

Will the World See Christians Respond in Mercy to Jerry Falwell Jr.?

You may have seen the recent news. A photo of Jerry Falwell Jr., his arm around a young woman, with both their abdomens exposed went viral. I was shocked, as were many others.

I've had the privilege of knowing Jerry Falwell Jr. (as well as his late father, Dr. Jerry Falwell) for a number of years. I have utmost respect for him and the magnificent job he has done leading Liberty University. Suddenly, students, alumni and others were calling for his resignation. I couldn't really tell what was going on, but I was concerned.

I discovered that the photo in question was taken on vacation. Falwell was teasing his wife's secretary, who is pregnant. Nevertheless, there was an outcry that what he had done was inappropriate. Then I started hearing that more and more people were piling on, as people seem to do in these days of social media.

I believe this is wrong. I don't know all the details of why the executive committee of the Liberty University board of trustees asked him to step down for an indefinite leave of absence. They probably have very good reasons. But I personally hope he can bounce back from this.

Today on my *Strang Report* podcast, I interviewed John Wesley Reid, who worked for Liberty University as a national recruiter for nearly three years. He has been a report and currently contributes to Liberty University's Falkirk Center for Faith and Liberty.

Reid wrote an insightful piece for The Christian Post titled "Dear Christians: The World Saw Falwell's Sin, Will They See

Your Mercy?" I thought he did an outstanding job and invited him to discuss it on my podcast. Our discussion was much more personal than his article, but we both talked about how Christians make mistakes and how Christ forgives. We also discussed what is really a sin and how Christians should respond while the world watches.

I hope you'll listen to my podcast. I believe it's important. I felt that I needed to speak up in this article as well as the podcast to say that we need to be supportive of Jerry Falwell Jr. during this time and believe that God will make all things work together for good.

I remember talking to a CNN reporter when I was being interviewed for one of my books during the time the Stormy Daniels controversy was swirling around Donald Trump. They were trying to get me, as an evangelical leader, to denounce Trump. While I said that if it were true (I have since come to believe it was totally fabricated), Christians don't condone that kind of behavior, but I felt that Christians could continue to support Trump because they know what it's like to be forgiven.

The narrative in the media was that Trump was so vile and sinful the evangelical Christians would finally turn their backs on him. I remember saying that every Christian who's accepted Christ has done at least one thing in their life that they would be ashamed to have on the front page of the newspaper, and they know since Christ has forgiven them, they would forgive Trump.

The situation here is very different. But the concept of showing mercy and forgiveness is similar.

John Wesley Reid and I concluded the podcast by praying for Jerry Falwell Jr. and his family, knowing that God can turn something the devil meant for evil and make it good, just as He did in the story of Joseph in the Old Testament.

I encourage you to speak out on social media when you read somebody who is saying something rude. We can be supportive of our Christian brother and the idea of forgiveness even without necessarily approving of the particular situation that happened. I think it's important for Christians to stand together and to show the world what Christianity is really about: love and forgiveness, mercy and grace.

Be sure to listen to my *Strang Report* podcast interview with John Wesley Reid and share it with friends and on social media. I also want to encourage you to check out , where you can find special offers on all four of my books written to share the truth as we approach the upcoming election: *God and Donald Trump*; *Trump Aftershock*; *God, Trump and the 2020 Election*; and my most recent book, *God, Trump and COVID-19*.
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