

How to Stay 50 Miles Away From a Moral Failure

Last week, late-night comics joked about the fact that yet another Christian broadcaster had gone down in flames because of a moral failure. This time it was Rory Alec, the British founder of God TV, who announced on Oct. 2 that he was stepping down from the network he co-founded in 1995 and putting his wife, Wendy, in charge.

Despite the giddy reaction from secular pundits, this is no laughing matter. When the world looks at us they think we are just a bunch of greedy hypocrites who can't keep our pants zipped. The embarrassment that started in the 1980s with Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart continues today. We are now experiencing an epidemic of sexual failure in the church that threatens to discredit us.

Wendy Alec has promised to explain the details of her husband's resignation in a statement this week, and the least we can do for our fallen brother is pray for his restoration. But beyond that, I'm also eager to help Christians who might be tempted to think that the failure of yet another high-profile minister means it's impossible to stay sexually pure in a world full of temptation.

The truth is: Jesus can keep you from falling if you trust Him and use biblical common sense. Here's the most honest advice I could give any sincere believer, male or female, who wants to avoid becoming a statistic in this struggle.

1. Maintain an intimate relationship with God. I can offer a 100 percent guarantee that no man or woman who prays regularly, worships God intimately, reads the Bible consistently and knows God's grace personally will fall into sexual sin. When we are full of God's Spirit, His fire will

keep us far away from the edge of moral failure. It's only when a person loses his first love for Jesus that he drifts toward sinful desires.

2. Never get in a sexually compromising situation with a person who is not your spouse. It's never wise to play next to the edge of a cliff. Yet Christians today seem to think it's spiritual to flirt, literally, with danger. The Bible says: "Flee from youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). "Flee" does not mean linger, loiter or dawdle, nor does it mean wink to see if you get a wink back. It means run for your life!

If you are guilty of making suggestive come-ons, counseling people of the opposite sex with no precautions in place, sexting or letting friendships become romantic entanglements, you are well on your way to a full-blown moral failure. You need to repeat this over and over: "Don't be stupid. Don't be stupid." Stop compromising. Draw boundaries, and live as far from the edge of sexual sin as possible.

3. Be on your guard for traps. In Proverbs, the author gave his son the address of the adulteress and told him never to go anywhere near her house. He also said of her: "For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech" (Prov. 5:3). The reason so many great Christians fall into sexual sin is that they don't realize the deceptive power it has.

Immoral sexual attraction clouds judgment and makes men and women do really dumb things that mess up their lives. (Consider King David, who murdered a man to hide his sin after he caught sight of the guy's wife nude then got her pregnant!) The best way to steer clear of a potential marital affair is to stay 50 miles away from the person who is sending the subtle hints. Don't be fooled by another person's seduction or by your seductive urges.

4. Keep your mind cleared of sexual debris. I counsel many

Christian guys who battle with pornography. Technology has made it more accessible than ever, but that doesn't change the fact that porn works like a computer virus to destroy your moral resistance. A man with "porn on the brain" is much more likely to end up in bed with someone who is not his wife. If you have this problem, get your brain debugged as soon as possible.

5. Don't live in spiritual isolation. Almost every minister I know who fell into sexual scandal was living in a private world with no accountability. If you study the habit patterns of adulterers you find that after they start going down the path of sin they become distant and secretive. God has called us to live in the light (see 1 John 1:7), and that means we should give our close Christian friends the right to confront us and ask hard questions. Choose to be transparent.

6. Keep your own marriage exciting. If you are married, one sure way to stay out of someone else's bed is to be satisfied with your own. Solomon told his son: "Rejoice in the wife of your youth; she is your partner, your flesh and your bone" (Prov. 5:18b, 19b). Never talk yourself into believing that you have a "right" to adultery because the sizzle went out of your marriage. Your selfish attitude is probably the reason the sizzle died.

Moral failures are going to continue to scandalize the church, and we will continue to extend grace and forgiveness to those who have fallen. But with Jesus, sexual purity is possible. Let's do a better job of teaching Christians to walk in it.

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