

# How to Help A Wounded Pastor

*By Barrington H. Brennen, September 13, 2006*

This article is the continuation of last week's article, "We Need Healing in Our Church." Here are a few of the questions I asked: What happens to a church when its members' hopes and dreams have been shattered by the inappropriate behavior of their spiritual leader? Why do such things happen? Why do people in power violate the trust of people by seducing them? Some people respond to such questions by stating that pastors are only human. Aren't we all human? For an in depth response to this problem you may read my four-part series entitled "Sex in the Forbidden Zone" available online at [www.soencouragement.org/articles](http://www.soencouragement.org/articles) .

Pastors are powerful human beings. No other human being on earth has the respect, honor and privilege that pastors have, not even heads of state. Too many pastors, however, live in a dark world of secret sexual fantasies and inappropriate behaviors. Too many pastors are themselves wounded and damage material. They enter the ministry because it appeals to their need to be accepted and to become powerful. Instead of admitting to their own vulnerability, they allow their pride and ego to take control. When their inordinate sexual desires raise their ugly heads, these pastors become weak and powerless. The more powerful they are in the pulpit and in the eyes of the believers, the weaker they are to oppose the sexual forces within them.

## **WHAT TO DO?**

Accountability is the first step toward healing. The guilty pastor must ask its congregation for forgiveness for violating its trust. In addition he should remove himself from the position of trust, if only until complete healing has taken place. It would be wise that the church or denominational leaders remove the pastor from serving the church. If he is too proud to do this, then his congregation will know that he is not a hopeful ministerial prospect. If the pastor is the highest authority in the church and is not accountable to a higher authority, then he or she and the church are in big trouble, especially if he denies what is so obvious to others.

## **DENIAL AND COVER-UP**

The greatest challenge to dealing with pastors who are accused of sexual misconduct or any other inappropriate behavior is when they deny that anything has happened, even when there are witnesses and tangible evidences. In their own words: "Everyone is a liar." "People are only trying to hurt my ministry." This is the time the pastor wields his most powerful sword of persuasion on the weak-minded, blindly loyal congregants. He uses his most effective weapon, the pulpit, to preach powerful sermons of how people in Bible times tried to destroy the innocent. He would appear to be so genuine and spiritual that blind loyalists would be more convinced that he is telling the truth. There have been cases where the pastor uses his executive powers by removing all persons from church office whom he thinks do not support him. These are the pastors that set themselves up as demigods.

Often these kinds of behaviors are allowed to flourish because the church administrators, or those who are the pastor's advisors, do nothing about it. To prevent embarrassment, or the reputation of the pastor or church, they cover up by not saying a thing. It's a "hush, hush." It becomes the biggest cover-up in town. Sometimes they move the pastor to another district, send them overseas, or even to graduate school. But wherever the pastor goes, he leaves a nasty trail of sexually inappropriate behavior. This is not helping the pastor. These administrators become just as guilty and are accomplices in the crime of destroying others and the life of the pastor. It is best to deal with the pastor honestly than to push the situation under the rug.

### **WHAT CAN THE SPOUSE DO?**

When a wife finds out that her minister husband has been cheating on her, she may experience a mixture of feelings. She has been betrayed by the man to whom she gave her life and body. She may become extremely angry, frustrated, and ashamed. The news of her husband's sexual behavior may push her into a deep depression. Her greatest challenge is finding a confidant. Facing the congregation, friends, and sometimes relatives seems most difficult. The children will also face challenges at school from their peers who seem so cold in their questioning and comments. Their lives have been turned upside down by their father's behavior. Little do we know, without divine healing and professional help, their lives will be ruined forever.

I encourage such spouses and family members to seek professional help. Find a trusted friend or family member to depend on. Avoid being alone for long periods at a time. Avoid feeling guilty for what has happened. Your husband has made a choice on his own. You did not "make him do it." Take care of yourself. You need not be troubled about making emotional, quick decisions about ending the relationship. However, finding your own peace might be most important. While going through this dark time in your life, remember God has not abandoned you. Lean on Him. **The sad part about all of this is that we can only help the pastor if he wants to be helped. To admit one needs help calls for great humility and the removal of false pride.**

**Part 3 next week. Barrington H. Brennen is a marriage and family therapist and nationally a certified psychologist, USA. Contact him at 323 8772, or P.O. Box N-896, Nassau, The Bahamas. Or you may email at [question@soencouragement.org](mailto:question@soencouragement.org) Or visit the website [www.soencouragement.org](http://www.soencouragement.org)**