

Dealing with Inappropriate Sexual Behavior in the Church

We are obviously at an important cultural moment concerning men who abuse their positions for sexual gratification. Predators are not limited to certain lines of work or political parties. It turns out they are everywhere.

The church is not immune. It behooves church leaders to think about this issue personally and as it effects the church. Here are some thoughts to consider.

1. Men, let's acknowledge the truth. We all are capable of boorish sexual behavior, and most of us at some point have done or said something of a sexual nature that we now recognize as inappropriate. Hopefully it happened when we were young and stupid and before we were in roles of authority. Hopefully in the intervening years God's grace, through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, has changed our hearts and behavior. But let's acknowledge, too, that the capability for sexual sin is ever with us. We all need humility and accountability in this matter.

2. As biblical complementarians who recognize male headship in the church, we must also acknowledge our leadership responsibility. The female staff members and volunteers in our churches deserve a place of work and ministry that is free of sexual harassment and inappropriate talk and behavior. Men, it is our responsibility to make sure that happens to the best of our ability. Let's accept our responsibility and step up to the plate. Do not turn a blind eye to inappropriate behavior in your church. Do not dismiss "locker room talk" with a "boys will be boys" attitude. Men, we have a responsibility to protect the flock. Let's man up and do it.

3. Each church should have a doctrinal statement that defines the church's beliefs about human sexuality. That has become important in recent years due to the cultural trends concerning gender identity and same-sex relationships. But it is important that we identify *all* aberrant sexual behavior by clearly defining positive, biblical sexuality. Make sure you have such a statement in your governing documents that sets parameters for all the church's ministries and activities. We prepare to deal with what is sinful by first defining what is holy.

4. Each church should have a written policy on harassment and inappropriate conduct. The policy should define to whom incidents and accusations are to be reported and which person or leadership group has decision-making authority in such matters. Do not wait for an incident to occur before figuring out the process and responsibilities for handling it. Exercise appropriate confidentiality, but do not succumb to the temptation to hide incidents "for the good of the church." Not dealing with the matter appropriately is always bad for the church.

Define the process *before* you have a problem and then implement that process immediately when a problem arises.

The bottom line for church leaders is: *Be proactive* on this issue both in your personal behavior and in your responsibility to lead and protect the church. Waiting gives the enemy an opportunity to do his destructive work.

Please take this matter seriously and do whatever is personally and corporately necessary to protect your witness for Christ and the fellowship of the church.

For further reading on this subject, I suggest the following Christian leaders and organizations:

Jim Denison

<https://www.denisonforum.org/columns/cultural-commentary/matt-lauer-earthquake-continues-escalate/>

Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/what-the-bible-teaches-about-sexuality-a-threefold-vision>

<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-sexual-assault-and-harassment-scandals>

Ed Stetzer

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/november/moore-franken-conyers-republican-democrat-weinstein.html>