

The pastor is just a man. We all make **MISTAKES**. Why is this any different?

It is common knowledge that a licensed counselor would be committing a crime if he (or she) became involved with a counselee. The same is true of a physician-patient or teacher-student relationship. It goes against the professional code of ethics and, in some situations, against state laws. How much greater the offense coming from a pastor who not only has spiritual authority and power, but is called to maintain a higher degree of accountability due to the sacred office he holds and the One he represents! It is a spiritual crime of the highest degree. A mistake made by one who represents the Savior of the world cannot be placed on the same level with someone without that calling, position or experience. God requires that His representatives reach a higher and holier standard.

“The example of those who minister in holy things should be such as to impress the people with reverence for God and with fear to offend Him. When men, standing “in Christ’s stead” (2 Corinthians 5:20) to speak to the people God’s message of mercy and reconciliation, use their sacred calling as a cloak for selfish or sensual gratification, they make themselves the most effective agents of Satan. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they cause men to “abhor the offering of the Lord.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 580

“Since it is unreasonable to ask members to trust pastors who have engaged in sexual misconduct ... such ministers are expected to return their credentials to the conference/mission.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*, p. 56.

THE Hope of Survivors

Reaching the **HURTING**... Calling the **FAITHFUL**... Bridging the **GAP**...

Isn’t the **RESPONSIBILITY** for this 50-50?

The answer is no. The pastor is 100% responsible for keeping appropriate boundaries at all times. The pastor (or whomever is in the role of spiritual authority and power) is ALWAYS responsible for maintaining propriety in all relationships, whether it is counseling a member of the congregation, working with a member on a committee, or in some other capacity. The pastor has a high calling and is, therefore, much more accountable to God, himself and others for his behavior, whether it be good or evil.

“When ministers thus take advantage of the confidence the people place in them and lead souls to ruin, they make themselves as much more guilty than the common sinner as their profession is higher.”—*Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 143

“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”—James 3:1

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Do **WE**
really
NEED
to
TALK
about
this?

What is pastoral sexual ABUSE?

Whenever a pastor or any individual in a role of spiritual authority takes advantage of his (or her) position and power, it is considered abuse. This is not only the case when children are involved, but with adults as well. It is abuse because there is a tremendous imbalance of power, authority, knowledge, experience and responsibility between a pastor and a congregant. Due to these imbalances, there can be no mutual consent to a relationship of any kind, especially not a physical one.

By definition, abuse means “to use ill; to maltreat; to misuse; to use with bad motives or wrong purposes; to violate; to defile by improper sexual intercourse; to deceive; to impose on; to treat rudely or with reproachful language; to revile; to pervert the meaning of; to misapply.” It also means seduction. (See *American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828.*) A pastoral relationship is never to be a sexual one.

Abuse of this kind is especially damaging because of the sacred trust given to someone who stands as a representative of Christ. When this trust is betrayed, it not only destroys the victim’s understanding of and relationship with God, it brings reproach and disgrace to the church and is counter-productive to the ministry of those who faithfully maintain their allegiance to Christ.

What is the difference between ADULTERY and an affair?

In the same dictionary, adultery is described as “the unfaithfulness of any married person to the marriage bed,” “a manner of lewdness or unchastity.” Modern-day dictionaries tend to define adultery and affair as the same thing, implying there is a mutual consent and agreement on behalf of both parties in both instances. However, when a person in power or authority abuses the trust placed in them to suit their own purposes, it is not considered “mutual consent.”

Is this really a PROBLEM?

Sadly, sexual abuse and abuse of power in these types of situations is far too common, even epidemic, in our country and around the world. We need only to look at the news to see how prevalent this really is in our day. However, it is not a new thing. Jude 1:4 says, “*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Let the following figures speak to this horrendous epidemic:

“The problem of pastoral misconduct affects all denominations. The Presbyterian Church estimates that up to 23% of its clergy engage in “inappropriate sexual behavior or inappropriate sexual contact.”—*Hartford Institute for Religion Research*

“Present research and numerous studies indicate the incidence of sexual abuse by clergy has reached horrific proportions—about 12% of ministers have engaged in sexual intercourse with members and 30%-35% acknowledge sexually inappropriate behavior.”—Joe E. Trull (in a speech to Austin Baptist ministers and in *Broken Trust: Confronting Clergy Sexual Abuse*, Baptist General Convention of Texas)

In the Seventh-day Adventist denomination alone, there is a “guesstimate” of 2 pastors each week, over 100 pastors a year, being lost to sexual misconduct.—See the *Pacific Union Recorder*, Lectureship to Address Sexual Ethics in Pastors’ Lives, Sept. 2003

“Over 100,000 victims of clergy sexual abuse have come forward in the United States...80% of victims never report...the [Catholic] Church has spent over \$1 billion in legal settlements...”—Statistics from the documentary film *Deliver Us From Evil*, by Lionsgate Films

I’ve heard women go after the pastor because of his POWER. Do many seduce their pastors?

No one can deny there may be some women who are attracted to power, or to a certain pastor, or who, perhaps, even hold a grudge for some reason and seek to destroy a man’s ministry. However, in those rare cases where the pastor is said to have been seduced, one must ask a few significant questions. Is the alleged seductress going after any and every male? If so, then the pastor should have taken steps to protect himself and his ministry. If not, then why is she after this particular man? Would she be after him if he were not the pastor? The fact is, the pastor or spiritual leader is always responsible for maintaining healthy, safe and appropriate boundaries—under all circumstances. Jesus is our Example and a pastor is to represent Jesus in all things.

“*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.*”—1 Peter 5:2-3