

THE IRONY OF TEACHING TRUTH

By Prof. Lay

The Irony of Teaching Truth

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It is with the upmost care and prayer that I have researched the dates and places mentioned in this story, to interview individuals related to its content, and to write with clarity and truthfulness, as I understand the events. I have not knowingly or willfully falsified or altered the facts to deceive or defame any individuals in the story.

UNNECESSARY DEDICATION

This story is dedicated to victims of sexual abuse
who have turned their pain into advocacy;

this story is dedicated to victims of sexual abuse
who are in the midst of their healing and recovery;

this story is dedicated to victims of sexual abuse
who have yet to reach out for healing;

this story is dedicated to agencies and individuals
who work to protect and help victims of sexual abuse.

This is a dedication I wish was not necessary.

A STORY OF IRONY

“In Greek, eiron (irony) meant a dissembler – someone who hides their true intentions...(an) incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs.”¹

This is a story of irony—but not the fictional irony I use to teach to my literature students, the type of literary irony you find when Dorothy discovers she did not have to travel all the way to the Land of Oz to find her true home—it was right there in front of her all the time.

This is a story of real life excruciating irony—how a gifted, talented young man preparing for the Christian ministry destroyed the lives of many as a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.”²

This is a story of real life sinful irony—how church leaders called to care for “the least of these” ignored, denied, and covered-up their failures and then sued to protect the church’s

¹ Dictionary.com. This story has no page numbers or chapter numbers—ironic for a book.

² May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

reputation.³

This is a story of real life betrayal irony—how a Christian college founded to graduate leaders to share the Truth silenced a professor for teaching truth.⁴

This is a story of real life irony—how five college students taught one professor about the Gospel:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.”⁵

Douglas Lay
November 5, 2015

³ May 8, 2015. “Whistleblowers Fight Back Against Pastor Steve Wingfield’s Lawsuit”, Sarah Fenske, [Riverfront Times](#).

⁴ May 29, 2015. “Professor’s Accusations Led to South County Pastor Yanking Bible College Funding”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

⁵ Mark 8:35 *English Standard Version*.

AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION

“I don’t care what we do as long as we don’t study the Bible.”

I knew how to lead small groups. I knew how to organize and implement small groups. I knew how to lead small groups in a variety of cultural contexts. I knew how to teach the Bible in a small group. So, who did these “sophomores” think they were telling me, the veteran missionary, how to lead a small group?

“So what do you boys want to do?” I sarcastically replied to one of the four 19-year-old kids sitting in the college’s cafeteria conference room.⁶

“We just want to hangout,” another one added.

“We don’t want another Bible class.” “We just want to share life.”

⁶ Except for the opening quote, most of the dialogues in this story are not word-for-word reconstructions of actual conversations. They represent, however, broad representations of many conversations I had with these young men over the years.

Reluctantly, I agreed to meet with these four students, once a week in my office; however, I wasn't overly committed to these students. I was just doing a favor for their previous small group leader, a guy I didn't really know.

He was six years older than these four students, a recruiter and a 1997 graduate of my college. When he had accepted a job with another ministry, he began looking for a replacement to lead the group. He asked me to step in.

Although I was flattered to be asked, I didn't understand why he hadn't asked one of the veteran, well-known professors. I was just finishing my third semester at the college. He didn't know me very well, and he didn't know me as one of his professors. His invitation was unexpected.

The next week, these four young students showed up in my office. Usually, the first one to arrive would camp out on the couch in my office, taking his sandals off and rubbing his bare feet against the cushions. The next one would arrive and make a move for the leather rocking chair I had brought back from Costa Rica while I was studying Spanish at a missionary language school. The third student would grab the only remaining seat, an uncomfortable chair like the one you might find in a doctor's waiting room, and the last one to arrive would get the floor. I sat in my office chair. Since the four were already friends, they had no difficulty conversing with each other.

“Does anyone know who the girl was leading worship today in chapel?”

“Did you see the cardinals game last night?” “Awesome!”

“My church back home had a church-wide fight recently about women serving communion!”

“Have any of you read about the weird laws in the book of Leviticus?” “Someone should write a song about them.”

The conversations often took on a common theme—girls, sports, ministry, and God—they just talked about life; they talked about their stories. I listened and only occasionally commented on some game they saw, or asked who they were interested in dating, or only briefly answered some generic question about the Bible. Most of the time I remained silent and watched.

After several months of this, I wanted out. I don’t remember if I actually spoke these words to them, but I certainly thought them every week:

“This is a waste of my time. This is not a Bible study. It is just a gossip group. We don’t even have an opening or closing prayer!”

But they kept coming the rest of the fall semester and then through the spring semester of 2001. Nearly every week, they came to my office,⁷ sat on my couch, took off their sandals, and talked about life—talked about their stories.

Yet as they talked and as I listened, they did not know my story.

⁷ Three of the students came on a regular basis. One of the four came more sporadically, once every 3-4 weeks.

PREACHING THE PULPIT

“I hate teaching college students!”

I tried to hide it, but they knew. They saw it on my face, heard it in my voice, and sensed it in my attitude as they sat in my classes and sat in my office.

They knew I was new to teaching. They knew I had lived in Puerto Rico for nearly fourteen years, pastoring several Spanish-speaking churches and an English-speaking church. They knew I had pastored a church in southwest St. Louis County before arriving at the college in January of 1999.

For the first time in my professional career, I was no longer a pastor—I was a professor—and I wasn’t prepared for the transition. Ever since my conversion at the age of 16, I had wanted to work in some area of the local church. I never dreamed I would become a college professor.

I missed the pulpit.

But these four students, now juniors, came back the next school year to sit on my couch, take off their sandals, talk about girls, sports, ministry, God—talk about their stories.

By now, our conversations began to move in a different direction—the boys began to share doubts they had about their own faith, temptations they had with sin, frustrations they had with their parents, church leaders, and even their professors. They were getting comfortable around me, comfortable enough to begin asking me for advice. That I could give. After all, I was twice their age, I was their professor, and I was an authority figure.

But the questions started to shift from asking for dating advice or ministerial help to asking questions like:

“Hey Prof Lay. What fears do you have about your faith?”

“What temptations do you struggle with?” “How do you deal with them?”

“How do you get along with your parents?”

“Did you ever use drugs back in those hippy days of the 70’s? Come on, we won’t tell!”

“Have you ever wanted to quit being a Christian?”

They had turned the tables on me. They not only wanted to share their lives with me, but they also wanted me to share my life with them!

“I will lose all credibility with these four young men,” I worried, “if I am open and vulnerable with them.”

“They will never respect me if they know my failures, my mistakes, my sins.”

But they kept asking. So I started sharing my story.

I shared the challenges of wrestling with Social Services for six and a half years trying to adopt a child from Puerto Rico.

I shared the frustrations of trying to relearn an American culture I had left fourteen years earlier while gravely missing my adopted Puerto Rican culture.

I shared the difficulties of pastoring a local church where I was the 12th minister in 25 years, where an elder didn't trust my leadership, and where the congregation was fighting over replacing the pews with chairs in the sanctuary.

I shared the humiliation of dropping out of Bible College and flunking out of a state college, all before the age of 21.

I shared the embarrassment of living with an undiagnosed reading disability and untreated ADD while trying to hide it from my teachers and then my students at the college.

I eventually shared a three-decade long secret of being sexually molested at the age of ten by a middle-aged married man who lived across the street from my boyhood home.

I shared my life with them, and in the process, I didn't lose respect—I gained it; I didn't lose credibility—I earned it.

Ironically I began to cherish our conversations. This once a week gathering became the highlight of my week. I began to like “teaching” college students.

But when their senior year rolled around, I wondered if they would stop coming. They were busy. One was married. One was about to be engaged. They were doing internships at churches, preparing to graduate and to get married. They were moving on.

But they still came back, every week, sitting on my couch, taking off their sandals, talking about girls, sports, ministry, God—talking about their stories, talking about The Story.

STARTING AGAIN

“Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honor to introduce the graduating class of 2003.”

When three of those four students walked across the stage that morning, received their diplomas, and graduated to do ministry, I was proud, not just for their degrees, but for their character, their integrity, and their hearts for the gospel I had witnessed for three years in my office.

Three months after I said good-bye to them⁸, I found myself for the first time not looking back on my pastoral career in the church, but looking forward to my educational career at the college. I was grateful to begin a new ministry in my mid 40’s, shaped not only in the classroom, but also in my office, with young men sitting on my couch, taking off their sandals, talking about girls, sports, ministry, God—talking about their stories and The Story.

These five young men laid the foundation for all future

⁸ One of the students graduated the following year.

students in my classes and in my office.

They taught me that this generation does not respect authority because of titles or positions, but because those in authority are willing to come down to their level and listen.

They taught me that this generation wants to stamp out injustices, but they live lives of dysfunction and chaos.

They taught me that this generation wants authentic relationships over entertainment religion.

These young men became my professor, instructing me how to minister, to shepherd, to teach, to serve this millennial generation of future church leaders.⁹

How ironic that I would fall in love with an academic profession considering that while I was in grade school, I read at the 30th percentile; in high school I excelled in P.E.; in Bible College I dropped out after three semesters; and at a state university, I flunked out after one year with a GPA under a 1.0!¹⁰

How ironic that I would owe this new love for teaching at the college to a twenty-five year old graduate and recruiter who took the initiative to invite someone he did not know to share life with four students who did not know him.¹¹

⁹ A great resource to learn more about this generation is *Generation iY: Our Last Chance to Save Their Future*. Tim Elmore. 2010.

¹⁰ I had an undiagnosed reading disability along with untreated ADD. It wasn't until I was in my early 40's that I was treated for ADD and learned to address the reading disability.

¹¹ I am indebted and thankful to him for his invitation to share life with these students. I thank him nearly every time I visit with him.

How ironic that I would owe this new love for teaching at the college to the four young men who taught me about the truth of the gospel, “Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”¹²

When the college implemented MAP¹³ in 2005 and small groups became a requirement of the curriculum, students were now mandated to be a part of small groups. They could, however, choose their small group leader.

During one of the first meetings under MAP, I asked the six students in my office:

“So how many of you want to be here?”

One of them, sitting on my couch, replied with a disgruntled look on his face:

“I’m only here because I have to be!”

Another student, while rocking back and forth in my Costa Rican chair, boldly proclaimed to the group:

“I only signed up for your group because I thought if I have to be here, then at least you would make it fun.”

For these six guys, small groups were just another class, another hoop to get over, another requirement to check off to graduate. Behind their resistance to mandatory small groups, I heard what I had learned from those four young men—they really just wanted someone to invite them to share their

¹² Mark 1:17 *English Standard Version*.

¹³ Ministry Advancement Program.

stories together.

So every semester, instead of letting the students choose me, I chose them. I would unexpectedly invite them to my office to sit on my couch, take off their sandals and to talk about girls, sports, ministry, God—to share their stories.

It was these life stories of countless young men that kept me at the college through major administrative changes in 2004, through the uncertain period of the presidential transition team, through the implementation of free tuition, through the challenges of the sudden rise in enrollment, through the transition of hiring a new president and academic dean in 2006, through the grueling two-year ABHE¹⁴ accreditation process, through nearly every year with no faculty raises and reduced financial resources, through the changes in personnel in 2014, and most recently the declining enrollment and financial challenges in 2015.

This was not just a job; it was a calling. It was a privilege and an honor—a ministry and a calling to share the Christian story with these future Kingdom builders.

During the past 15 years, the young men who came to my office weren't always the students with the highest ACT scores, although I did have one with a perfect score of 36; or with the most polished speaking skills, although I did have several who are now accomplished preachers; or with the greatest biblical knowledge revealed on the Bible test, although I did have a few go on to seminary and do doctoral work.

¹⁴ Association of Biblical Higher Education.

A number of these young men, however, did flunk out of college, some were expelled for breaking the student covenant, and one, six months ago, was sentenced to 25 years in prison as a child molester for abusing two 11-year old boys he was “disciplining” while all the time still coming to my office, sitting on my couch, and sharing his life story.¹⁵

¹⁵ During the time of the abuse between October of 2007 and March of 2008, Brandon was attending my class in the fall of 2007 and was attending my church through March of 2008.

SEEING AN INVISIBLE MAN

“He was known as the invisible man.”¹⁶

This is how many of the students at my college referred to Brandon Milburn. One of the Resident Assistants in the dorm observed:

“It was a little strange that he spent much of his time off campus with students and families from his church and so little time with his peers on campus.”¹⁷

When he was on campus, former students commented on seeing him with young boys from the church. On one occasion, another RA witnessed Brandon bringing one young boy back to his room and closing the door. The RA intervened and told him it was not a good idea to keep the door closed. Brandon quickly responded,

¹⁶ This is a quote from Brandon’s roommate during his last year at St. Louis Christian College. Page 4 of the Case Study.

¹⁷ This is from a Resident Assistant at SLCC during the time Brandon was a student from 2005 to 2007 and during the time he molested the two victims.

“Oh yeah, that’s probably a good call.”¹⁸

I saw Brandon mostly in class and when he would come by my office every semester during pre-registration. He would stay awhile, not just talking about his class schedule, but also about what the Lord was doing in his life, about his dreams for ministry, and about his goals for his music and art. On several occasions, these meetings were conducted during road-trips to the White Barn, then to the 7-11 to buy our 32-ounce sodas, and then to “Pato”¹⁹ park, to sit on the aluminum bleachers, consume our half-pound burgers, and share life.

When Brandon wasn’t at the college, he was working as a paid intern for most of his time at my church. He appeared to have a special relationship with the senior minister. Brandon’s former roommate and worship leader at my church observed:

“The senior minister openly considered Brandon ‘like-minded’ with himself,” and he “admired, favored, and just plain liked Brandon as a person and as a minister.”²⁰

When I was at church, I would stop by the youth room to just say “hi”, or I would wait until after one of the worship services to thank him for his tremendous job helping to lead worship.

He was talented beyond his years in music and the creative arts, but he was most gifted with mentoring and teaching

¹⁸ March 28, 2015. *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse in the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, Douglas Lay. Page 3.

¹⁹ It was a name I gave to the park where we would go to eat our food from the White Barn. During my 16 years at the college, I took countless students to the White Barn.

²⁰ March 28, 2015. *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse in the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, Douglas Lay. Page 12.

young boys to know the Lord. You would often see middle school boys surrounding him at church, or you would see pictures of him on social media with a young boy at a baseball game or a skate park.

His peers often commented that they wanted to emulate his ability to disciple young boys. One of this roommates commented how he

“admired how Brandon brought students under his wings” and how “he brings them along when he was working or when he was on stage.”²¹

It was that giftedness, however, that Brandon used, not for the glory of God’s Kingdom, but for the glory of the prince of darkness, an evil that would devastate victims and their families, betray co-workers and volunteers, tear apart a local church and place suspicions on his home church—that would eventually spill over to a Christian college on a hill.

²¹ March 28, 2015. *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse in the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, Douglas Lay. Page 4.

BLINDED IN FRONT OF MY EYES

“The police officer just left my house,” she nervously told me over the phone. “They have arrested Brandon tonight on sexual abuse charges.”

It hadn't hit the papers yet. That would come three days later.²² A friend of mine had called, a parent with several children in the youth program at the same church Brandon and I attended, a youth sponsor at the church, a woman who had opened up her home to Brandon, a woman whose address he had used as his last place of residence in St. Louis before he had moved to California in July of 2012.

I was profoundly saddened, yet angry. I was hurt, but I was not completely surprised.

Two years earlier (February of 2012), this parent had already informed the executive and senior ministers²³ at our church, the church where Brandon was employed, concerning allegations of sexual misconduct with six boys, all minors at

²² February 7, 2015.

²³ Executive minister: Scott Strandell; Senior minister: Steve Wingfield.

the time. She shared, in great detail, how five boys told her that Brandon had exposed his genitals to them, how she and her husband had witnessed Brandon spooning in bed with another boy in their home, and how Brandon had purchased expensive electronics and had given a key to his apartment to that boy.

And there was more.

She and her counselor had already hot lined Brandon for this conduct after being advised by two professors from my college. Also, she had shared these same allegations with my wife and me, immediately after leaving the meeting with the two ministers. When she arrived at my home, she was distraught and upset. These two ministers had downplayed the seriousness of the allegations, had expressed their support for Brandon, and had counseled her to focus on her own family, not on Brandon.²⁴

About a week later, I invited Brandon to my office at the college. He sat on the couch, as he had done numerous times before, as I went through each of the allegations, line-by-line, with him. He didn't seem surprised by the questioning; yet he was a little nervous. He denied nearly all of the allegations while he excused and downplayed others. He then left my office, and I would not see him again for two years.

When I did see him again, it was not in my office, but at the St. Louis County jail three days after his arrest, not as his professor or mentor, but as an ordained minister. The clergy

²⁴ The entire description of the events leading up this event, including this meeting, and the events that transpired afterwards can be found in a case study, *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse Within the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, Douglas Lay. March 28, 2015. (isitenough.net).

privilege allowed me to visit Brandon any day, any time during the day without his knowledge of my visit, so he did not know I was coming that day. Normally, Brandon was allowed only two visitors a week, and he had to request their visit.

As I walked into the small room in the visiting area and closed the door, I saw a scared look on his face, one of shock as he constantly looked down at the floor, nervously shaking his legs up and down, as we engaged in small talk, ignoring the elephant in the room—the serious charges before him.

When I returned to the jail a week later, the charges against him—six counts of sodomy with two minors—had saturated the news media. His picture was everywhere, plastered on the TV, in the newspapers, and throughout the Internet. The news of his arrest was not only reported in St. Louis, but also in California and Louisville, his hometown.

During this visit, looking somewhat calmer than the previous week, Brandon asked me for a favor,

“Prof Lay, could you please not tell anyone I am in here?”

He hadn’t seen the evening news.

He told me he had been ferociously reading the Bible, praying, and even fasting over the past several days, convinced the judge would reduce the \$100,000 cash bond so he could be released into the custody of his friend, the Connections pastor at my church, and his wife, the cafeteria director at the college where I worked.

The bail was not reduced; he would remain behind bars.

He talked about his future as if he thought he would be back in California before too long, resuming his music and film career. Yet as he talked with what seemed like a renewed hope for his release, he seemed to be in complete denial of the seriousness of his situation.

I didn't stay long. I read several passages from the book of Lamentations. I prayed and then left. That was my last visit. I was advised by a prison chaplain to not visit Brandon again as a pastor because of a conflict of interest, not just as his former professor, advisor, and mentor, but as a potential witness for the prosecution.

I didn't know if or when I would see him again.

THE SILENCE OF SHOUTING

“*Mr. Lay, you will not need to testify. Brandon has pleaded guilty.*”

Those were the words the prosecuting attorney spoke to me over the phone on the first day of Brandon’s trial.²⁵ This was good news, not for me, but for the victims. They would not have to relive the horror of their ordeal in a courtroom and eventually in the public record. The families were spared the pain of watching their children confront their predator.

Brandon had just entered a guilty plea earlier that morning to seven counts of sodomy against two eleven-year old boys from my church where he was employed as a youth intern. The crimes were committed during a six-month period from October of 2007 to March of 2008, a three-month period when Brandon was a paid intern at the church and a student at the college where I worked.

I, like many others, kept asking how I could have missed the

²⁵ January 26, 2015.

warning signs. I felt guilty, and at times, wondered how I could have been so blind. I felt I had failed as a professor, an advisor, a mentor, and a friend. I had mentored and shepherd so many other young men at the college. How did I miss this one? More importantly, I thought,

“What can I learn from this?”

I got a call from a former youth minister from my church that morning also. He was in town because he had been subpoenaed to testify at the trial as I was. As he was sitting on my couch in my office, we reflected on the events surrounding Brandon’s guilty plea.

“How did we miss this?”

“What were the warning signs?”

“Did anyone else have suspensions?”

“How should the church and the college deal with this?”

As we tried to process all of the events, not only of the past year, but also of the entire time we had known Brandon, I posed this question to him,

“What are we going to learn from this?”

For many, the approaching sentencing on March 30th would be the end of this horrific ordeal. Justice would be served; life could then move on.

Life could not move on for us. I had poured nearly six years of my life into Brandon at the college; the youth minister had

poured about the same amount of time into Brandon at the church. We had to learn from the evil of his past, so we could redeem the future with good.

We made a plan.

Near the end of February of 2015, the youth minister sent a letter to the senior minister, the executive minister, and the elders at my home church, pleading with them to investigate the allegations from three years earlier.²⁶ A few days later, I sent the first edition of the case study, *Is It Enough? Sexual Abuse Within the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, to the church leadership and to them only. The case study explained the process of how we believed the victims, the church, and the college could learn from this despicable act by one young man. The case study was sent to the elders in good faith for the benefit of the church.

We waited to hear back. We waited two weeks.

The senior minister and the elders finally replied in a certified letter to us—there would be no investigation!²⁷

I was shocked. How could the elders (including the college's business administrator)²⁸ ignore the case study and justify not investigating the allegations of sexual abuse by Brandon who was by this time, a convicted child molester?

How could the elders justify not investigating the allegations

²⁶ March 28, 2015. *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse Within the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, Douglas Lay. Pages 21-23.

²⁷ March 28, 2015. *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse Within the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, Douglas Lay. Pages 26-27.

²⁸ The college's business administrator was an elder at my church.

when the senior and former executive ministers had already been told about other allegations three years earlier?

So I pressed forward.

I interviewed more former students who knew Brandon. I talked with church members who had worked with him. Each time, I would send the updated edition of the case study to the church leadership. Each time I heard nothing in reply.

Finally, two days before Brandon's sentencing, the executive minister and three of the four elders (including the business administrator of the college) agreed to meet with the wife of a former youth minister and me. I didn't know if the elders knew about the allegations from 2012, so I gave them the benefit of the doubt before accusing them of not acting upon the allegations.

The two of us did most of the talking during the three-hour meeting while the elders mostly listened and took notes. I asked if the senior minister had told them about the allegations from 2012. They didn't answer, and the senior minister wasn't there to answer either. I explained, argued, and then pleaded with the elders to investigate the allegations from three years earlier. They asked me what I would recommend they do. I told them to interview the parent, interview other former youth ministers, and interview every family who had boys in contact with Brandon. (I had already laid out a three-fold strategy in the case study of how to conduct an investigation).

Near the end of the meeting, we were asked to submit questions so they could take them back to the rest of the

elders.²⁹ We asked:

“Did the senior minister tell the elders about the sexual abuse allegations from February of 2012?”

“Have the elders communicated with the former executive minister about the allegations from 2012?”

“Have the elders interviewed the parent who brought the allegations to the two ministers in 2012?”

“Have the elders communicated with any of the families in the church who had contact with Brandon while he was employed at the church?”

“What are the specific errors you believe are in the case study?”

“Would I be able to meet with the senior minister soon?”

The elders (including the college administrator) promised to answer our questions within the next several weeks. I waited, but no answers came, and still no answers six months later.

I walked out of that meeting more perplexed about their indifference but more determined to press on. I no longer gave the elders the benefit of the doubt. They were now responsible and accountable for the care and protection of the children at the church—including the eight “alleged” victims

²⁹ Three elders were present with the executive minister and his wife as a witness. One elder arrived 2 ½ hours later. Another elder and the senior minister were absent.

reported in the case study.³⁰ They could no longer delay and stall. They needed to be held accountable.

While I was waiting to hear from the elders, Brandon was waiting to hear from the court.

³⁰ The parent had reported to me there were six alleged victims back in February of 2012. After Brandon pleaded guilty in January of 2015, she reported to me that two additional victims informed her they too had been abused by Brandon, bringing the total to eight.

REPETITION OF ONCE

“This is a pattern that has been going on for ten years,” the prosecuting attorney said. “We know there are other victims here in St. Louis, at least one who has been named.”³¹

He continued:

“Your Honor, again, he used his position as a youth minister to gain access to all these different victims. In the sentencing advisory report, the defendant minimizes his activities, his offenses against the boys in this case, and actually denies there are other victims.”³²

Brandon was dressed in a light brown jumpsuit with his hands and feet shackled, sitting alone on the first row nearest

³¹ The other named victim from St. Louis is one of the six alleged victims reported in the Case Study and reported to the senior minister in February of 2012 and to the elders at FCCF on March 3, 2015.

³² May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#). At the sentencing, the prosecuting attorney reported that there were eight additional alleged victims from First Christian Church of Florissant and three victims from his home church, Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

the front of the courtroom, nervously shaking his legs up and down as he waited to hear his sentence.³³

But first, he would have to listen to the prosecuting attorney's strong and persuasive arguments for a sentence much longer than the minimum ten years.

Brandon then would have to listen to the victims and their families speak about the indescribable betrayal and deep-seated pain brought upon them by his unconscionable actions. He would have to listen to them petitioning the court to give him the maximum sentence—life in prison.

Standing in front of the judge with his back to Brandon, one of the two victims bravely declared:

“I stand before you a confused and hurt individual,’ says Adam Krauss, who first met Milburn through FCCF's children's ministry when he was in middle school. ‘Brandon Milburn was a guy I thought I could look up to and trust. He played a significant role in my spiritual life. He baptized me... He is a pathetic excuse for a man. He is a liar and a manipulator.’”³⁴

When the other victim's turn came, he approached the bench, and he too bravely shared:

“I kept the secret of what happened to me for seven years, seven very long years,’ he says, his voice shaking. ‘Your

³³ Besides the victims and their families at the sentencing, there were about ten of us in support of the victims, including the sister-in-law of the college president, a reporter from a local newspaper and a woman from SNAP, the catholic organization that helps victims of sexual abuse from the clergy, Catholic and non-Catholic.

³⁴ May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister's Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

Honor, Brandon Milburn's effects on my life reach far past the sexual abuses of years ago. It seeps into my daily life even now. His actions broke my confidence, pride and trust.”³⁵

After the families had spoken, two supporters of Brandon approached the bench. One was from a church in California where Brandon had worked. I did not know him. The other was the college’s cafeteria director. She was a youth volunteer who worked with her husband, the Connections Pastor, at my church. I knew her.

The next to last person to speak was Brandon:

“With everything I am, I'm so sorry. I would do anything to take my childish behavior back.... I know that I sinned against God and that I sinned against them. I was given a position of trust, and I abused it on them.... My actions have haunted me for years.... I truly hate what I've done. I'm sorry, God, I'm so sorry.”

However, in the next breath he said,

“I'm ready to be put this all behind me and to continue reaching for my dreams of filmmaking and in music...Your Honor, I ask for your mercy in your decision today, for a chance to further prove who I am.”³⁶

Before Judge Robert Cohen issued the 25-year sentence to be served concurrently on all 7 counts of sodomy, he addressed

³⁵ May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, Riverfront Times.

³⁶ May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, Riverfront Times.

all of us that day in the courtroom:

“The problem with the sort of behavior that Mr. Milburn has shown is that it’s not like other kinds of situations...What we know about molestation, with all due respect to everybody, is that this is a very, very, very stubborn problem. And that isn’t what Judge Cohen says. This is what the psychologists say. This is what the counselors say. The professionals say there is no such thing in this area. There is no feeling like, ‘oh, boy, that was youthful indiscretion, and that was wrong, and I’m ashamed of it, and that was then and this is now.’ If only that were true.”

“But it’s not true. And I will repeat that statement. It’s not true. You cannot will it away. It is an aberration that is part of your character development. It takes a lifetime of work and in many, many instances we fail because we cannot get at that which has created this behavior...It is the most stubborn problem...This is Mr. Milburn’s life-long issue.”

“We don’t know that he is going to do this again...but the likelihood is great that he will. We know that what I will call clergy abuse, using religious authority and orientation, is not an accident. It is not an accident. It’s a way to get close to people. This is what the molester does, and this is what the pedophile does. This has all been documented.”

“It’s no accident that Mr. Milburn chose this activity and then abused his position and abused his authority to gain proximity, respect, and the opportunity to do this. That was not an accident. It happens all the time.”

“I am very concerned about Mr. Milburn. And I know one thing for sure, his statement that he is ashamed and that he has worked through it and it’s over with it is not true. It’s just not true. It is an illness and the illness is not cured. It’s with him.”

“This is a serious, serious, serious matter. It’s very troubling. It’s very troubling....There have been a lot of allegations about other behaviors of Mr. Milburn. What should I believe? They haven’t been charged as crimes. They haven’t been prosecuted...Would I be surprised? I’ve been sitting on this bench for 40 years. It’s hard to surprise me any more. This is the pattern of child molesters and Mr. Milburn is a child molester....It doesn’t just happen once.”³⁷

The prosecuting attorney had already confirmed the judge’s concerns about other victims. He had announced that there were three additional victims—not from my home church, but from Brandon’s home church, a church of over 25,000 members in Louisville, Kentucky, information confirmed in letters from the three victims received by the judge before the sentencing.³⁸

In addition, the prosecuting attorney had also shared with the court that there were an additional eight victims from my church, information I had shared with him five months earlier in a phone conversation, repeated in the case study I had sent to him and to the judge, and again on the phone only days before the sentencing.

³⁷ March 30, 2015. *Sentencing of Brandon Milburn*, Court Transcript.

³⁸ Public court records.

As I walked out of the courtroom that day, I was more convinced and driven to persuade the elders at my church to immediately and extensively investigate the allegations of sexual misconduct reported to the senior minister three years earlier, and the same allegations shared with the elders through six editions of the case study, sent to them between March 3rd and March 28th.

This led me to writing an additional document, *Serious Answers for a Serious Problem*. It provided additional evidence targeted at a grave discrepancy in the church's public statements immediately following the arrest of Brandon in February of 2014. The church had released statements that Brandon had been living in California for two years (since February of 2012). At the time, that small detail seemed insignificant, but by now it would prove to lay the foundation for accusations of a cover-up.

Brandon had actually been living in St. Louis and attending my church since February of 2012, and he had worked as a leader at the church's VBS in June of that year, contrary to the senior minister's public statements. I had found pictures of Brandon from Facebook at the VBS in June of 2012, working as a leader with the kids.

The discrepancy of the four months is significant—the senior and executive ministers had been informed of sexual abuse allegations in February of 2012. So Brandon was allowed to volunteer, attend, and serve at the church for at least four months with what appeared to be full knowledge of the sexual abuse allegations by the top two ministers at the church, both mandatory reporters. Yet, they never reported the allegations.

This document accused the senior minister of lying about not

knowing about the previous allegations and of covering-up that knowledge. I sent it first to the senior minister and the elders on April 7th, but when they did not respond, I sent it to other staff members, to former elders and staff, and a number of church members, hoping they would engage the elders to address the discrepancies and investigate the allegations. This document was not placed on social media or on the Internet.

It would be another nine days until the senior minister and the elders finally responded to the case study and to *Serious Answers for a Serious Problem*.

What would they finally say to me?

WATCH WHAT YOU SAY

“*T*hey’re suing me along with three others!”³⁹

“Who is?” asked one of two students I was talking to in the tutoring center on campus before going home that day.⁴⁰

“The senior minister and the entire church—for slander!”

I had just opened an email on my smartphone from the church’s lawyer with an attachment of a lawsuit⁴¹ and a temporary restraining order⁴², demanding that I retract what I had written in the case study.

We were to appear in court on Friday at 1:30 pm; it was now Thursday, 4:51 p.m.

³⁹ The defendants were Douglas Lay, Titus Benton, Kari Benton, and Dawn Varvil. A fourth person, Annie Shankin (Jane Doe), was listed as a defendant. She was an anonymous person who had set up a fake Facebook page.

⁴⁰ April 16, 2015.

⁴¹ April 16, 2015. *Memorandum in Support of Temporary Restraining Order Including Exhibit*, James Wyrsh.

⁴² April 16, 2015. *Lawsuit Verified Petition Including Exhibits*, James Wyrsh.

The plaintiffs—my senior minister and my entire church—were asking for \$25,000 plus punitive damages, and a retraction of the contents of the case study, *Is It Enough?*

In less than 24 hours after receiving two PDF files with the names of the senior minister and the church as the plaintiffs in a lawsuit for slander, I found myself back in a St. Louis County courtroom, similar to the one where I had been 18 days earlier watching a defendant, a child molester, receive a 25-year sentence. But now I was the defendant.

As I entered the courtroom alone, the senior minister and his wife, daughter, mother, the executive minister, two elders including the college's business administrator, and several other supporters were waiting for a judgment from the court. We had to wait only 20 minutes. The court denied the senior minister's petition for a temporary restraining order of the case study. The case study would not be silenced.

Before I left the courthouse that day, I requested through my lawyer to sit down and talk to the senior minister—in the spirit of Matthew 18—yet the senior minister declined.⁴³

The senior minister finally did sit down with me⁴⁴ and talk—but in a legal mediation meeting with each of our lawyers and with a signed confidentiality agreement.⁴⁵ The senior minister was ready to drop the lawsuit that very afternoon if I would simply retract my statements in an upcoming newspaper article and publicly retract the contents of the case study—the

⁴³ April 27, 2015. *Motion to Dismiss Letter*, Al Johnson. Page 3.

⁴⁴ April 30, 2015.

⁴⁵ The senior minister broke the confidentiality agreement the next week, thus allowing me to discuss the contents of the meeting now. April 30 2015. *Confidentiality Agreement*, Johnson, Wyrsh, Wingfield, Lay.

key petition in the lawsuit! If so, he would then lift the “no trespassing order” that had revoked my “permission to enter on the property of the Church,”⁴⁶ thus allowing me to attend the college’s graduation service the next week on the church property.

I rejected his conditions, resulting in, for the first time in 16 years, not attending college graduation. Although I felt betrayed by the college for not addressing this, I was focused on continuing to speak out through the case study. Because I had already filed a petition to dismiss the lawsuit⁴⁷, all I had to do was wait two weeks for the lawsuit to be dropped *with prejudice*, a petition I was 90% confident I would win. But if not, I was still prepared to go to trial—to speak out and defend my cause for the victims and my criticism of the church in the case study.

As I was waiting, the public became aware of the severity of Brandon’s actions. After a two-month investigation, a lead story hit the newsstands and the internet, *A Youth Minister’s Downfall Is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart* in the Riverfront Times, a local paper in St. Louis.⁴⁸

The reporter interviewed one of the alleged victims, first reported to the senior and executive ministers at my church in 2012 and then later shared with the elders at my church in the case study in 2015. This young boy confirmed one of those initial allegations from the case study:

“One night he (Brandon) was actually spooning me. I was asleep, and I remember feeling something down here, on

⁴⁶ April 10, 2015. *Cease and Desist Letter*, James Wyrsh.

⁴⁷ April 27, 2015.

⁴⁸ May 6, 2005 by Danny Wicentowski.

my leg,' Rayner⁴⁹ says. 'I woke up and I feel him getting closer to my dick. I was frozen with fear; I didn't know what to do. He did that for a few seconds and then he stopped. I think he realized I was awake, and he just broke down in tears, saying, like, "Oh my God, I'm so sorry, I did not mean to do that.'" Rayner remembers Milburn sitting up on the couch, crying and apologizing. When Rayner told him it wasn't a big deal, Milburn stopped crying. 'Did you like it?' he asked."⁵⁰

Yet two days after the article came out, the college, not the church elders, suddenly initiated a mediation meeting on their own without my knowledge, five days before the court was to hear my petition to dismiss.⁵¹ The mediation was with two area ministers without our lawyers. The college's business administrator (one of the elder's suing me) informed me of the meeting with less than 24-hour notice.

I declined the invitation because of my lawyer's counsel. I declined the invitation because I had already rejected the senior minister's conditions in a legal mediation. I declined the invitation because I was waiting five days for the suit to be dismissed. I declined the invitation because I was going to the ballet with my wife as a mother's day gift to her!

Because of the confidentiality agreement, I could not tell the college, the area ministers, or the elders why I declined the invitation, an invitation the president would later state I refused to attend.⁵² Yet, it was during that meeting where I

⁴⁹ This is not his real name.

⁵⁰ May 6, 2015. "A Youth Minister's Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart", Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

⁵¹ Correspondence written by the President.

⁵² Correspondence written by the President.

did not attend that the senior minister broke our confidentiality agreement!⁵³

So with only 48 hours before the lawsuit most likely would have been dismissed *with prejudice*, the senior minister “suddenly” dropped the lawsuit *without prejudice*, still allowing the senior minister to reopen the lawsuit over the next two years.⁵⁴ His petition to drop the suit said that

“because (the) Plaintiffs have invited an independent Christian mediation process and as a sign of good faith, the Plaintiffs voluntarily dismiss this action without prejudice....”⁵⁵

Yet, the senior minister didn’t invite the mediation process—the college did, initiated by the college president and a college trustee who was a former minister at the church. The senior minister didn’t voluntarily drop the suit—that was the purpose of this mediation meeting.

The next day, I met with the college president and academic dean who surprised me by demanding I personally thank the elders for dropping the lawsuit and to offer an apology to them.⁵⁶

Why?” Because the lawsuit would still be open for two years, my lawyer could not legally advise me to apologize for a frivolous lawsuit.⁵⁷ When I did ask the college president what

⁵³ Two of the defendants in the lawsuit did attend and reported to me the senior minister shared parts of our mediation meeting with the group.

⁵⁴ May 11, 2015.

⁵⁵ May 11, 2015. *Plaintiffs Voluntary Motion to Dismiss Without Prejudice*, James Wyrsh.

⁵⁶ Email from May 12th requesting a meeting with me and the president and the academic dean.

⁵⁷ May 20, 2015. *Information / Press Release*. Al Johnson.

I was specifically apologizing for, he gave me no specifics.

Yet before I left that meeting, I did, however, ask them for specific FERPA⁵⁸ guidelines they said I might have broken in an interview with the reporter a month earlier. I had speculated about why I thought Brandon had returned to the college 18 months later to complete a bachelor's degree. The article stated:

“...he was a terrible student. He's a very good public speaker, but he could barely write your standard research paper.’ So I said, 'Brandon, you don't need a bachelor's degree! Why would you come back?’”⁵⁹

The college administrators informed me after the newspaper article came out that this comment might possibly be a borderline infraction of FERPA laws, but they were unsure. I apologized for my ignorance and asked for further FERPA guidelines.

The college did not follow through with my request. I never received any guidelines or specific examples of FERPA infractions or rules—none! Instead, the college would place unacceptable and unfair conditions upon my employment—two days before receiving my contract for the next academic year.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ “Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.”

⁵⁹ May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

⁶⁰ The faculty one-year contracts are usually given a month before the end of the fiscal year. This year, however, they were given to us only two-weeks before the end.

CORRECTION OF CHOICE

“**R**efrain from using social media, texting, email, or public media to espouse your cause or criticize a local church as your job as professor obligates the college in matters of personal concern.”

Instead of waiting by the phone to hear from my lawyer if the court had dropped the lawsuit *with prejudice*, I was sitting in the president’s office with my lawyer unprepared to hear what the college had just dropped on me:

Notice to Professor Doug Lay, in re Section 12.4, “Written Warning: Step Two” of the College’s Correction Policy.⁶¹

Before any of the employment contracts had been offered to the faculty, I was given six conditions that were placed upon my future employment. The first three were as follows:

⁶¹ This is the document the president and academic dean gave to me in a meeting with my lawyer. If an employee disobeys the conditions of Step Two of the Correction Policy, Step Three of the policy is implemented—suspension, and then dismissal in Step Four.

- “Do not use the college name ‘so as not to obligate the college in matters of personal concern.’”⁶²
- “Do not use the college email for personal use.”⁶³
- “You were warned to be mindful of FERPA requirements and restrictions regarding information on any student, current or past.”⁶⁴

First, I was being disciplined for using the college’s name in the newspaper article to “obligate the college in matters of personal concern” when the reporter stated:

“His (Brandon) desire for that degree confused Doug Lay, an FCCF member who'd been Milburn's professor and mentor at **St. Louis Christian College.**”

It was the only reference made in the 8,000+-word article between me and the college, a reference that is public knowledge. In fact, the article mentioned the college’s name four other times, twice in reference to Brandon, once about a former student who knew Brandon, and once in reference to a former professor at the college.⁶⁵ This did not break any employee handbook policy rule.

Second, I was being corrected for using the school’s email to

⁶² Section 8.11 of the SLCC Employee Handbook.

⁶³ Section 9.4 of the SLCC Employee Handbook.

⁶⁴ May 13, 2015. *Notice to Professor Doug Lay, in re Section 12.4, “Written Warning: Step Two” of the College’s Correction Policy, Employee Handbook.*

⁶⁵ (1) “He'd arrived in St. Louis to pursue an associate's degree at St. Louis Christian College.” (2) “Milburn earned an associate's degree from St. Louis Christian College in 2007.” (3) “In January 2011, sixteen months after Milburn returned to Florissant, Thiele herself enrolled at St. Louis Christian College.” (4) “It wasn't until she took her concerns to her mentor, a minister and faculty member at St. Louis Christian College named Lisa Womble, that the scales finally fell from her eyes.”

send out the case study in March. When I was informally warned of that infraction in Step One of the Correction policy on April 7th, I apologized. This did break an employee policy rule.

So I changed my Facebook email from the school's email to a personal one, created a new email (isitenough15@gmail.com), and started using that email for all correspondences with the church.⁶⁶

Third, I was being warned for possibly breaking a borderline FERPA law (the administrators admitted they were not sure if it was an infraction) when I said in the newspaper article that Brandon was not a good student.

“...he was a terrible student...he could barely write your standard research paper.”⁶⁷

Those thirteen words from an 8,000+word article were from an interview I did in April, before the college informed me of any possible borderline infraction. The president and dean were not completely sure I had broken a FERPA rule; they described it as a “borderline” infraction,” needing further clarification, which I asked for from them but never received.

Concerning the credibility of this condition, my lawyer commented in a letter to the president on August 28, 2015:

“Your reference to alleged violations of the FERPA in your August 20, 2015 letter is a continuation of a

⁶⁶ Email reply from FACEBOOK acknowledging a change in the email address from dlay@stlchristian.edu to isitenough2015@gmail.com on April 13, 2015.

⁶⁷ May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

recurrent complaint by you that Doug violated FERPA by his suggestion in a newspaper article that Mr. Milburn was a poor student at SLCC. I am not aware of any cases where a convicted child molester has successfully maintained a FERPA action simply because someone suggested that he may not have been a good student, so such a case would certainly be unprecedented. Our impression is that you continue to pursue this as a tacit threat designed to silence Doug, which is also part of a recurrent pattern.”⁶⁸

The next three conditions placed upon my future employment had no connection to the first three.

I was to:

- “Refrain from using social media, texting, email, or public media to espouse your cause (i.e. case study and Serious Answers for a Serious Problem) or criticize a local church (case study, etc) as your job as professor obligates the college in matters of personal concern.”
- “Refrain from discussion of these matters with students or employees of St. Louis Christian College.”
- “Seek out opportunities for reconciliation to the best of your ability and depending on God with First Christian Church, Florissant relying on your conscience and God’s Word as an ethical guide.”

How did those three conditions directly relate to the use of the newspaper siting public information that I was a professor

⁶⁸ August 28, 2015. *Letter to Dr. Veech* by Al Johnson.

at the college, or the past use of the school's email for personal use for which I had already apologized for and changed, or the warning by the college of an uncertain and borderline infraction of a FERPA law?

My lawyer, present at this meeting, stated in a letter to the president:

“I witnessed one of these efforts (to silence Doug) first hand in a meeting with you, Doug, and Mike Chambers on May 13th, in which you advised Doug that as a condition of further employment **he would be required to be silent about the continuing controversy with FCCF...**He (Doug) was not only going to be restrained from saying anything critical of Mr. Wingfield and FCCF, but he was not going to be allowed to defend himself in the face of the unfair and malicious communications and actions by Mr. Wingfield and other.”⁶⁹

What was extremely clear was that the college was forcing me to choose one of three choices:

- (1) Remain silent about the content of the case study on social media and on campus,⁷⁰ or
- (2) Continue to speak out about the case study and be suspended and then dismissed,⁷¹ or

⁶⁹ August 28, 2015. *Letter in Response to the President*. Al Johnson.

⁷⁰ As part of my “correction,” I was to refrain from speaking publicly about my cause and to not be critical of a local church.

⁷¹ According to the Correction Policy for employees at SLCC, if an employee rejects the conditions of Step Two of the policy, Step Three would result in a suspension followed by an investigation. Step Four would result in a dismissal.

(3) Resign⁷² and continue to speak out for the victims of abuse and the cover-up of the church.

The college was placing the same condition upon my employment that the senior minister had in the lawsuit—stop communicating publicly about the case study.

It was my choice, but it was a forced choice.

Simple.

In addition, I was mandated by the president to meet with two area ministers for mediation by the next day. As a step of good faith, my lawyer encouraged me to call one of the ministers to set up a meeting for that afternoon. To my surprise, I was told they did not want to meet with me. I was confused by the college's request!

Two days later, I was finally given my contract along with all of the other faculty members. Since the conditions were placed under the "Correction Policy," the conditions were not part of the contract; they were part of a disciplinary process that if not heeded would have led to my firing.

What would I do?

- I was not going to refrain from speaking about victims of sexual abuse and from speaking out against abuses by my church in handling allegations of sexual abuse.
- I was not going to refrain from speaking out because I had

⁷² My resignation simply avoided step three and four of the correction policy. Since I was not going to abide by the restrictions to refrain from speaking out about the case study, I was forced to not sign my contract in order to not be fired.

already spent \$5,500 to fight the lawsuit to not retract the case study.

- I was not going to refrain from speaking out because I had already rejected the official mediation to retract the case study.
- I was not going to refrain from speaking out because I had already filed a petition to drop the lawsuit “with prejudice” so I could continue to speak out about the case study.
- I was not going to refrain from speaking out because I had sent the case study to the prosecuting attorney and the judge to keep speaking out about it.
- I was not going to refrain from speaking out because I was prepared, if I needed, to go to trial to defend the case study.
- I was not going to refrain from speaking out, most importantly, because it was morally incomprehensible to remain silent on behalf of eight alleged victims of sexual abuse by Brandon Milburn and about the senior minister’s lies and cover-up of those allegations.

So I did not sign my contract.

I sent a letter to the college’s president and academic dean on May 16th, stating why I could not sign my contract:

“Concerning the conditions for my employment, I am in agreement with adhering to the policy of not using the college’s name as to no obligate the college in matters of

personal concern and the use of college technology for college business only. Also, I am in agreement concerning the FERPA requirements and restrictions.”

“However, I am not in agreement with these three conditions...My cause is to protect children from sexual abuse and support children of sexual abuse—this is the central focus of the case study. **These three employment conditions would silence and hinder that cause.** Since these conditions are directly tied to my employment at the college, I will not sign the contract for the 2015-2016 school year.”⁷³

After conferring with legal advice the next day, I submitted a resignation letter for the press as part of a much larger legal strategy.⁷⁴ It would be this letter I posted on-line. Although this letter did not refer to the three conditions, the letter did not state the college did NOT pressure me.⁷⁵

Two weeks after I submitted my resignation letter, a trustee had some doubts about my resignation relating to FERPA and asked about my resignation.⁷⁶ I wrote a letter to all of the trustees on June 1, 2015. When the chairman of the college trustees asked me for a further explanation about my resignation, I clearly stated to him:

⁷³ May 16 2015. *Refusal to Sign the Contract*, Douglas Lay.

⁷⁴ I sent a letter to the trustees on June 1, 2015 explaining the details of my resignation. June 1, 2015. *Letter to the College Trustees*, Douglas Lay.

⁷⁵ May 18, 2015. *Published Resignation Letter*, Douglas Lay.

⁷⁶ After a presiding trustee asked why I resigned after 17 years, I sent a letter to the trustees on June 1, 2015. Two days later, the chairman of the trustees asked for additional information I shared in this letter to him. The trustees had not been informed about the conditions to refrain from speaking out about the case study because the initial letter from the President to the trustees did not include the conditions to refrain from speaking out. (President’s Letter to the Trustees).

“I want the trustees to understand that I did not resign because I disliked my role at the college—I loved my job, or because the Lord was leading me somewhere else—the Lord was using me to teach and mentor these students, or because I had a job already lined up somewhere else—I was completing my 17th year at the college, or because I was given a nice severance package to leave—I was not, or because I was being fired because of inappropriate behavior—I was not.”

“I resigned because of the pressure from the college to be silenced for being a whistle blower concerning the behavior of the senior minister of a church that has an enormous financial and personnel relationship with the college! I was being silenced from protecting and supporting victims and from defending myself from falsehoods made by the senior minister of a church that is profoundly interconnected to the college.”⁷⁷

I summarized my resignation by stating:

“I resigned because Condition #1 silenced me for espousing my ‘cause’ for being a whistle-blower concerning allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior by a former employee at FCCF with minors. This cause was described in a case study, *Is It Enough....* I would welcome, if you choose, an invitation to address this letter in person.”⁷⁸

I waited to see if perhaps the college would reconsider dropping the three conditions to allow me to sign my contract. I would only return to the college if the three

⁷⁷ June 3, 2015. *Letter to the Chairman of the Trustees.*

⁷⁸ June 1, 2015. *Letter to the College Trustees*, Douglas Lay.

conditions were dropped. It didn't happen. The president chose to allow me to resign. The trustees chose not to meet with me about the resignation.

With a recommendation from my lawyer, I created a website (www.isitenough.net), named after the case study, to provide all of the documents and articles related to the case study, designed to continue to speak out on behalf of the victims of sexual abuse and against allegations of a cover-up by my church.

As I was speaking out for the victims of sexual abuse and against the alleged lies and cover-up of those allegations by the leadership of my church, I didn't know why the college wanted me to remain silent.

THE WHY OF SILENCE

“Why would the college want me to refrain from speaking out publicly for alleged victims of sexual abuse and publicly addressing allegations of a cover-up by my church?”

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from informing his elders about allegations of sexual misconduct by a former employee at the church and a graduate of the college, Brandon Milburn?⁷⁹

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from recommending a three-fold strategy to his elders about how to minister to all of the victims, to their families, and to any church members affected by Brandon Milburn’s actions?⁸⁰

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from recommending to his elders how they must reexamine his

⁷⁹ Case Study. March 28, 2015. Pages 8-12.

⁸⁰ Case Study. March 28, 2015. Page 23.

church's official statement released to the press on February 11, 2014?⁸¹

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from advising his elders how they could initiate an extensive investigation into any mismanagement or failures by his senior pastor/elders/or staff in handling this situation and thoroughly reassess all of the church's policies and procedures concerning sexual abuse allegations?⁸²

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from raising questions to his elders when his senior minister publicly declared that Brandon had moved to California when he knew that Brandon was still living in St. Louis, working at his son-in-law's church, attending Wednesday nights and Sunday nights at the church and serving as a leader at VBS?⁸³

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from bringing to light to his elders the senior minister's admission of learning about several of the allegations of sexual misconduct which he had denied knowing about in the lawsuit?⁸⁴

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from writing to his elders that his senior minister did know about some of the sexual allegations, but he did not report them as a mandatory reporter?⁸⁵

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from

⁸¹ Case Study. March 28, 2015. Page 23.

⁸² Case Study. March 28, 2015. Page 24.

⁸³ April 7, 2015. *Serious Answers for a Serious Problem*, Douglas Lay.

⁸⁴ June 24, 2015. *Response to the Elder's Letter*, Titus Benton.

⁸⁵ March 28, 2015. Case Study.

speaking out about how his senior minister broke the confidentiality agreement?⁸⁶

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from speaking out that his senior minister had lied when he said he had tried to resolve the conflict with the professor?⁸⁷

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from speaking out that his senior minister dropped the lawsuit out of “good faith” when he did not because the professor had already filed a petition to drop the lawsuit within 48 hours?⁸⁸

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from speaking out that his senior minister did not drop the suit because of an independent Christian mediation process between the minister and the professor?⁸⁹

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from speaking out that his senior minister’s lawyer failed to respond to the professor’s lawyer’s request that “as a token of good faith, I also asked that your client remove the ban on Doug Lay’s presence at FCCF so that he could attend the graduation ceremonies of St. Louis Christian College?”⁹⁰

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from asking his elders and his senior minister to remove a number of falsehoods against the professor on the church’s web site?⁹¹

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from

⁸⁶ May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

⁸⁷ April 27, 2015. *Motion to Dismiss Letter*, Al Johnson.

⁸⁸ May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

⁸⁹ May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

⁹⁰ April 27, 2015. *Motion to Dismiss Letter*, Al Johnson.

⁹¹ May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

potentially bringing a counter lawsuit against his senior minister for filing a frivolous and unlawful lawsuit?⁹²

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from speaking out by refuting his senior minister's claim that the professor accused his minister of criminal behavior for not reporting sexual abuse?⁹³

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from speaking out when his senior minister publicly slandered one of the whistleblowers by attacking her motives?⁹⁴

Why would the college demand a professor refrain from talking to the press, an effective strategy used against the Catholic Church, in addressing the refusal of his senior minister and his elders to investigate serious allegation of abuse?⁹⁵

I wrote the case study as a member of my local church, not as an employee of the college. I wrote the case study for the elders, not the college. I wrote *Serious Answers for a Serious Problem* for the elders, not the college. I met for three hours with the elders, not the college. I submitted to a "no trespass order" from the elders, not the college. I fought a lawsuit from the elders, not the college.

The college president assured me, privately and publicly, for two months that speaking out for my cause did not involve the college. It was a personal matter, not an employment

⁹² May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

⁹³ April 27, 2015. *Motion to Dismiss Letter*, Al Johnson.

⁹⁴ Public meeting with Steve Wingfield and a number of FCCF volunteers on April 8, 2015. He said, "She either had an agenda of sorts or was a previous molestation victim and needed to lash out or hurt someone."

⁹⁵ May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

matter. In fact, the president assured me before this situation ever appeared in the newspapers that he supported my writing of the case study:

“You need to know that I am supporting you in the decisions you have made regarding the BM case. The task of the Christian is not always an easy one. Standing for those whose voices can often not be heard, the victims, is the call of the Prophets as well as that of Jesus. Well, I know this decision is costing you dearly at your home church and I want to know I appreciate you.”⁹⁶

So why did the college president change his position seven weeks later and ask me to stop all conversations with my church because “...your job as [a] professor obligates the college in matters of personal concern?”⁹⁷

Why would the college want me to refrain from speaking out publicly for alleged victims of sexual abuse and publicly addressing allegations of a cover-up by my church?

⁹⁶ Email correspondence from the president on March 24, 2015.

⁹⁷ May 13, 2015. *Notice to Professor Doug Lay, in re Section 12.4, “Written Warning: Step Two” of the College’s Correction Policy, Employee Handbook.*

THE SHEPHERD'S BUSINESS

“My job as [a] professor obligates the college in matters of personal concern.”

I was being corrected for speaking out publicly for alleged victims of sexual abuse and publicly addressing allegations of a cover-up by my church because this “obligated the college in matters of personal concern.”

Yet the college was being silent about the actions of another employee of the college—the business administrator⁹⁸, an elder at my church.

The college did not correct the business administrator for refusing to investigate the allegations of sexual allegations presented in the case study.⁹⁹

The college did not correct the business administrator for filing a temporary restraining order to silence the professor

⁹⁸ The business administrator had been an adjunct professor of the Old Testament for numerous years.

⁹⁹ Case Study. Page 26.

from speaking out about the case study, a TRO the church lost.¹⁰⁰

The college did not correct the business administrator when he appeared in court with the senior minister and others when they filed the TRO¹⁰¹ against the professor.¹⁰²

The college did not correct the business administrator when he posted on the church's web site a document, "Answers from the Elders" containing a number of blatant falsehoods against the professor, later rebutted by his lawyer.¹⁰³

The college did not correct the business administrator for publicly criticizing the professor by supporting the lawsuit against him, a former AIM¹⁰⁴ student, and an alumnus of the college.¹⁰⁵

The college did not correct the business administrator for supporting the lawsuit that stated the professor knowingly made false charges against his senior minister that were not true.¹⁰⁶

The college did not correct the business administrator for supporting the lawsuit that asked for \$25,000 dollars plus punitive damages against the professor.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ (isitenough.net).

¹⁰¹ TRO is a Temporary Restraining Order.

¹⁰² The business administrator and I were both in court on April 17, 2015.

¹⁰³ (isitenough.net).

¹⁰⁴ Adults In Ministry Program is an associate and bachelor degree program for non-traditional students at St. Louis Christian College.

¹⁰⁵ The case study is Exhibit B in the lawsuit. Page 4.

¹⁰⁶ April 16, 2015. *Lawsuit Verified Petition Including Exhibits*, James Wyrsh. Page 9, line 55.

¹⁰⁷ April 16, 2015. *Lawsuit Verified Petition Including Exhibits*, James Wyrsh. Page 9-10, lines 68a-e.

The college did not correct the business administrator for posting a letter on the church’s website presenting falsehoods about allegations the professor did not make.¹⁰⁸

The college did not correct the business administrator for posting a letter on the church’s website presenting falsehoods against the professor that “FCCF has attempted to resolve this situation and is ‘currently reaching out to meet with our accusers to see if we can resolve this matter without additional litigation.’”¹⁰⁹

The college did not correct the business administrator for posting a letter on the church’s website presenting falsehoods against the professor that “at this time, Mr. Wingfield and FCCF ‘are seeking zero financial penalties’ against the defendants in the lawsuit and only seek to ‘clear our name.’”¹¹⁰

The college did not correct the business administrator for publicly declaring in the newspaper a falsehood that the elders dismissed the lawsuit against the professor “as a good-faith gesture because they have offered an ‘independent Christian mediation process’ to resolve their differences with Mr. Lay....”¹¹¹

The college did not correct the business administrator for maintaining the church’s website where “Mr. Wingfield and his Elders at FCCF have continued to demonstrate bad faith

¹⁰⁸ My lawyer’s letter of April 27, 2015 refutes that lie, yet the document is still on the church’s website as of the time of this writing.

¹⁰⁹ My lawyer’s letter of April 27, 2015 refutes that lie, yet the document is still on the website as of the time of this writing.

¹¹⁰ My lawyer’s letter of April 27, 2015 refutes that lie, yet the document is still on the website as of the time of this writing.

¹¹¹ May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

and dishonesty by maintaining a website that discusses the lawsuit and the surrounding circumstances but greatly distorts and misstates the facts.”¹¹²

The college did not correct the business administrator for requiring the professor to spend \$5,500 to publicly fight a lawsuit the college administrator was responsible for filing against the professor.¹¹³

The college did not correct the business administrator for making the professor’s case study public by placing it as an exhibit in a public lawsuit, a case study the professor did not make public.¹¹⁴

The college did not correct the business administrator for coming to the professor’s office during work hours to dismiss him and his wife as Sunday school teachers because the professor was rejecting the authority of the business administrator as an elder by writing the case study.¹¹⁵

The college did not correct the business administrator for supporting a “no trespass order” against the professor, preventing him from attending the college’s graduation service at the church that the business administrator did attend.¹¹⁶

The college did not correct the business administrator for failing to keep his promise to answer a series of questions the professor asked during a meeting with the business

¹¹² May 20, 2015. *Information and Press Release*, Al Johnson.

¹¹³ List of fees from my lawyer.

¹¹⁴ April 16, 2015. *Lawsuit Verified Petition Including Exhibits*, James Wyrsh.

¹¹⁵ The business administrator came to my office with two other elders.

¹¹⁶ April 10, 2015. *Cease and Desist Letter*, James Wyrsh.

administrator and the other elders on March 28th.¹¹⁷

The college did not correct the business administrator for publishing a series of false statements against the professor in an open letter on Facebook and sent by mail to members of the church and to area churches in St. Louis.¹¹⁸

The college did not correct the business administrator for not reaching out to any of the families of the victims although the professor did.¹¹⁹

Would anyone expect the college to correct the business administrator for what he does during his personal time as an elder when it is not connected to his job at the college, especially if his job performance is not compromised?

Would anyone expect the college to correct a professor for what he does during his personal time as a member of a church when it is not connected to his job at the college, especially if his job performance is not compromised?

So why **DID** the college correct the professor for actions related to his role as a member of a church and not related to his employment at the college which led to his forced resignation?

¹¹⁷ I met with the business administrator, three other elders, and the executive minister on March 28th, 2015 for three hours. They asked us repeatedly to give them questions that they would reply to within a few weeks. They never did.

¹¹⁸ June 24, 2015. *Response to the Elder's Letter*, Titus Benton.

¹¹⁹ As of my last day of employment, one of the families informed me that none of the elders or the senior minister had reached out to them to provide any type of support.

THE SUPPORTER'S SUPPORT

“My job as [a] professor obligates the college in matters of personal concern.”

I was being corrected for speaking out publicly for alleged victims of sexual abuse and publicly addressing allegations of a cover-up by my church because this “obligated the college in matters of personal concern.”

Yet the college was being silent about the actions of another employee of the college—a full-time cafeteria director, who is a youth volunteer at my church and who is married to the former interim youth minister and current Connections Pastor.

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for visiting Brandon Milburn, a former graduate of the college, eighty times who had been charged with 7 counts of sodomy against two eleven year old boys.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Public Record.

The college did not correct the cafeteria director because her husband petitioned the court so they could take custody of a charged child molester if he were to be released on bail.¹²¹

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for speaking publicly on behalf of a convicted child molester at his sentencing when she said she was employed at St. Louis Christian College:

“Your honor, I’ve known Brandon the entire duration of his time in St. Louis. Early on, in the 2007 to 2008 years at the time of the allegations, he was really just an acquaintance. We were fellow members at the Christian Church. I was on staff at St. Louis Christian College, where he attended?”¹²²

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for speaking publicly at the sentencing of a convicted child molester when she said she had no doubts Brandon would not harm again:

“I want you to please believe me, if I had any doubt that Brandon would harm any young person now or in the future, I would be sitting back there with my friends. I wouldn’t be standing on this side to speak for Brandon?”¹²³

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for speaking publicly at the sentencing of a convicted child molester when she said she had kept in contact with Brandon while he was in jail:

“This year I’ve had many conversations with Brandon in

¹²¹ March 24, 2014. *Motion to Reduce Bond*, Michael Bert.

¹²² March 30, 2015. *Sentencing of Brandon Milburn*, Court Transcript.

¹²³ March 30, 2015. *Sentencing of Brandon Milburn*, Court Transcript.

jail, on the phone, and in the mail.”¹²⁴

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for speaking publicly at the sentencing of a convicted child molester when she said she believed Brandon had changed since molesting the two eleven-year-old boys:

“I don’t take this stand lightly. It’s really painful to be up here. I love all these people in this room. But I fully believe there has been change that has occurred in his life. I believe he is a very different man than the kid of years ago. I think he exhibits security, not fear, patience, not impulse, and wisdom. He gained those really recently. I am hopeful that who he is at present will clearly be seen by the Court?”¹²⁵

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for embracing and weeping with a convicted child molester after being sentenced to 25 years for seven counts of sodomy.¹²⁶

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for publicly reading a letter of support for a convicted child molester in front of the two victims and their families.¹²⁷

The college did not correct the cafeteria director who continues to correspond with a convicted child molester in prison.¹²⁸

The college did not correct the cafeteria director for not

¹²⁴ March 30, 2015. *Sentencing of Brandon Milburn*, Court Transcript.

¹²⁵ March 30, 2015. *Sentencing of Brandon Milburn*, Court Transcript.

¹²⁶ I witnessed the sentencing of Brandon Milburn on March 30, 2015.

¹²⁷ I witnessed the sentencing of Brandon Milburn on March 30, 2015.

¹²⁸ May 6, 2015. “A Youth Minister’s Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart”, Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

reaching out to the families of the victims.¹²⁹

Would anyone expect the college to correct the cafeteria director for what she does during her personal time when it is not connected to her job at the college, especially if her job performance is not compromised?

Would anyone expect the college to correct a professor for what he does during his personal time when it is not connected to his job at the college, especially if his job performance is not compromised?

So why **DID** the college correct the professor for personal actions not related to his employment at the college that led to his forced resignation?

¹²⁹ One of the family members told me as of July 30, 2015 that the staff director had not contacted them to express any type of support.

THE DEPENDENCY OF INDEPENDENCE

“Founded and primarily sustained by members of Christian Churches with a Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement heritage, this institution of higher education integrates biblical, general, and professional studies, and practical field experience.”¹³⁰

As a religiously affiliated institution, the college is heavily dependent upon the financial contributions from its constituents of individuals and churches within the “independent Christian Churches” as part of the Stone-Campbell movement.

One of those supporting churches with a rich history spanning over 50 years with the college is First Christian Church of Florissant.¹³¹ FCCF was and is closely connected to the college. Consider that:

1. The college has received significance financial support

¹³⁰ St. Louis Christian College Catalog, Page 12.

¹³¹ First Christian Church of Florissant. (www.fccf.org).

- from FCCF as one of the college's top financial contributors for many years.
2. The college had received financial support from a local church, pastored by the brother of the minister at FCCF and lead by an elder who is an alumnus of the college.¹³²
 3. The college had employed an elder from FCCF as the business administrator, IT director, and as an adjunct professor in Old Testament who supported the lawsuit against a professor.
 4. The college employs the wife of the Connections Pastor and a youth volunteer at FCCF as the director of the cafeteria and Cool Benz, the college's coffee shop.
 5. The college employs a former children's minister from FCCF as the director of recruitment.
 6. The college employs the Discipleship pastor and the Family Life pastor as adjunct professors.
 7. The college has currently appointed a former FCCF church administrator as a current trustee.
 8. The college employs a former member of FCCF as the college president and his wife as a faculty member.
 9. The college had employed Sunday school teachers of

¹³² The minister of White Flag, the brother of the minister of FCCF, contacted the president of the college on March 23, 2015 to inform him his church was dropping financial support because a professor at the college, Douglas Lay, had written the case study against his brother at FCCF. Article, *Professor's Accnsations Led to South County Pastor Yanking Bible College Funding*, by Danny Wicentowski on May 29, 2015.

FCCF as the academic dean and an English professor.

10. The college had employed an elder at FCCF as the chair of the Bible department.
11. The college had employed an elder at FCCF as the business administrator.
12. The college had employed a Sunday school teacher at FCCF as the director of development.
13. The college had employed elders at FCCF as college trustees.
14. The college had employed a youth volunteer at FCCF for many years as an adjunct math professor and had appointed her husband as a trustee.
15. The college's current President's sister-in-law was the administrative secretary for the senior minister at FCCF for several years.
16. The college has provided numerous paid interns for FCCF from its student body, including Brandon Milburn.
17. The college invites, usually annually, staff from FCCF to share in chapel by preaching and/or leading worship.
18. The college has utilized special offerings for projects from FCCF and work teams to complete those projects on campus with volunteers from FCCF.
19. The college celebrates graduation services at the FCCF church building.

20. The college has a well-known graduate and a former youth minister at FCCF who wrote a book on the history of FCCF.¹³³
21. The college housed the church on the college property during the early years of the church.¹³⁴

It is undisputable that the college has a deep and dependent relationship with FCCF spanning over 50 years.

So after I wrote the case study, *Is It Enough: Sexual Abuse Within the Church: A Case Study at First Christian Church of Florissant*, accusing the senior minister of lying about knowledge of sexual abuse allegations and then trying to cover-up that knowledge, the college began to intervene in this situation between the church and me.

First, the college was already receiving calls about what I had written in the case study by April 1st. The academic dean sent me an email stating,

“His [president’s] office is being bombarded (not quite) with questions about the college’s involvement.”¹³⁵

The case study had not been published on social media or in the newspaper, but it had been sent only to key personnel at the church. If I had worked for a secular college, the college would not be receiving questions about its involvement with a professor’s church.

¹³³ Read Titus Benton’s book, *Echos, A Reflection on our First Fifty Years*, (2008) for more examples of the close relationship between St. Louis Christian College and FCCF.

¹³⁴ *Echos, A Reflection on our First Fifty Years*, (2008) by Titus Benton.

¹³⁵ Email from the Academic Dean to me to set up a meeting with the president. April 1, 2015.

Second, two days later, the college president demanded I promise him I would inform the elders first as to any future actions on my part concerning the church. The next day, I informed the president I could not make that promise:

“Concerning your request to talk to the elders first, I now need to decline that request. Additional information has come to my attention that has changed my decision. I may still contact them first, but I can no longer make a promise that I will do so under **every** circumstance. I will be sending out a letter, hopefully, on Monday explaining why. It will include a specific direct charge against Steve Wingfield and indirectly, the elders. To be constrained by the request to run everything through them first is problematic since they are the ones included in the charge. I will send them the letter, as I will to the both of you before I send it to them. This situation is and has been profoundly heavy not only on my heart and my family, but on many others. I would in no way purposefully attack or destroy the reputation of the school. In fact, as you have said, this is about me and the church I attend. I understand the connections between the school and the college. But I have wondered who or how or why this request was presented. It speaks of an attempt by the elders to try to constrain me to not speak openly.”¹³⁶

The president replied to me that same day:

“I...am disappointed that you declined the request to talk to the elders first...Any eldership would prefer that you continue to go directly to them. This is not an

¹³⁶ Email to the president on April 3, 2015.

unreasonable request. It is my hope that Mike, you, and I will have the opportunity to talk again on Monday. Praying for resolution in this situation.”¹³⁷

Why was my employer targeting me by placing guidelines on me about how I should or should not correspond with the elders at my home church about an issue I had been told did not include the college?

Third, the president called a meeting for all the employees of the college on April 20th to address the “complexities of this issue” between the business administrator and me.¹³⁸ This was a “complex issue” because the lawsuit also listed the entire FCCF church as plaintiffs in the suit—including the business administrator, the academic dean, the cafeteria director, two adjunct professors, a current college trustee and numerous college students—all as members of FCCF! In fact, I was not only a defendant but also a plaintiff in the lawsuit since I was a member of FCCF. How ironic!

The president did share with me a summary of this meeting in advance:

“This will simply be an acknowledgement of events that are taking place between elders of FCCF and one of our employees who is a member at FCCF. Will explain we have met regularly with our employee and expressed support for the employee. Made ourselves available to

¹³⁷ Email from the president on April 3, 2015. Although I said I could not promise I would contact the elders first in the future, I did contact them first several days later when I sent them the last document I would send them, *Serious Answers for a Serious Problem*. In addition, as a step of good faith, I sent a copy of that document to the president and the academic dean before I sent it to the elders.

¹³⁸ The college’s business administrator was an elder at the church who was part of a lawsuit against me, a professor at the college.

elders to help in any way possible to help resolve this issue. Will explain the complexities of this issue on our campus with various personalities who take different views on this issue. Will explain that I am praying daily for church, leaders, our employees involved, those who know victims, and families. Also praying for many of our graduates involved and our students as they continue to work thru this issue.”¹³⁹

This meeting clearly demonstrates the very close working relationship between the college and the church. Otherwise, why would the college feel compelled to discuss with the entire college personnel a personal issue between my church and me?

Fourth, the following week the college informed me I would not be attending the graduation service at the church’s facility, the first time in 16 years I would be absent. The dean informed me that

“he (the president) has asked me to acknowledge that we do not at present expect you at graduation, and that we will continue to operate with that understanding unless the elders communicate directly to us (meaning Guthrie) that it is permissible.”¹⁴⁰

Instead of the college demanding that the church grant a 16-year veteran professor permission to attend the college graduation service, the college, instead, was upholding the church’s “no trespass” order as part of a cease and desist letter concerning the case study, preventing me from participating

¹³⁹ Facebook message from the president on April 18, 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Email from the academic dean on May 1, 2015.

in a college event—not a church event! The college also chose not to announce in the bulletin or during the graduation service that the students had selected me as teacher of the year for 2015, a practice the college does every year.

Fifth, the college president and a current trustee set up a mediation meeting, without my knowledge or permission in advance, between the leadership at FCCF and me. Why was the college president intervening in my personal legal strategy with my local church if the lawsuit was simply between an employee and his church? Again, if I worked at a secular college, the president would not be directly interfering in my legal strategy towards my church.

Sixth, the day after the church dropped the lawsuit, the college president and academic dean demanded I thank the elders for dropping the lawsuit and required I apologize to them.¹⁴¹ Again, why was my employer making demands on me not related to my job responsibilities or performance concerning a personal matter between my church and me?

Finally, the next day, the president placed conditions upon me to refrain from speaking out about the case study, a case study that addressed misconduct by the senior minister at my church.¹⁴²

Is it not obvious that the college president silenced me because of pressure, directly and indirectly, from the leading financial supporting church where I had accused its senior minister of lying and covering-up allegations of sexual abuse by a convicted child molester who was a former employee of

¹⁴¹ Email from the academic dean on May 12, 2015.

¹⁴² Out of respect for the college, I did send the case study to the president and the academic dean for full disclosure.

the church and a graduate of the college?

The college chose to do the following:

The college chose to place disciplinary restraints on a professor for publicly criticizing a church's eldership for mishandling sexual abuse allegations while allowing freedom of speech (and no correction) for the college's business administrator for publicly criticizing the professor by filing a lawsuit against him for criticizing the church! How ironic!

The college chose to place disciplinary restraints on a professor—as an employee of the college—for speaking out publicly in a newspaper article against a convicted child molester—while allowing freedom of speech (and no correction) for a cafeteria director for publicly speaking out in a courtroom in support of a convicted child molester—as an employee of the college! How ironic!

The college chose to place disciplinary restraints on a professor for speaking out for truth against the church's mishandling of sexual abuse allegation that directly led to his resignation from the very college where, for 16 years, he was expected to speak the truth when educating Christians to graduate leaders. How ironic!

I spoke truth against a leading supporting church of the college, and I lost my teaching career at the college—the irony of teaching truth!

IT IS NOT ENOUGH

“It is not enough for me to close the book on this story—I will continue to turn the pages of this story.”¹⁴³

My church, FCCF, first sent me a cease and desist letter to silence me from speaking out about the case study;¹⁴⁴ my church placed a “no trespass” order to prevent me from attending services on the church property to silence me;¹⁴⁵ my church fired my wife and me from teaching Sunday School to silence me; my church filed a Temporary Restraining Order to silence me;¹⁴⁶ my church filed a lawsuit for slander to silence me;¹⁴⁷ and my church applied great pressure on the college to “restrain (me) from using social media, texting, email, or public media to espouse your cause or criticize a local church as your job as professor obligates the college in matters of personal concern.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ These are the closing words in the Case Study. Page 37.

¹⁴⁴ April 10, 2015. *Cease and Desist Letter*, James Wyrsh.

¹⁴⁵ April 10, 2015. *Cease and Desist Letter*, James Wyrsh.

¹⁴⁶ April 16, 2015. *Motion for Temporary Restraining Order*, James Wyrsh.

¹⁴⁷ April 16, 2015. *Lawsuit Verified Petition Including Exhibits*, James Wyrsh.

¹⁴⁸ May 13, 2015. *Notice to Professor Doug Lay, in re Section 12.4, “Written Warning: Step Two” of the College’s Correction Policy, Employee Handbook.*

It is not enough for me to be silent.

As I leave the college, I ironically now return to the college to reintroduce the five young men at the beginning of this story. They are helping me to turn on the light at the church and now at the college.

Since their graduations from the college, they have all moved on—to raising their families, to serving in their ministries, to impacting the world as leaders. They no longer come by for “Essay Therapy” in room 218 in the Keystone building anymore. Yet, we continue to share our lives together. I still text, FB message, email and call them. I visit in their homes if I am in their cities; I visit them at Applebee’s, late at night, when they are in my town.

In fact, as I was finishing the last chapter of this story, three of them came to my house, sat on my couch, and continued to turn the pages of their own stories with me.

They still talk about girls—their lovely daughters (and sons too); they still talk about sports—encouraging each other to win the prize and fight the good fight; they still talk about the ministry—how to impact the culture by living and speaking the gospel as one of them ministers in the city, one in the country, two in the suburbs, and one overseas; they still talk about God—how He delights when the church gives generously to the poor, how He asks the church to pray that all the nations will know His Son, how His heart breaks at the injustices and darkness in our cities, why He allows personal hurt and pain in their families, and how He can be glorified in all that they say and do.

But as they shared their stories, it is not enough for them to

close the book on this story—a story about the silence of a church’s eldership to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct; the frivolous lawsuit for slander to silence the whistleblowers; disingenuous “good-faith” move by the church to drop the suit; the growing outside pressure to keep the college out of this conflict; the unwise leadership decision to restrain me from speaking out; the college’s inconsistent policy implementations with its employees; and the increasing loss of respect and support for the college from younger alumni and students—many who have passed through my office, who have taken off their sandals, who have talked about girls, sports, ministry, and God—who have shared their stories.

It is not enough for them to close the book on this story—a story where they learn about the pain and despair of 8 young boys who are considered “alleged” only because they haven’t pressed charges yet; where they discover from the sentencing about the horrors of abuse by Brandon to an additional three victims from Brandon’s home church and a possible cover-up; where they provide wise and godly counsel to me about how to speak out against the unconscionable behavior of the elders’ denials and cover-up; where they stand strong beside me as I relive my own past through the pain of the victims; where they lovingly encourage yet gently correct me as I try to articulate my written message; where they pray without ceasing for my family; where they boldly and publicly continue to speak out when I am exhausted; and where they love and respect me, not as their professor, but as a co-worker, a fellow brother, and as a co-heir of Christ.

Some of them have spoken out, privately and publicly, on my behalf so that future students might experience the same shepherding, mentoring, teaching, and discipling they had

received years ago. They have spoken out, privately and publicly, so future students might come into my office, take off their sandals, talk about girls, sports, ministry, God—to share their stories together. They have spoken out, privately and publicly, because they wanted to defend my honor without asking for my permission first.

I chose to remain at the college because of these five men. I chose to commit my life to teaching, mentoring, and shepherding students at the college because of these five men. I chose to speak out for the victims and against the church with the support of these five men—I could not have continued to turn on the light without them.

Fifteen years ago four kids came into my office, took off their sandals, talked about girls, sports, ministry, God—talked about their stories. But they left my office as men and talked about The Story—as servants in the Kingdom of God, as proclaimers of the gospel of Christ, and as witnesses of the power of the Spirit.

These five men continue to “sit on my couch” to encourage me to turn on the light and to keep turning the pages of this story and The Story:

Matt Campbell, Lucas Rougely, Titus Benton, Keith Kepley, and the one who invited me to mentor them, Jared Odle.

THIS EPILOGUE IS NOT OVER

“**A** section or speech at the end of a book or play that serves as a comment on or a conclusion to what has happened.”¹⁴⁹

You expect an epilogue to be at the end of a book. You expect a church youth intern to shepherd his students. You expect children to be safe at their church. You expect church leadership to investigate allegations of abuse. You expect whistle blowers to be listened to. You expect Christian colleges to support truth speakers.

But life IS filled with irony—church interns do molest; churches do fail children; ministers do cover-up lies; whistle blowers do get sued; Christian colleges do silence truth.

Yet, there is another type of real life irony where:

God punishes a couple with death, and then promises Adam and Eve with life through the “seed” of her third son, not the

¹⁴⁹ From the Greek, *epi* “in addition” and *logos* “word”.

first.

God regrets He had made mankind because of the evil of their hearts, and then instructs Noah and his family to build an Ark to be rescued from a worldwide flood although it had never rained before.

God chooses a barren woman and her husband to become the genesis of a great nation, and then blesses Abraham and Sarah with the miraculous birth of their son, Isaac.

God allows millions of Jews to remain in slavery for 400 years, and then chooses a murderer, Moses, to return to the government from where he is a fugitive to lead his people to freedom.

God regrets he had appointed Saul, a tall, handsome, wealthy man, as a king who failed in his duties to fight the enemy, and appoints a young and poor adolescent, David, to defeat Goliath, with the giant's own sword.

God sends His one and only Son to be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, to be condemned to death, to be mocked and spit upon, to be flogged and killed on a Roman cross, and then resurrects Jesus from the dead, returns him to heaven and pours out His Holy Spirit upon his church.

These are just a few examples of biblical irony—how God takes our brokenness, our sin, our lies, our hatred, our evil and redeems it into His perfection, His holiness, His truth, His love, His goodness.

This is the gospel—the irony of God.

So this is not the Epilogue. There is no simple and sweet conclusion to this story. There is no three-point sermon with a few antidotal stories thrown in that will resolve this story.

The predator being sentenced to prison doesn't end the story.¹⁵⁰ The victims and their families continue to live with the consequences of one person. The senior minister being sent on a sabbatical doesn't end the story.¹⁵¹ The church leadership continues to deny and cover-up the behavior of the senior minister.¹⁵² The college losing a professor doesn't end the story.¹⁵³ The college continues to twist and mislead their constituents and students about a professor's resignation.

This story is not over yet. Your story is not over yet.

There will be more chaos, pain, disappointment, betrayal, hypocrisy, unfairness, doubt, bitterness, fear, resentment, unforgiveness for all of us in our own stories.

There will be more order, peace, fulfillment, acceptance, honesty, fairness, belief, love, obedience, mercy, and forgiveness for all of us in Christ Jesus.

The irony of teaching truth is we live with the Pain of Spiritual Death AND the Joy of Eternal Life at the same time.

The irony of living the Truth is we live in the agony of a

¹⁵⁰ May 6, 2015. "A Youth Minister's Downfall is Tearing First Christian Church of Florissant Apart", Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

¹⁵¹ August 4, 2015. "Church Cites 'Stress, Grief, and Fatigue' for Embattled Pastor Steve Wingfield's Sabbatical", Danny Wicentowski, [Riverfront Times](#).

¹⁵² As of the writing of this story, the elders and senior minister at FCCF have yet to address the allegations of lying about knowledge of sexual abuse and covering up that knowledge.

¹⁵³ May 21, 2015. *Vocal Critic of Florissant Church Leaves Job at Local Christian College*. Lilly Fowler. St. Louis Post Dispatch.

broken world AND we live in the spiritual realm of the Kingdom of God at the same time.

There will be an Epilogue some day. You can read about it at the end of the Bible. Until then, we need to read about the one who taught the irony of being the Truth:

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who **for the joy** that was set before him **endured the cross, despising the shame**, and is **seated at the right hand** of the throne of God.”¹⁵⁴

The irony of speaking truth—the irony of The Truth—is that the gruesomeness of the Cross brought the glory of the Creator down to the hearts of the Church.

It is because of this irony of the gospel that we, the church, must find practical ways to demonstrate the irony of God’s grace to the victims of sexual abuse and the irony of God’s holiness to our churches and colleges.

We must not stop praying

Pray for all victims, especially for those who have not come forward yet so they will have the courage to tell someone and ask for help.

Pray for the darkness of sexual abuse to be exposed so the church and the college can bring to the victims, the families,

¹⁵⁴ Hebrews 12:1-2 *English Standard Version*.

and the church the light of the gospel of restoration.

Pray for the leadership of our churches to “shepherd the flock...not domineering over those in their charge, but as examples to the flock.”¹⁵⁵

Pray for our college trustees and administrators to oversee the work of educating Christians and graduating leaders with truth, integrity, openness, and humility.

Pray for our churches, colleges, and population at large to know how to identifying the “signs” of abuse before the abuse happens—to help stop the predators before they start.

Pray for the predators to experience the gospel of Christ—the gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and gospel of holiness and justice.

We must not stop preparing

Learn how you can better help victims of abuse within the church community through these two great resource groups:

GRACE: “Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment,” a national organization devoted to helping victims within the church community (www.netgrace.org).

SNAP: “Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests,” a national organization committed to helping victims affected by abuse within the church (www.snapnetwork.org).

¹⁵⁵ I Peter 5:3 *English Standard Version*.

We must not stop preaching

The church and the college need to investigate any current or past allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct immediately. They must take seriously anyone who comes forward with allegations of abuse—in their college, in their church, or in their family. They cannot hide behind the law and not conduct their own internal investigation of past or current alleged allegations.

The church and the college must work tirelessly to identify, assess, support, and care for the needs of anyone who may be or have been victims of sexual abuse.

The church and the college must examine, assess, and revise problems with their policies and procedures concerning any type of abusive, ungodly, or illegal behavior—physical, sexual, or emotional—displayed by anyone at the church or the college.

The church and the college must defend truth over financial support. They must speak out against abuses within other organizations—including supporting churches and colleges—which are mishandling allegations of sexual abuse.

The church and the college must support anyone who speaks out about sexual abuse allegations without retribution or discipline.

The church and the college must train and equip its future church leaders on the how to handle and deal with sexual abuse within the church. They should be at the forefront of instruction, resources, support, and personnel in preparing

their leaders.

The church and the college must reassure their constituents that they are committed to protecting everyone from predators and promise to take any and all future complaints of sexual abuse seriously.

The church and the college must confess and repent when they mishandle sexual abuse allegations with denials, lies, ignorance, delays, cover-ups or attacks.

We must not stop persevering.

Over six months ago I penned the following words at the beginning of this story:¹⁵⁶

“Is it enough to deny the existence of other alleged victims? Is it enough to ignore the pain of the collateral victims? Is it enough to keep silent about the church’s responsibility towards dealing with sexual abuse? Is it enough to remain ignorant to the signs of sexual predators? Is it enough to miss the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of this tragedy—thus turning evil into good?”

It is not enough for us to close the book on this story or any story of sexual abuse—we must continue to turn on the light and turn the pages of every story, teaching the irony of truth until The Truth returns.

¹⁵⁶ *Is It Enough? Sexual Abuse Within the Church; A case study at First Christian Church of Florissant*. March 28, 2015. 6th edition. Page 37.

5 STUDENTS AND A PROFESSOR

1. Matt Campbell—a 2004 graduate of St. Louis Christian College—is the pastor of worship and small groups at Hillside Christian Church in Amarillo, Texas.
 2. Lucas Rougely—a 2003 graduate of St. Louis Christian College—is the founding pastor of Pursuit Ministries and founder and director of LovetheLou in St. Louis, Missouri.
 3. Titus Benton—a 2003 graduate of St. Louis Christian College—is the youth pastor at Current Church in Katy, Texas.
 4. Keith Kepley—a 2003 graduate of St. Louis Christian College—is the lead follower at Ingraham Christian Church in Ingraham, Illinois.
 5. Jared Odle—a 1997 graduate of St. Louis Christian College—is the vice-president of Mission Resource in Columbus, Indiana.
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1. Douglas Lay is a 1982 graduate of Ozark Christian College with a BS in Biblical Literature and a 1994 graduate of the University of Puerto Rico with an MA in English Education. He was a professor of English and the founder and director of the TESOL program at St. Louis Christian College from 1999 to 2015. He pastored churches in Spanish and English in Puerto Rico for nearly 14 years, and for seven years in the St. Louis area.

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A POSTSCRIPT: A PUBLIC BLACKMAIL¹⁵⁷

“So what are you going to do now?” “Do you have another job lined up? “How is unemployment?”

As I was asked about life after SLCC, I spent the summer of 2015 reflecting on the past six months beginning with the guilty plea of a child molester in January, to the first letter written to the elders in February at FCCF, to the sentencing in March, to a lawsuit and Temporary Restraining Order in April, to a media blitz about these events in May, and to my first days of unemployment in June.

So I began to write.

In August, I sent a proof copy of *The Irony of Teaching Truth* to the college’s president and academic dean for their preview

¹⁵⁷ This chapter was written after the proof copy of the book was written and sent to the president and the academic dean in August. It did not include this chapter, of course, nor most of the chapter, *The Dependency of Independence*. This chapter is included now at the end of this follow-up edition of the book.

first before I sent it to the trustees of the college.¹⁵⁸ This followed the same practice as the case study: I was asking for those involved in the events to first read and then comment and address any issues they deemed significant, asking for their corrections, comments, additions, denials, or retractions.

In addition, I sent a series of questions to the president concerning my resignation. Nearly a dozen students had told me in August that the president and/or the academic dean had told them I had not been disciplined, that I had been given the same contract as every other faculty, and that the president had been discussing my employment with them.¹⁵⁹

“Guthrie, as I wait for you to read the narrative, I have a question for when we talk. Nearly a dozen students have told me that you and Eddy have told them I was not being disciplined. I thought I was. I wrote the correction policy for the handbook back in 2005, so I am pretty familiar with it.”

“I had no doubts that I was being corrected for speaking out about the case study and that you wanted me to be quiet or I would lose my job. I told you that in my resignation letter on May 16th. You said you wanted me to stay, that you did all you could do to keep me. If so, then if I wasn't being corrected, than I will hand in my contract.”¹⁶⁰

I was hoping for some clarity on these questions to the president. Instead I received this letter from the college

¹⁵⁸ I sent a proof copy of the book to the trustees in September of 2015, including this chapter and the chapter, *The Dependency of Independence*.

¹⁵⁹ Facebook message to the president from me on August 18, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Facebook message to the president from me on August 18, 2015.

president. It is reprinted here in its entirety with my comments:

“A discussion of your concerns on-line will not be helpful. And, unfortunately, neither will a face-to-face meeting. I will not validate the authenticity of your book.”

“I think you know exactly why Mike and I moved to a Written Warning. Your resignation eliminated the need for a more extended procedure regarding your possible problems complying with federal privacy laws and regulations regarding student information. There were at least four letters involving your resignation, the last of which, was sent to the trustees two weeks after the other letters were received.”

Is the president now saying that I resigned after 16 years because I wanted to avoid being fired because I might possibly make a future public statement about a convicted child molester’s grades?

I resigned because the college silenced me from speaking out for my cause (standing up for the alleged sexual abuse victims) and for criticizing a leading financial supporting church (the deception and cover-up by the senior minister about knowledge of allegations of sexual abuse)—the condition placed upon my employment in the document, *Written Warning: Step Two of the College’s Correction Policy*.

The letter continues:

“One of those resignation letters you submitted was accepted, and your employment with the College

ended. Your rejection of our offer of employment means that there is no pending offer of employment for you.”

“Frankly, the manner in which your narrative has been sent, with the language in your last notes which indicate your pending return to your teaching position and that you can't wait to tell the students you are coming back, has the smell of an attempted **blackmail or extortion**. Your careful wording makes one read between the lines, but are you saying ‘Read this narrative, and take me back as an employee, or I will publish it?’”

“Because of this, we will be consulting with an attorney to determine if we should report this latest series of communications to the authorities for investigation. I suggest that you stop communicating on this matter in this fashion.”

Is the president saying that I wrote, *The Irony of Teaching Truth*—a story that explains that I resigned because I refused to remain silent about six alleged victims of sexual abuse by a graduate of the college and about the senior minister at a leading financial supporting church lying about the knowledge of those allegations of sexual abuse and attempting to cover-up that knowledge—so I could then turn around and blackmail the college to get my job back by not speaking out about a story where I refused to remain silent?

The letter concludes:

“Doug, your use of current and former students to un-do your resignation is demeaning to you, and it appears to be a part of an organized effort. But our college year is off to

a good start, and the distraction of this must not deter from our hopes for a good year for all of our students.”

By August, ten students had asked me several questions about my resignation. They were told by the president and/or the academic dean that I was not disciplined for breaking college policies and that I was given the same contract as the rest of the faculty.

So I shared with the students the document: *Notice to Professor Doug Lay, in re Section 12.4, “Written Warning: Step Two” of the College’s Correction Policy*. I explained to them that I was corrected and that I was to refrain from speaking out for my cause and for criticizing a leading financial supporting church.

My lawyer responded to this letter from the President, summarizing the situation by stating:

“Your letter sounds eerily similar to the communication that has been coming from Steve Wingfield and the elders at FCCF during the last six months. When the controversy surrounding Brandon Milburn and FCCF erupted earlier this year, it was our hope that a mature Christian leader like yourself would intervene as a voice of reason and moderation and restrain Mr. Wingfield from some of his irresponsible behavior. Unfortunately, it appears the reverse has happened as you have now taken a page from Mr. Wingfield’s playbook rather than your *Christian Minister’s Manual*.”¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ August 31, 2015. *Letter in Response to the President*. Al Johnson.

So isn't the college using the threat of a criminal investigation of blackmail to silence me in the same way the church used a threat—and the filing—of a lawsuit to silence me?

How ironic!