opposition to the finished work of Calvary.

As a result, when soldiers of the cross failed morally, they were systematically exposed, humiliated and cast upon the dung heaps of degradation and solitude. We reveal that we are unspiritual because we respond in a worldly way to those in need instead of embracing the power of the Gospel and applying it to these very public opportunities to model the gospel.

Because of our faithless responses, these men, called and chosen of God are now in the dry places working menial jobs to make ends meet. Many of them have been so shamed that their humiliation drives them deeper into sin, as far from the things of God as possible.

The religious scoff and point their accusatory fingers and call them anathema. Yet, how does God's word refer to these fallen men?

Romans 11:29 says, "His gifts and callings are irrevocable".

If we truly are "the body" of Christ and part of our body is wounded, it's expedient that we rush to protect and heal those very parts, which are sickly. It is our responsibility get them healed, restored and back to where God called them to be.

The sixth chapter of Galatians gives us very clear perspective on how to distinguish those who are truly God's servants in such a time: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently."

This scripture very clearly indicates how God's man will instinctively respond. The most spiritual among us will be those who run to restore.

The religious are unable to fulfill such a task. Their prerogative is limited to Old Testament directives, initiating fanatical obsession in order to smite those who do wrong. It's natural, unspiritual, worldly, and carnal, but it looks and sounds good, especially when cloaked in church language.

Jesus dealt with this same issue when confronting the woman caught in adultery. He exchanged our concept of "accountability to," to that of His concept of "accountability for." He took personal responsibility for the woman. And after driving away the accusers he spoke words of forgiveness, healing and restoration.

That's beautiful.

For the past year, round tables have been spontaneously rising up across America where these tough issues are being discussed. These meetings include many of America's greatest theologians, denominational leaders, ministers, counselors, Christian college directors, and authors.

In attending one of these myself, the ministry of Heal Your Servant received very clear confirmation and directive to obediently step into the fray. The results have been overwhelming. In May, Heal Your Servant and Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Tex., will be hosting a round table of our own.

The purpose of Heal Your Servant is to be a safe place for vulnerable ministers. We are choosing to care more about your

restoration than our reputation.

Our vision is twofold:

1. We are a listening ear for ministers who have no one with which to be utterly honest. We have chosen to create a non-condemning, yet non-condoning environment to speak God's mercy and grace to those who are scripturally entitled to be the first partakers of these fruits.

2. We are very aware of this great commission and understand the significance of the irrevocability of the call of God on those who have once proclaimed this glorious gospel. We feel compelled to seek out those ministers who have fallen away and get them healed and restored and back to the calling for which they have been set apart.

On our website, we provide several godly solutions including a link to "The Underground," a counseling organization directed by Fred Antonelli PhD, which provides intense directives for ministers and their wives for counsel, prayer, and often biblical deliverance.

Heal Your Servant also has an entire plan for churches in the midst of leadership dilemmas. When invited, we take an entire team into the church. Working first with the minister and his wife, then with the inner leadership core, and then to the exterior leadership.

Once a plan is in place, we stand before the congregation on a Sunday morning and say, "You all know this Pastor who has led you to Christ, baptized you, performed your wedding, counseled you, visited you in the hospital, prayed with you and taught you of the wonderful mercies of God? This very Pastor needs a little bit of that right now. We are taking him and his wife away for a short time to be strengthened and restored. When they return, they will be greater than they've ever been. Your job is to simply pray and speak good things about them."

When handled correctly, rather than a church split, people will observe the love of Christ in action. Rather than wounded believers, we will see individuals strengthened and encouraged.

There may be occasions where the minister must step down indefinitely. That is not our decision, but the decision of each particular congregation. However, no matter what happens, that minister will maintain the dignity that was purchased for him by the shed blood of Christ and God will be glorified.

We have several testimonies of those who have avoided scandal, been restored, and brought out of the catacombs of shame and degradation. Here are a couple of examples:

Pastor Kris:

"I don't know how you found me. I pastored a wonderful church for 10 years. It was Camelot, but then the devil hit hard and strong and took out my marriage. And when I reached out for help, everyone— I mean everyone—turned their back on me and kicked me to the side of the road and left me for dead. It was the most devastating experiences a human being could go through. My wife left me and took our 4 children. I resigned from my pastoring because I was too devastated to lead my congregation even though I loved them with all my heart. When I went to minister friends I thought I could trust, and poured my heart out to them, they all walked away because they didn't want to be associated with someone who was having a "failure experience" because it might tint their "success" appearance. I went into a spiral of depression and total shock to the point of attempted suicide twice, and there was NO ONE there. It was, and is, amazing to me that as ministers, we are on the front lines of battle. Yet when the enemy is able to hit us and wound us, our "fellow soldiers," instead of reaching out to help us in our wounded condition turn instead and aim their

weapons at us and seemingly "finish the job." I was amazed that the devil wounded me, but it was my brothers in Christ that finished me off. It is interesting that there is an organization that is reaching out to our wounded veterans coming home from war named "Wounded Warriors," yet we don't do anything for our "Wounded Warriors?" When they tell the stories how they were hit with a roadside bomb and it blew their legs or arms off. I have sat with tears down my face saying to myself. I know what that is like, only my wounds were unseen, but just as painful and life-changing. God Bless Your Ministry. (You can read the entire testimony at)

Pastor Mike:

"I have pastored for 15 years. I have never been unfaithful to my wife before. The pressures of ministry had placed a great division between my wife and me. We were both so busy with the work of God that we had neglected each other. I met a woman online. This relationship had developed slowly and we had made the decision to meet in the Caribbean for the sole purpose of consummating our adulterous affair. I told my wife I was going on a ministry trip. I called in to Heal Your Servant several times and I just talked. I didn't call them back for two weeks. When I finally called again I was asked, what was going on? My response was, Well, I did go to the Caribbean, but instead of taking the other woman, I took my wife. I told her everything. She then admitted to me that she had been in an emotional relationship with another man. We asked for each other's forgiveness, forgave each other and then had an amazing honeymoon in the Caribbean. Thank you so much for saving my marriage and my ministry."

These are just two lives directly touched by the ministry of Heal Your Servant. Yet, the ripple effect of their transformation will perpetuate indefinitely.

Out of the many exposes' we receive through our four weekly conference calls, we are finding that our ministers are

constantly attacked on just a few basic fronts; primarily internet pornography and people met on line via the Internet. We are still hearing many stories of affairs with church congregants. Some have admitted to misappropriation of funds. A few have confessed spousal abuse. I have heard many men profess that they have developed secret identities with which they conduct their trysts.

The uniqueness of Heal Your Servant's ministry is in the fact that we have chosen to provide the vehicle that enables us to be the first responders in the body of Christ. The reason that we choose to listen so intently is to understand how the enemy is attacking our spiritual leaders for the specific purpose of exposing the adversary's plan. Secrecy empowers sin, in the light sin is powerless. Your sin is what you did and not who you are.

Though many grace-oriented ministers and counselors have attempted to take on a task such as this, they have always lacked the single most significant element, the ability to shake the trees and get these ministers to want to walk out of the dark places without fear of retribution.

We say we believe the gospel of forgiveness until someone actually sins. Our ministry simply chooses to believe what the gospel says about forgiveness.

Before anyone responds with condemnation, I have one question for everyone reading this article: If your worst moment were made public, would you still be in the ministry?

If we, as the body of Christ, will accept this challenge and allow these matters to be handled through the perspective of the love of Christ, beginning honest conversation, implementing these truths, we can glorify God by changing the course of the church, our nation, and the world.

Please visit our site and if you have or are ever tempted to cross that line, we invite you please call us and speak with

US.

David Vigil is CEO and Founder of . His life focus is to serve those who have been called of God and see to it that they are free to be exactly what they have been designed to be. His ministry is based out of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Tex. Under the tender of Randy Frazee and Max Lucado, he serves to restore ministers across the globe.