



JESUS OUR HEALER

Root Causes for Failure

“Keep alert and pray, otherwise temptation will overpower us.”

— Matthew 25:41

Most often, moral or ethical failure can be categorized into three areas:

1. A lack of accountability and too much power.
2. Unresolved conflict in the family of origin.
 - Was there some type of abuse in the leader's background?
 - Our past is part of us.
 - “If we don't deal with our past, our past will deal with us” (WG).
3. Limited time spent alone with God.
 - Lack of depth in the leader's relationship with Christ
 - Poor devotional life

TEMPTATION

We often do not recognize areas of temptation. When temptation occurs, we may respond by:

1. Not acknowledging it
2. Thinking about it and possibly developing a plan
3. Compartmentalizing:
 - In order to justify sin
 - A sense of entitlement
 - Expectation of silence from family, peers, subordinates
4. Toying with it – by not completely yielding to the temptation but partially becoming involved
“No matter how many pleasures Satan offers you, his ultimate intention is to ruin you. Your destruction is his highest priority.”
— Erwin Lutzer

WEAKENED LEADER

1. Stress and conflict that leads to compromise in the leader's disciplines (spiritual, emotional, physical, relational, intellectual):
 - Conflict is a (the) major reason for pastors' resignations
2. Marriage problems
 - Communication, conflict issues, areas of intimacy, finances
3. A flawed concept of success
 - Power, influence, possessions, false humility, authority issues
 - The sin of pride or ego “egomaniacs”
4. A lack of personal discipline
 - Diet, exercise, rest, spiritual resources, accountability

WARNING SIGNS LEADING TO POSSIBLE FAILURE

- Not paying attention to signs of burnout and stress
- Behavioral changes
 - ~ Sleep issues
 - ~ Anxiety

ROOT CAUSES FOR FAILURE continued

- ~ Depression
- ~ Common irritability
- ~ Anger
- ~ Outbursts
- ~ Lack of discipline in communication [sarcastic, defensive, angry, rude, off-color, etc.]
- ~ Excessive worry
- ~ Not tactful

- Personality changes
 - ~ Anger
 - ~ Outbursts
 - ~ Mood swings
 - ~ Lethargy

NOTE: Mental health challenges need to be evaluated

- A lack of Bible reading or prayer (can be an outward sign of inner turmoil).
- Sermons becoming less about the Bible and more about the pastor. Also, conversations are more focused on self instead of on others
- Not being aware, having unusual absences or unavailability (excessive withdrawal)
- Being unbalanced or reckless with finances (inability to stay within a budget personally or within ministry setting) – i.e., spending sprees, not turning in receipts (church), rationalizing spending habits for yourself or others
- Tolerating inappropriate touching of the opposite sex
- Having closed-door, one-on-one counseling with the opposite sex

“Satan will lie in the weeds for forty years to entrap one of God’s servants.” — Howard Hendricks

“Our greatest defense is intimacy with God and right relationships at home, at church, and with colleagues. A busy pastor must get adequate rest and encourage honest accountability from one or more of his fellow pastors.”

— H.B. London

“Stand firm, let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.” —1 Corinthians 15:58

REPENTANCE – HOW TO IDENTIFY IT

- **CONFESSION:** Sincere regret and acknowledgment of the magnitude of the sin and why it was wrong
- **CHANGE OF ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR:** A shift from blaming others to a willingness to bear the blame
- **FOLLOW A PLAN:** A willingness to follow a written contract detailing steps for restoration
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** A willingness to meet with one biblically grounded, mature believer each week who will prepare a report of the leader’s progress. It will be important to have access to all e-mail and internet accounts of the fallen leader.

RESTORATION PRIORITIES

- Authentic and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ
- Intimate and trusting relationship with spouse and children
- Fellowship with no ministry responsibilities
- Good reputation within the community
- Possibility of ministry

ROOT CAUSES FOR FAILURE continued

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:1-2

THE LEADER’S (PASTOR’S) HIGH CALLING

“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

— 1 Timothy 3:2-7 (NASB)

Also see Titus 1:6-9.

SEXUAL SIN: Numerous character flaws that lead to sexual expression. If a leader has been sexually involved with anyone other than his or her spouse, or has been frequently involved with pornography, he/she is biblically disqualified to serve in ministry until he/she is restored. (It is possible that he or she is permanently disqualified).

THE GUILT OF INFIDELITY

See Matthew 5:27-28; 2 Peter 2:14; Hebrews 13:4

- The leader is no longer blameless {Gk: unrebukeable} (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6).
- The leader no longer has a good reputation (1 Timothy 3:7).
- The leader is not a man/woman of good behavior (1 Timothy 3:2).
- The leader is not temperate (Titus 1:8).
- The leader’s behavior is not holy (Titus 1:8).
- The leader has been self-willed (Titus 1:7).
- The leader has not been sober in his/her thinking (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8).
~ Sober-minded, prudent, sensible, discreet, having a sound mind

THE RESPONSE OF THE CONGREGATION OR MINISTRY

This depends on the nature and severity of the offense. There are different strategies of restoration for different offenses: adultery, pornography, illegal activity, embezzlement, molestation, angry outbursts, etc. The congregation or ministry should:

- Insist on immediate administrative leave for the fallen leader. The length is to be determined.
- Document all related meetings, testimony, counsel, etc. Take copious and exacting notes.
- Seek legal counsel if infidelity involves another person. Contact the legal department of your insurance company, as a lawsuit could ensue. They will explain the provisions of your policy and hopefully give good legal counsel.
- Begin intensive counseling for at least a week or two for both the husband and wife. Offer counseling to all persons involved, not just the ministry couple.
- Prepare a written statement about the situation to be read to the congregation.
~ This statement should be sensitive to the congregation, as well as to the offending party and his/her family.
~ It should be brief and accurate (without giving specific details).
- Formulate a restoration plan whereby the leader is restored to Christ, his or her spouse, the church body and, only rarely, to ministry.
~ This must be done with much counsel (advice) and care. The marriage relationship has been seriously damaged. Healing and rebuilding trust will take time and must be proven to be valid (Acts 20:20, Ephesians 4:28).

ROOT CAUSES FOR FAILURE continued

~Many believe the restoration process can take 3-24 months. Under no circumstances should the person be placed back into any position of leadership until this has taken place. The marriage and the individual pastor are the primary concerns, not the ministry.

- Determine a severance package and follow through with a restoration plan where possible.
- Begin the process of finding a new leader to fill the voice (if the restoration process will be longer than 3 months).

RECOMMENDATIONS

As soon as possible:

- Develop a referral list of certified Christian counselors.
- Develop a group of elder (mature) counselors who can keep confidences. They must be able to listen and advise ministers (and their spouses) concerning various needs such as:
 - ~ Areas of marital dysfunction
 - ~ Emotional struggles (depression, etc.)
 - ~ Mental health concerns
 - ~ Moral compromise
 - ~ Areas of temptation
- Develop a telephone “help line” for ministers and spouses to call for confidential counseling.
- Develop a follow through action plan for several types of restoration strategies.
- Develop a follow-up schedule for any minister/spouse who has gone through the restoration process. (Check on them at regular intervals – one month, 3, 6, 9, 12 months – 1, 2, 3, years).
- Develop a strategy to connect with the offended party.

If these practices are put in place and revealed to each leader and minister before a fallen leader is found guilty, he (or she) won't feel singled out for harsh treatment.

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