

THE IRONY OF SPEAKING TRUTH:

*Four Strategies for Bringing God's Grace to Sexual Abuse Victims and God's Holiness to Christian Institutions*¹

Douglas Lay / March 2019

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 Ground 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

1. 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.
2. Pray for the darkness of sexual abuse to be exposed so the church and the college can bring to the victims, the families, and the church the light of the gospel of restoration.
3. Pray for the leadership of our churches to “shepherd the flock...not domineering over those in their charge, but as examples to the flock.”²
4. Pray for our college trustees and administrators to oversee the work of educating Christians and graduating leaders with truth, integrity, openness, and humility.
5. 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.
6. 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 resources:

1. GRACE: “Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment,” a national organization devoted to helping victims within the church community (www.netgrace.org).
2. SNAP: “Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests,” a national organization committed to helping victims affected by abuse within the church (www.snapnetwork.org).
3. FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS: Christians standing for change in the Church's treatment of women and all abuse victims (www.forsuchatimeasthisrally.com)
4. IS IT ENOUGH: A pastoral voice for abuse victims; a prophetic voice for Christian institutions (www.isitenough.org)

¹ From the book, *The Irony of Speaking Truth*. Douglas Lay. 2015.

² I Peter 5:3 *English Standard Version*.

WE MUST NOT STOP PURSUING

1. 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 and independent outside investigations of past or current alleged allegations.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. The church and the college must support anyone who speaks out about sexual abuse allegations without retribution or discipline.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The church and the college must publicly confess and repent when they mishandle sexual abuse allegations with denials, lies, ignorance, delays, cover-ups or attacks.

WE MUST NOT STOP PERSEVERING

Four years ago, I penned the following words at the beginning of a story:³

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.

³ *Is It Enough? Sexual Abuse Within the Church; A case study at First Christian Church of Florissant.* March 28, 2015. 6th edition. Page 37.