

Pedestals

If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12

Have you built any pedestals lately? In the last couple of decades, newspapers and newscasts have been filled with reports of sin in high places. Television evangelists have fallen with embarrassing regularity. Today's righteous finger pointer often turns into tomorrow's suspect of impropriety. Only the exposures of political leaders vie with the revelations of religious scandals for front-page coverage.

I'm not sure how the average American views these scandals. Certainly the news media seem to delight in their revelations. And comedians have grist for hundreds of new routines. But as a person who also claims to be a born again Christian and a follower of the same Jesus about whom these men have preached, I am dismayed and angered. When these high profile Christians are impugned, I feel as if the barbs are being hurled at me. Their proven or alleged wrongdoings seem to indict all of us. Maybe you can identify with those feelings.

If we the evangelical Christian community are honest, however, we would have to admit that we are part of the problem. You see, by putting these men on pedestals, we have made them larger than life and we have made them susceptible to the temptations of power and pride.

In reality, they are fallible and sinful human beings, just like you and me. Think of how you would fare if your inconsistencies and secrets were exposed—those angry words, gossip, lust for things, murderous thoughts. But we elevate those with special gifts. We treat celebrity converts with almost worship status.

Years ago, as a college freshman and aspiring athlete, I went

to college football camp. It was a Christian institution, staffed with excellent role models. I admired these upper classmen “superstars” as athletes and as great examples of the Christian life. But during one of our team meetings, a massive All-American tackle said something that I have never forgotten. “Don’t put your faith in us or in any human being. If you watch us long enough or close enough, we’ll let you down,” he said. “Instead, keep your eyes on Christ. He will never fail.”

Who are your Christian “superstars?” A pastor, a musician, a parent, a close friend? By “overrating” you hurt them and yourself. Instead, let us put our Christian leaders in their proper place as fellow strugglers who are striving to be Christ-like and who are using their gifts to serve him. And let’s uphold in prayer our Christian leaders and those in the spotlight.