

PURPOSE: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

The Church Doctor® Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information. This information is free to share as long as the source is respected: *The Church Doctor® Report*, www.churchdoctor.org.

BAD BEHAVIOR IN THE CHURCH

Does it surprise you that Saul of Tarsus, a murderer of Christians and overall scoundrel of self-righteousness could become an apostolic hero of Christianity? And what about King David, with his adulterous manipulation to get Bathsheba into his bed? How does this guy get to be King of Israel? For that matter, how can a guy like that make it into the Bible?

In reality, these biblical characters would probably not make it in many of today's denominations, with their "zero tolerance" policies for church leaders. If you slip and fall—you are out: out of the church, out of your career, and you are dropped from your denomination. It is like there is a special rule for church leaders: we shoot our wounded. This growing approach to quick action for those who fall comes from pressure from a secular, sue-happy, legal system. Denominational leaders are taking their cues from wise attorneys who are there to protect financial resources of churches, judicatories, and denominations. Let's face it, the new approach to church leaders who are sinners is a stern hand from their denominations who practice their philosophy of ministry, "guard your assets." What happened to grace?

Kent Hunter leads Church Doctor Ministries, a consultancy group that works exclusively with churches to help them become more effective for the mission of the Great Commission.



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THE REALITY OF FALLENNESS

Pastor Dan and his wife have struggled, privately, in their marriage for years. Like many strong senior pastors of growing churches, Dan is a gregarious, social person who genuinely loves people. His wife, Callie, is deeply insecure and her counselor has told her many times that she is overly suspicious. Callie began to spread rumors about her hus-

MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

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- ▶ Forward it to staff and leaders in your church, denomination, network, or fellowship.

band with a few on the church staff. The gossip flew through the staff like a tidal wave and began to penetrate various corners of the congregation. The elders, fueled by the strong hand of denominational leaders, began to see their pastor through suspicious eyes. The challenged Dan. Now he had a precarious choice to make: let the Elders know his wife is in therapy and has serious social and mental issues, or protect his wife and take the risk of the elders turning the heat up another notch. In a very short time, the elders demanded Dan's resignation. Callie, from the shock of her loose tongue, ended up hospitalized for her emotional state. Dan lost his position at the church and ultimately his credentials were pulled from his denomination. Divorce soon followed and today Dan is selling insurance.

Is there a better ending to a true story like this? Is this the Christian approach? Does the Scripture teach us in any clear fashion about how we should deal with these scoundrels in the church?

HIGH ACCOUNTABILITY/LOW CONTROL

Somehow, secular notions have crept into the church to a level that diminishes grace and disrupts opportunities to allow God to demonstrate the miracle of healing and restoration, which is supposed to be a Christian's greatest expertise. As consultants, we frequently run into church leaders who are struggling. It's almost like a setup. It's probably spiritual warfare. Pastors and church leaders are under tremendous stress. Like everyone in business, the world of the church is struggling against the incredible changes in the environment. Through these changes, there is enormous stress placed upon church leaders. Further, they are ill-equipped by the institutions that train them for ministry. These leaders are overworked, underpaid, and constantly dealing with people who have serious struggles. In many cases, these church leaders work tirelessly. Because people change slowly, the encouragement of seeing results comes slowly, and sometimes, not at all. Many see their congregation declining in numbers, struggling in finances, and diminishing in joy. Many pastors are stressed and vulnerable to temptation. It is well-known that most pastors are lonely—feeling they have no one safe with whom they can talk. Meanwhile, they are distressed by the challenges they receive, especially as they try to initiate changes to move their churches forward. It's almost like a setup. Without making excuses for sin, let's face it, pastors and other church leaders are in a precarious position, vulnerable for attack by the enemy.

Meanwhile, churches operate in this high-control manner, a heavy-handed bureaucracy from denominations to church boards that is more controlling than empowering. More legalistic than loving. More law than Gospel. More punitive than forgiving. What happened to grace?

When I arrived in Kansas City to consult Faith Church, the pastor picked me up at the airport. It

WASY TO PRACTICE CHRISTIAN RESTORATION

1. Develop small group Bible studies. Use Philip Yancey's book, *What's So Amazing About Grace*.
2. Teach and preach about the essence of grace—as it is practiced.
3. Look at failures as sad, yet good opportunities for repentance and restoration—a platform to demonstrate grace to our secular culture.
4. Teach and preach about the meaning of gossip as a sin.
5. Teach and preach about a culture of accountability, speaking the truth in a spirit of love.
6. Develop a low-control, high-accountability culture in your church. Begin by reading the Church Doctor Ministries monograph *21st Century Pain-Free Church Government*.
7. Teach, preach, and demonstrate a lifestyle of following Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18.
8. Whenever it applies, petition your denomination to demonstrate grace and restoration to fallen and repentant pastors and church leaders.
9. Train decision makers and governance groups in your church to practice grace and restoration as a response to anyone in the church who falls and asks for forgiveness.
10. Teach parents to live the dynamics of grace with their children; business leaders to develop the culture of restoration and grace with those on their work teams—always with an eye to the opportunity to live authentic Christianity.

didn't take long to recognize the stress, his excess nervousness, and his frustration with ministry not going well. We were well within the context of this church consultation when I began to unearth the symptoms of pastor Dave's life-threatening problem. The treasurer mentioned that pastor was always eager to get his paycheck at the earliest possible moment. One of the elders indicated that he always seemed so tired—he was frequently staying up late at night. Then one person I interviewed shared that they left the council meeting, went home, and early the next morning, on the way to work, noticed the pastor's car in the parking lot by the riverboat gambling casino—he had been there all night. As the consultation diagnosis continued, it became clear that I needed to speak privately with Pastor Dave about his gambling addiction.

Pastor Dave needed help. The denominational leader in his region had resources. However, in the American church, high control is often practiced in the absence of high accountability. Dave was in a position to lose his job, his career, his future.

High control is the bureaucratic heavy hand that is swift to make judgment, take action, and rid the church of problem people. It is the most common strategy for dealing with pastors and other church leaders who have fallen. This high control is often balanced by low accountability. Most churches, quite frankly, are heavily impacted by gossip, political maneuvering, and judgmental attitudes. Few people follow the accountability lifestyle that Jesus modeled and taught: that we should speak the truth in the spirit of love (Ephesians 4:15). Jesus taught, in Matthew 18, that if someone behaves in a way that offends you, you should go to that person directly, sharing the offense between the two of you with the intent of bringing a solution to the other's problem. This is rarely practiced in congregations.

I was with Pastor Bob the other day and asked him, "does anybody ever come and confess their sins to you?" He said, "No, but I often get people coming in trying to confess someone else's sins!" He went on to explain that he tells them they have to go talk to the people, according to the biblical perspective. Most people don't get it. We have very low accountability.

This atmosphere of high control and low accountability has several challenges:

1. Most sinful behavior is not caught at a lower level, when it first begins.
2. Restoration, early on in the process of "a fall," is not practiced.
3. We rely on boards, committees, and denominational leaders to make judgments, and pass along punishments in a way that rejects the sinner instead of focusing on the healing that would demonstrate the power of God in our lives.
4. This disrupts congregations significantly and sets ministry back for years.
5. This level of treatment toward fellow Christian leaders promotes disrespect and suspicion for all those called to lead the church.

CONSULTATION SERVICE

SPECIAL FOCUS CONSULTATION

Personal attention from The Church Doctor® according to your agenda for as many days as you like. The Church Doctor® will meet with the senior pastor, staff, board; field questions from the congregation in an evening session; look over your facilities – whatever you design. You will receive a report with specific recommendations for your church.

CHURCH DOCTOR® MINISTRIES
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JUNE 2010 EMERGENT EMERSION EXPERIENCE

In June 2010, Church Doctor Ministries will lead a group of pastors and church leaders to the church that, for twenty-five years, has been the source of a spreading world revival. A movement is more caught than taught. This trip may be eligible for advanced degree credit at some seminaries, Bible colleges, or Christian universities.

Limit: 20 pastors and church leaders.

For an application form:
e-mail jasonatkinson@churchdoctor.org

There has got to be a better way. There is! It's the biblical way.

LOW CONTROL/HIGH ACCOUNTABILITY

The Scripture teaches that the church operates with a culture of low control and high accountability. This means that the people (called the priesthood of all believers) are empowered at the lowest possible level. Each person is given spiritual gifts. Those who are leaders equip them (Ephesians 4). This is balanced by high accountability. This is an atmosphere where people are authentic and honest and will hold one another accountable, speaking the truth in a spirit of love (Ephesians 4:15). This approach carries the DNA of New Testament culture. It is not the favorite subject of attorneys or most denominational bureaucrats. It is the way of the Gospel.

What happened to Dave and his gambling problem? His regional denominational supervisor was phenomenal. He came in, worked with the congregation to give the pastor time off to get healed, arranged counseling, and, over time, Dave was restored: without the gambling habit, with a healthier balance in his life, and renewed by grace for a positive career in ministry.

WHEN GRACE WORKS

Another true story from our consulting files is the story of Jim, who was caught by the police and convicted as a sex offender. Jim had been struggling with pressure and uncertainties. His issues originated in his childhood. He grew up in a demanding household, with a control-oriented parent. Jim was a Sunday school teacher and was involved in an inappropriate e-mail conversation with one of the female high school students. His arrest shocked the church. In that moment, his pastor had a huge decision to make: be motivated by law, justice, judgment, or grace, love, and an end goal of restoration. Yes, of course, Jim was convicted and spent time in prison. Yes, he was required to get significant counseling. Eventually he would be paroled and he and his wife would get counseling together. In many ways his life would never be the same.

KEY RESOURCES

-  John 8:1-11 (Good News Bible).
-  Bridges, Gerald. *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.
-  Bridges, Gerald. *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008.
-  Kendall, R.T., *Total Forgiveness*. Charisma House, 2007.
-  Stanley, Dr. Charles. *The Gift of Forgiveness*. Colorado Springs, CO: Thomas Nelson, 2008.
-  Hunter, Kent R. *Stress and Burnout: Survive and Thrive through Church Leadership*. Corunna, Indiana: Church Doctor Ministries, 2008.
-  Hunter, Kent R. *Your Tongue: Very Small, Very Powerful*. Corunna, Indiana: Church Doctor Ministries, 2008.
-  Hunter, Kent R. *Self Esteem: What You Do or Who You Are?* Corunna, Indiana: Church Doctor Ministries, 2008.
-  Hunter, Kent R. *Mistakes: What to Do When You Trip and Fall*. Corunna, Indiana: Church Doctor Ministries, 2008.
-  Huston, Paula. *Following Jesus Into Radical Loving*. Cape Cod, MA: Paraclete Press, 2008.
-  Yancey, Philip. *What's So Amazing about Grace?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

ISRAEL 2010 WITH CHURCH DOCTOR MINISTRIES (MARCH 1-10, 2010)

Join Church Doctor Ministries in a trip to the Holy Land. Kent Hunter will join with Educational Opportunities (EO) to provide a guided tour with added teaching about events happening in those locations in the Bible and what it means for us as Christians reaching people for Christ.

Space is limited. To obtain a brochure, call (800) 626-8515 or e-mail shelly-hinkley@churchdoctor.org.

However, Jim's church showed support while he was in prison. Nobody made light of his failure, his sin. No one excused his bad behavior. Instead of punishing him further, however, they came to the rescue with prayer, support for his wife while he was in jail, and love for their children who didn't understand why dad was all over the newspapers. His pastors ministered to Jim in jail and, when he returned, most of the congregation showed proactive love and acceptance. Many financially supported the family during difficult times. I was in that congregation again, just recently. It was time for the offering when I noticed Jim, the former Sunday school teacher, convicted sex offender, now counseled and restored, helping with the public service of taking the offering with the other ushers. My first thought was, "This is what grace **does**." Then I thought, "This is what grace **is**." As I watched Jim pass the offering plate from row to row, I thought this is what church is all about. This is what Christianity is all about. We all are sinners. No sin is greater than another, in God's eyes. It's why we go to church, because we know we need constant encouragement and help. While I sat there and watched Jim publically ushering, restored and moving forward with his life, I thought Jesus would be proud of a congregation that didn't shoot a wounded brother. He would not teach children again. They didn't excuse the offense as if it wasn't important to God, either. However, ultimately, this congregation practiced Jesus' love and forgiveness. It was their finest hour.

WHAT DO YOU THINK JESUS WROTE IN THE SAND?

John 8:1-11 has several problems of its own. Many manuscripts and early translations did not have this passage. Others have it after John 21:24. Still others have it after Luke 21:38. One manuscript has it after John 7:36. Maybe the early church didn't know what to do with it. Do we?

This is the story of the woman caught in the very act of adultery. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought this woman and made her stand in front of them. They asked Jesus about the law of Moses that said such a woman should be stoned to death. They wanted to know what Jesus had to say.

This question from the Pharisees is the question before your church. It is the question every church should be asked. A woman caught in the very act of adultery. What would your church say?

Of course, this scenario put together by the Pharisees was an attempt to trap Jesus so they could accuse him. The Scripture says Jesus bent over and wrote on the ground with his finger. He, then straightened up and said, "whoever among you who has no sin can throw the first stone." He bent over and wrote on the ground again. Meanwhile, the Pharisees dispersed, figuring they couldn't trap Jesus, at least not this time. Jesus stood up again and asked the woman where her accusers were. He noted there was no one left to condemn her. After she agreed, Jesus responded that he did not condemn her either and told her to go and sin no more.

What do you think Jesus wrote in the sand? Knowing I was going to write this newsletter, I posted this question on Twitter and Facebook a few days ago. One response I got was that he probably wrote the names of the accusers and their sins! Another response was he probably wrote the Ten Commandments. That would mean that God wrote the commandments twice, once in the Old Testament, and once in the New Testament. Another response I got was "Was this the first time?" An still another response is that he wrote "Where's the man? Weren't they BOTH guilty?" Another response was that maybe Jesus wrote "what were you doing, looking in the window to see this act of adultery?" I never considered the Pharisees peeping toms, but it's an interesting thought. Of course, the point is that they had their own sins just like she did.

And that's my point. When someone falls in your church, is this the signal to shoot the wounded? Or is this an opportunity to do what consultants do: first diagnose the situation. Sin is never excused by situations where people are stressed, troubled, lonely, or whatever may provide the environment for a spiritual fall. The environment, however, may give a little understanding which could trigger a little compassion, and in the Christian context, maybe even lead to repentance and forgiveness. When a

fellow Christian falls and is repentant, isn't this really a time for the Christian community to rise up and seek healing and work toward restoration?

It is, indeed, not a good witness when Christians, particularly leaders, fall. It definitely gives non Christians around us the opportunity to point the finger and use the word "hypocrite." And yet, when they yell "hypocrite," isn't it really a misunderstanding of the way we see ourselves as both saints and sinners? Isn't it an incredible miracle that God uses us anyway? Wouldn't restoration be a great witness to people who also know they are sinners, whether they are believers or not? This would demonstrate that there is a community where healing can take place and people, speaking the truth in the spirit of love could say with Jesus, "I don't condemn you. Go and don't sin again." Even with that exhortation, that injunction, we know that, in all likelihood, we will sin again. If we knew otherwise, why would we need Jesus, anyway? Why would we need church? If we practiced the restoration posture, healing, forgiveness, without ever watering down the seriousness of sinful failure, wouldn't that posture the church in a way that could impact communities around us for revival? I think this woman, caught in the act of adultery and impacted by the counterintuitive love of Jesus, was probably never quite the same again. Failures are never good. However, they are great opportunities to demonstrate grace. Failures provide your church the platform to demonstrate to your community there is a different way. It is the Jesus way. Our culture is desperate without it.

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