

Addressing Abuse in the Church 4



MEETING DATES

1. February 11
2. February 18
3. February 25
- 4. March 3**
5. March 10
6. March 17

RESOURCES

* Addressing Abuse, PCA Report 2022 <https://www.pcaac.org/aic-report-abuse/>

Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* (1820s)

Dan Allender, *The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (2008)

Lindsey Holcomb, *Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence* (2014)

Chris Moles, ed., *Caring for Families Caught in Domestic Abuse* (2015)

Diane Langberg, *Suffering and the Heart of God* (2015); *Redeeming Power* (2020)

Scot McKnight, *A Church Called Tov* (2020)

Michael Kruger, *Bully Pulpit* (2022)

CASE STUDY

How can a regular member of a church determine if a church has the potential for an abusive pastor to abuse? What are some “red flags” or symptoms you might look for? Examples can be structures, style, atmosphere, personalities, etc...

DEFINITIONS

Abuse: “Abuse is the treatment of any person that is callous, often cruel, for selfish reasons, and that has deeply detrimental effects on the person physically and/or sexually, emotionally, and spiritually. The image of God in the victim of such treatment is completely denied... (Abuse is) persistent maltreatment that causes lasting damage.”

1. **Damage** – real, sometime measurable, hurt is caused to victim
2. **Persistent** – it is not one-and-done, but consistent
3. **Power** – the abuser misuses power to his advantage
4. **Motivation** – the abuser does not see value in the victim as made in the image of God

Spiritual Abuse: “Spiritual abuse is when a spiritual leader – such as a pastor, elder, or head of a Christian organization – wields his position of spiritual authority in such a way that he manipulates, domineers, bullies, and intimidates those under him as a means of maintaining his own power and control, even if he is convinced he is seeking biblical and kingdom-related goals” (Kruger, *Bully Pulpit*, 24).

Some aspects of leadership that are not necessarily abuse (Kruger, *Bully Pulpit*, 35-39).

1. Being unfriendly
2. An intimidating personality
3. Not getting along
4. Accidentally hurting someone
5. Confronting people's sins

Pastor as prophet, priest, and king

BIBLE STUDY

Westminster Larger Catechism 130

123. Which is the fifth commandment?

The fifth commandment is, *Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

124. Who are meant by *father* and *mother* in the fifth commandment?

125. Why are superiors styled *father* and *mother*?

126. What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

127. What is the honor that inferiors owe to their superiors?

128. What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?

129. What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?

130. What are the sins of superiors?

131. What are the duties of equals?

132. What are the sins of equals?

133. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment, the more to enforce it?

[all WLC Qs and As can be found at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/westminster-larger-catechism>]

130. What are the sins of superiors?

A. The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; ...

Ezekiel 34:2-4, Philippians 2:21

... commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counseling, encouraging, or favoring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly; ...

Colossians 3:21; Deuteronomy 25:3

... careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; ...

Genesis 38:11, 26

... provoking them to wrath; ...

Ephesians 6:4

... or in any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.

1 Kings 12:16

“The very essence and heart of leadership is taking initiative we otherwise wouldn’t take and making sacrifices we otherwise wouldn’t make, to guide our people somewhere good they otherwise would not have gone” (David Mathis, “True Leadership Is Sacrifice, Not Privilege,” *Desiring God* (2016), <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/true-leadership-is-sacrifice-not-privilege>).

It takes a **radical humility** for a leader to be eager to hear correction and **radical strength** to stand firm in what he/she knows to be right.

3. When Matthew 18 is not enough

“Matthew 18 speaks of brother-to-brother exhortation, implying confrontation of leaders from a similar position of rank. A church must make every attempt to obtain the sinful leader’s repentance through direct and individual confrontation (BCO 34-3). Jesus teaches this process in Matthew 18:15-20. It is a step-by-step means of graciously turning a sinner from his sin. Each step in Jesus’s instructions provides a “raising of the stakes” as more people, including those with greater authority, are consulted and involved in the confrontation.

“Scripture also provides direction in cases where a subordinate confronting one in authority may be treacherous. ‘Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you (Matt. 7:6).’ Throwing the pearls of the truth before abusers may result in further harm to the victim (Prov. 23:9; 26:4). *In a case where the oppressor is in authority over the victim and has a history of unrepentance when confronted, he may be considered dangerous.* Confrontation can negatively impact the life of the victim(s) causing further emotional or spiritual trauma. Jesus provides freedom for an accuser to liberate themselves from greater harm by confronting their abuser. Those who have God-given leadership authority must take responsibility for bringing Christ’s authority to bear on an errant leader. This provides safety for the victim(s), vindication for those who support them, and accountability for the offender” (PCA Report 227).

HOMEWORK

- How is your regular (daily?) prayer for those suffering abuse in the church going?
- Meditate on **Hebrews 13:20-21** every day this week

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
