



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Help! The Preachers Are Falling

Four Steps to Protect Your Faith When a Pastor Fails

Preachers will fail, but Jesus never does. Get clear, get ready, get mature and get yours, so that your faith rests on Jesus alone and the teaching that took root in you stays yours when a teacher falls.

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Stand-alone message

MAIN TEXT

1 Corinthians 1:11-13

INSIDE

Contents

01 Sermon Transcript

02 Preaching Notes

03 Scripture List

04 About the Preacher

WATCH THE MESSAGE

youtu.be/19FHEGnayPE

0:00 Another preacher, another fall

2:54 The spectrum of church hurt

12:05 Get clear

16:33 Get ready

18:12 The attack surface

21:41 Get mature

30:00 Get yours

40:23 Get over it, get through it, get help

Sermon Transcript

Well, if you've been online in the last year, you've probably seen it. Another preacher, another fall, another wave of stories about pain connected to the local church. We've even coined a phrase for it: church hurt. Today, I want to preach a message I'm calling "Help! The Preachers Are Falling." And by the time we're done, you're going to walk away with a set of tools that will protect you from the fallout when a preacher fails. Have any of y'all heard that phrase, church hurt? You've heard that go around, church hurt. It's a coined phrase. Now do me a favor, go ahead and join me in your Bibles this morning.

If you will. And I Corinthians chapter one, we're going to look at quite a bit of scripture here. And I want to just note that our guys in the back, or our gals in the back — our tech team has a lot of girls on it because we think girls are awesome. I live with three of them. So I have to say that. Amen. But I'm going to be doing something a little different with the screen this morning. I might be writing on it, and at any moment I can take control from them and they can take control from me. So if things go funky, we just haven't figured out maybe two left feet.

Amen. Okay. So I'm going to preach from the floor this morning because we'll have a lot showing up on the screen that I don't want to block. This phrase, church hurt, has grown in quite a bit of popularity over the last several years. We've started to see it and hear it a lot. And when we talk about church hurt, it's typically connected to a preacher doing something that they should not have done. And the other side of that, though, is whenever you have a phrase coined, it also means whatever the person saying it thinks it means. Believe it or not, there's no textbook definition for the phrase church hurt.

There is no textbook definition for this. So what I want to do real quick, because this is not the main crux of what I'm going to preach today — I'm going to talk to you about what to do when preachers fall. My message today is called "Help! The Preachers Are Falling." And I really want to help you today because inevitably a preacher is going to fail. It may not be catastrophic, but to some degree, I'm going to fail you at some point. I'm going to let you down. Somebody's going to let you down. You're going to turn on the news and a preacher that you just never saw it coming.

You're going to go, what in the world, that happened. And so I want to prepare you for that. But before we do that, I want to just show you something that I think will be helpful. And this is what I'm calling the spectrum of church hurt. And I want us to take a look at this graphic real quick this morning, the spectrum of church hurt. And I want us to understand that not all situations carry the same weight, right? Not all situations carry the same weight. You can't look at every time you think a preacher failed and go, okay, that was — I can't believe that happened.

I'm walking away from the thing. So there's really a spectrum. Right in the middle, I'd say we have what we call church hurt. This phrase that we've been using — this is just when you get hurt in church. Folks, I want to let you know something. I have been hurt in church. I have been hurt. Growing up, I can't explain this to you. I don't really know why, but my youth pastor just hated my guts. I mean, just hated my guts. It was a real thing. And I remember being in the foyer one time, and I don't remember what made this come about, what brought it up.

It wasn't out of the blue. It wasn't irrelevant, but I don't know what it was. But I remember my youth pastor — I'd felt a call to be a worship leader. I know, I know, after the last 30 minutes of service, some of y'all are going, we wish you

would have held back. But I felt a call to be a worship leader, and I'll never forget him looking at me in front of people in the foyer and going, "You'll never lead worship for me." And it just stung and it stuck with me. And it's honest to goodness kind of always back here still. It's just — it hurts.

It wasn't egregious, but it just hurt. It hurt to the point that it left a bruise. It left an indentation on me. It just stayed with me forever. So that's just hurt. You just hurt. But then sometimes you're on the low end of the spectrum and a preacher just disappoints you. A preacher just disappoints you. Sometimes you're just going to be disappointed. Things are going to happen. Your stuff's going to get thrown away. The schedule's going — the preacher, you know. I have a friend who told me he went on a cruise one time. This is why preachers are afraid to go on vacation.

And so he goes on a cruise one time and he said he gets off the cruise and he has all these voicemails on his phone. And he checks the voicemail, because you know, this was like 20 years ago when you couldn't do all the internet and everything. When you went on a cruise, you were really shut down, you know, or it cost you a thousand dollars a minute. Amen. And so he picks up his phone, starts listening to the voicemail, and it starts with a lady saying, "Hey pastor, just want to let you know, Sarah Beth, she's feeling ill.

They're taking her to the ER. They're just going to check her out. And we just want you to pray and, you know." Click. Next voicemail. "Hey pastor, just want to let you know Sarah Beth's got something serious going on and they're going to admit her to the hospital, and you know, we're going to see how things turn out. We just want you to know, let you be praying." Click. The next voicemail is, "Hey pastor, we want you to know they're moving Sarah Beth to the ICU, and it's starting to look a little dire and we're not sure.

And we just want you to be praying." Click. The next voicemail is, "Hey pastor, Sarah Beth, it's starting to not look good. It might be time for you to come up here and pray for them and console the family, you know, and we'll see." Click. The next voice: "Pastor, Sarah Beth died." Nothing he could do about that. He was on a cruise. This lady went from going to the ER to dead in 30 seconds for him. But for them, it's easy to carry that offense, but really it's no more than disappointment, because you can't expect the pastor to telepathically understand what's going on and then teleport off the ship.

There's just unreasonable expectations. Some stuff can't happen. But then there's on the other end of the spectrum where there is genuinely abuse that happens in the church. And I hate that it is a reality. I want you to know, just here for me, it's something that I'm going to deal with swiftly and over the top. Okay. So if something happens here, it's going to be a show because I'm going nuclear on it. I'm not going to be one of them guys that in 20 years they go, well, we told the pastor and he just never did anything about it. No, people are going to go, no, the whole city knows he did something about it.

I will go for your throat over — we're not doing that. Abuse is a big deal, but that's over things like child abuse or physical abuse or sexual abuse. Things that we know are abuse. Here's what's hard: where things turn from hurt to abuse is a little fuzzy. We don't really know. There are some things that probably are abuse that if you grew up in a rough household, you may not view as abuse. In fact, I'll just give you this real quick. Some of the issues with this spectrum is that people who confuse disappointment with hurt, they have a tendency to be unreasonable. They're disappointed, but they view themselves as being hurt.

Like it's authentic — like if I threw your Cheerios away in the kitchen and you treat it like I came to your house and cussed you out at the front door. I don't know that I can help them. I'll go buy you more Cheerios, but they become unreasonable. There's no amount of Cheerios that'll ever make up for it, right? That's disappointment. Those people

are unreasonable. People who confuse abuse with hurt, they downgrade what they've been through. It actually can create a sense of unresolved in their life — that there's a thing that they've never dealt with.

And we don't totally understand that because, you know, over the years of seeing what people have dealt with and at the timeframe at which some of the most egregious things that are done to people come out, sometimes it takes people 20 years before they ever talk about an abuse situation that they walk through. And when they think of abuse as hurt and not as what it is, being abused, well, it's an unresolved issue and they're walking around with pain and torment and they don't know what to do with it.

That scares me. But I'll tell you, as an organizational leader, I'm going to stop being a person for a moment. As a leader, what worries me the most, and what we see a lot of, is people who confuse disappointed and hurt for abuse. And because we now have platforms that anybody can get out and say anything — I know people, there are people online, I know other preachers who there are people online who have committed their entire social media following to trying to ruin that preacher's life. I mean, I'm watching it happen. And again, the problem is if there's an abuse issue, it needs to be dealt with.

But if you think you got asked to wrap the microphone cables one too many times, and that's abuse — at some point, we have to figure out where we are on the spectrum. That's very important to our own personal healing. At the end of the day, it's not about justice. I'm not Batman. I am not vengeance. I am not the night. I cannot get justice for you. But what the hope is, is that you get better, that you find healing and hope and that you're able to move forward in your life. Amen. Now I do want to let you know, typically in those areas, church leaders fail for a few reasons.

Typically it comes down to three. One of them is training. Believe it or not, pastors are not trained to be financial people. They're not trained to be legal people, and they're not trained to be counselors. And most of what we end up doing as pastors is accounting, legal stuff, and counseling people. So we go around making bad decisions that could get us in big trouble while we give terrible advice. So there's just some realities there. And I think if we understand these things, it's going to protect us from being hurt. The best way to not get hurt is to not get hurt.

The next best thing is to get better when you get hurt. Amen. So what I want to do is give you some tools this morning, while I realize it feels like I just gave a defense of every preacher that's ever fallen in the world right now. That's not my intention. But what I want to do is give you some tools, because here's what's going to happen. A preacher is going to mess around and you're going to get hurt. You're going to get shocked and it happens. And hopefully it'll blindside you. Hopefully it'll happen and you'll go, oh my God, I never saw that coming. You know, unfortunately I've seen some guys have stuff happen and thought, well, I'm shocked but not surprised.

And I hope that never happens with you. So number one, write this down. I think this will help you. The first thing you need to do to protect yourself, because you need some help, because the preachers are falling. Number one is you got to get clear. You got to get clear. You got to get clear. I Corinthians chapter one, we'll start in verse 11.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:11-13 ESV

¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

It says, “For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas, or I follow Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” I want you to see something here in verse 13. Verse 13 says, “Was Paul crucified for you?” That’s a great clarity question. I see in the comments a lot of times that people view — or when people say that they’ve been hurt in church, I’ll see in the comment sections, people say, well, you got to remember it was the people, it wasn’t the church, or it was the church, it wasn’t Jesus that hurt you. And that is a lot easier to comment than it is to realize. If you haven’t realized it on the front end, to most people — and this should scare you greatly — to most people,

I am Jesus. Like, I am the representation of Jesus completely. People do not see past me to the cross. Now I’m working to try to help that every week when I preach. And let me be clear for those of you who are giving me really weird looks right now: I don’t want that, but that’s the reality. A lot of people confuse — and we’re going to talk about that a little bit in a minute — but you got to get clear. You got to get clear on who Jesus is. It’s not me. It’s not Pastor John. It’s not this church. It’s not a denominational figure. It ain’t Billy Graham.

It ain’t none of them. Jesus Christ is the one who died for you. And while you need help because the preachers are falling, you don’t need any help when it comes to Jesus, because he never, ever, ever fails. That’s a good place to give the Lord a praise right there. I want you to see a little equation real quick. You can write this down. This is an equation that will help you in your life. Well, there used to be a great equation. Okay, here it is. Ministers times church do not equal Jesus. Ministers times church do not equal Jesus. Okay.

In fact, we’re going to go on and see in chapter three, and in chapter four verse one, that Paul tells us that people like me, or people like the leaders in our church, or other preachers that you may listen to on TV or the radio or wherever — we’re just servants.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1 ESV

¹ This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

We’re just servants. That’s all we are. We are servants, but we are not Jesus, because Jesus is the one who died for you. I’ll never forget when I was in high school. I think I’ve told y’all this before that there’s a group that meets in the mornings called First Priority. How many of y’all got First Priority in your school?

If you’re a young person, y’all got it in your school. Okay. So I never went to First Priority, but every year they would put a picture of me on the First Priority page in the yearbook because I was that saved. Come on somebody. Hallelujah. And so people knew I was born again. They knew I served the Lord, but I didn’t go to it. Well, in my senior year of high school — and I didn’t know any of this was happening — there was a list that they had put together in First Priority of people who they wanted to be praying for.

And they published the list to people in First Priority. How long do you think that took to get out? About 13 seconds. And so that thing’s flying through the school. And here’s the thing. When people get on a list to get prayed for who aren’t saved, they usually know why they’re on that list. And I’ll never forget, I walk into an English class and I have got a girl on the basketball team who is screaming in my face over this thing. Why? Because she had confused me with First Priority. I had nothing to do with First Priority, but she thought because I was saved and First Priority was a Christian thing that I was part of this whole thing.

Folks, I'm telling you, you cannot confuse a servant or a bystander with the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to stay clear on that. So that's number one. You got to get clear. Number two, you got to get ready. Somebody say, get ready. Get ready. You got to get ready. I'm going to read just for a second here. This is chapter two, verse one.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5 ESV

¹ And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

It says, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him" — right there.

Let's look at this. "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Okay. That is cross-centered preaching. That is preaching the finished work of Jesus Christ. He said, when I came to you, I made the decision that I wasn't going to talk about anything else. Paul was a scholar. He had plenty to talk about, but he said, I'm not going to talk about anything other than Jesus Christ and him crucified. We're talking about the finished work of Jesus Christ. That was the only thing that he was going to make known to them in his preaching — not wisdom, but the finished work of Jesus Christ.

I'm going to keep going. Verse three: "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power." So listen to this line here in verse five: "So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." We could simplify this down a little bit: so that your faith might not rest in men, but in God. So when you get ready, you got to get your faith out of man and you got to get it into the Lord. There is a cybersecurity phrase.

Okay. Y'all can tell when I've been reading the internet, amen, but there's a cybersecurity phrase called an attack surface. It's also used in engineering. It's used in some other places, but it's a cybersecurity phrase. The attack surface is basically the breadth of vulnerability that a system or a structure has. It is the breadth of vulnerability. The attack surface is every area that you could hit and penetrate the security or the safety of any given mechanism. I would call them points of failure. This is where something can hit and cause something to fail.

Well, there's an attack surface for the Christian. And the typical attack surface looks like this. The typical attack surface has Jesus in there. And going down the list here, you kind of can see different items that are building blocks, almost. You've got Jesus and you've got the church, you've got the denomination, then the local assembly, and then you have the pastor, and then you have the services of the church, and then you have the ministries of the church. And then you have leaders, and you have the team, and you've got members, and you've got attendees.

And for most people in the church — most people, because this is typical, this is the typical Christian attack surface — most people have their faith built on a lot of this stuff. Their faith isn't just built in Jesus, but it's also built in the church. It's also built in certain ministries. It's also built in certain preachers or leaders, or maybe there's a volunteer who's been instrumental to your life. And you say, well, I don't think that's true. Well, people leave churches all the time because

sister so-and-so got disgruntled over something, because their faith was built to some degree in her satisfaction with the church.

Okay. This is the typical Christian attack surface. When you have an attack surface this broad, you are at risk of your faith failing for very small things. Anything can take you out. But here's the ideal Christian attack surface. This is cross-centered preaching right here. The ideal Christian attack surface is Jesus. So if Jesus fails, your faith fails. Well, that's good news because Jesus doesn't fail. Amen. That's a good place to shout in this Spirit-filled church. He don't fail. Does he? No, he don't fail. He won't let you down. So you want to minimize your attack surface.

See, because the more reliant your faith is on anything other than Jesus Christ, the more vulnerable you are. So to be frank and clear with you, when preachers fall, I'm relatively unfazed. It's never jolted me. It's never pushed me back. Why? Well, because I spend time in the word and prayer every day. Now here, Paul says, I only preach the cross. I only preach the cross. I only preach Jesus among you. I want you to listen to this in verse six.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-12 ESV

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

It goes on to say, "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom." Let me back up here and give you a point real quick.

You need to get mature. You need to get mature. Look at your neighbor and say, "Grow up." That was the most fun y'all had in church all day. Amen. You got to get mature. You got to get mature. Why? It says right here, "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom." Think about that. Now, Paul says that I'm not coming to you with wisdom. I'm not coming to you with words of wisdom. Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom. He doesn't say he's preaching anything else. So here's what it stands to reason. Let me just give this to you real quick.

That spiritually mature people preaching about the cross is enough. It's enough. Hey, listen, I'm not trying to say I'm spiritually mature, but I think at this point we would all agree that would be the hope, right? So can we just drop the pretense and stop trying to act like I'm an unspiritual person. I love all these preachers that feel like they got to get up and cuss and stuff in the pulpit so they can let you know that they're like everybody else. I don't feel like I need to do that. If I wanted to be like everybody else, I'd go do something that paid more and had less complaining.

Come on somebody. Amen. No, no. So for me, you drop me in a room where somebody starts to preach on the finished work of Jesus Christ, I'm going to walk out of that room with all kinds of revelation, all kinds of insight, all kinds of wisdom that wasn't anything that was preached in the room. You know why? Because when the cross is preached, it's enough, it's enough, it's enough. And you say, well, who would have a problem with that? Well, I'm just going to tell you right now, I've had people red-faced yelling at me at church before for preaching the cross.

You think that everybody's just cool with this? No, no. People want to hear stuff that I don't even know what they want to hear. I'm so uninterested in it. But I know 20 years ago, we made this big shift where we started preaching on how to be the better employee and how to be a good friend and how to become a best friend and how to do this, and seven ways to do this and five ways. I just don't care about that stuff. Folks, if you want it, just go to another church. I don't know what to tell you. I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to be that guy. I'm going to keep preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And if you think I've been doing it a lot now, wait till we get to August when you don't hear much else come out of my mouth. I'm trying to lay some establishing values, but I'm telling you, I'm about to go all the way. Amen. Sorry. I got 20 years of people. I need to tune in on these messages sometimes. Amen. So verse six again: "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away." Verse seven: "But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." Now listen to verse 10. Verse 10. This is for those of you who are getting mature. Say, "I'm getting mature." Hallelujah. Verse 10 says, "These things God has revealed to us through his Spirit." This is why the cross is enough for mature people, because when the cross is preached, the Holy Spirit will start to do a work in you.

You can walk into church, hear a message on the finished work of Jesus Christ, and if you have maturity, the Holy Ghost will just do in you what you need done. You're not in here for a message. If you're mature, you're just in here to create enough space to where everybody stops walking in the room and asking you for stuff and bothering you with stuff. No, you're just here to sit long enough so that the Holy Ghost can just minister to you through the service. Amen. We're going to keep going: "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?"

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." Verse 12: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world" — thank God — "but the Spirit who is from God." Now listen, this is what the Holy Spirit does. It tells you right here in the text, "that we might understand the things freely given us by God." Did it cost you anything for Jesus to die for you? Can you pay and attain anything that Jesus provides out of that death? Can you purchase or work your way to your salvation? These are all no answers, by the way, for those of y'all late to class here.

And so there's nothing you can do to get it. So everything that comes from the finished work of the cross is freely given. What he's saying here is he's saying the Holy Ghost will explain to you and show you the things that are freely given by Jesus Christ. That's why you can hear cross-centered preaching and get wisdom, because the Holy Ghost will say, hey, if Jesus did that, you can get this. Come on, somebody give him a brain. I feel like preaching all of a sudden. Amen. We're over time, but our children's lady is the Golden Apple recipient.

Amen. She'll be fine. Amen. Hallelujah. The problem with preaching anything other than the cross is that it increases your attack surface. So we talked about the attack surface. Every time we get off of Jesus Christ and into other things, there's always going to be an increase of the attack surface, unless we know Jesus and him crucified is the end of the story. That is the end of the story. And so when you have preachers who preach a lot of behavior stuff and tell you, you need to do this and you need to do that and you need to act this way, the problem with that is that the preacher almost becomes the authority or the proof of that thing working out.

So they become the center point for that teaching on behavior. So if I teach you to do something and then I go and do something otherwise, or even in another area of my life have some kind of major falling, the question is, well, if he didn't do it and he said I was supposed to do it, then maybe I'm not supposed to do it. Maybe I'm not supposed to live that way. It increases the attack surface. It gives the enemy more areas to get in and to mess with your life. I'll never forget, we went through a situation where we had a pastor having an affair. He had a moral falling.

And I just need — you know something about me. Okay. You know this about your pastor. If something happens, the information's coming to me. I know more stuff about more stuff than I ever wanted to. People are going to talk to me. I don't know why, but I get all the information. So if you're talking to me, don't assume I don't already know more than you're telling me. I just put out some warnings today. Help! The preachers are knowing stuff. Amen. And so this preacher — we heard, he said to the lady — we had relationships and connections, it's crazy.

He said to the lady that he had an affair with, he said this phrase: "Well, I guess I cannot preach on adultery anymore." Which, I'm going to say, if you have an affair and you walk out of there thinking about preaching content, man, I mean, all right. You know, so he said that. But do you want to know what the Lord spoke to me years ago? Because a lot of times it's not affairs and adultery. A lot of times it's very simple stuff that preachers neglect in their life. They just haven't mastered it. And they go, I can't talk about it because I haven't done it.

The Lord spoke to me years ago and said, "I have not called you to be perfect. I've called you to preach the word." So I'm never the proof of the scripture. The scripture will speak for itself. Amen. God honors his word. I just preach it. Amen. Amen. All right. Number three, number three, number three, you got to get yours. Y'all ever heard somebody say, "I'm going to get mine"? You got to get yours. Now let me give you some context. I don't have this on the screen,

1 CORINTHIANS 3:22 ESV

²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,

but verse 22 says this: "Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours."

All are yours. It's all yours. Okay. This stuff belongs to — I'm going to talk to you about what's yours now, and then I'm going to wrap up and get out of here. And I'm going to just preach this until we walk out. Y'all make me finish it while y'all leave. Amen. Go to chapter three, verse five with me.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-11 ESV

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

It says, “What then is Apollos? What is Paul?” Okay, we talked about this earlier. “Servants through whom you believed.” A way to interpret that: they’re teachers. They’re teachers. They’re servants through whom you have believed. They’re teachers.

“As the Lord assigned to each.” Verse six: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” What you got to know is that we participate in the process. Preachers are participating in the process, but preachers are not the ones doing it. We participate, but God does it. Amen. So God’s the one that does it. Verse seven: “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything.” I’m nothing, because God is the one who gives the growth. “He who plants and he who waters are one” — again, these are people who teach — “and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field.”

Now I want you to catch this. This is important to the interpretation of the text. Okay. Because if you parachute in on this text, you’re going to get a different interpretation than what the context will give you. Right here at “God’s field,” he is changing metaphors. He’s going from God’s field — so he’s talking about planting and watering, because you’re God’s field — but now he’s shifting the metaphor to you are God’s building. You are God’s building. That’s why we’re building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people. Can I get a good amen in the house?

Hallelujah. So we’ve switched metaphors. Now, God’s building. Verse 10: “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder” — that’s going to be my confession, I’m a skilled master builder, amen — “I laid a foundation.” Okay. We’re not going to go back there on the screen, but if we go back to chapter two, verse two, it says, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” That is the foundation. That’s the foundation. “And someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.” Here’s the reality.

Preachers are going to preach. Teachers are going to teach. And there are going to be times it’s not going to be about the cross only. It’s going to be something else. Do you want to know why? It’s two reasons. Reason number one is people do have specialty revelation. If I get up here and cut loose on Bible reading, you know I got some special revelation there for you. God has just shown me some things that work and they’re fruitful. The other reason is because you are not mature. If you aren’t mature, you can’t handle just the cross. Cross-centered preaching isn’t great for people who don’t know how to behave in the parking lot.

So if you’re flipping people the bird after you leave church, we have to talk about that now. Amen. Wait till you get to — we’ve got to see at least incremental change in your life. Hallelujah. And so we have to be mindful of that. We have to be careful. So we have to teach other things. What Paul’s saying here is there’s going to be other things that get taught. Verse 11: “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Now, remember, you’re God’s field and you’re God’s building.

Everybody say, “You’re God’s building.” Amen. Okay.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-15 ESV

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Now, “if anyone builds” — who are the builders? The builders are the teachers. “If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble” — I want you to see those phrases as two things. Gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, and stubble. “Each one’s work will become manifest.” Now whose work? The teacher’s work. “Each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it.” This is why you need the context, because if you parachute in on this, it sounds like end time judgment.

That’s not what it is. That’s not what this is talking about. “For the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.” Everybody in this room is going to go through some type of fire. Everybody’s going to go through some type of fire at some point, and that fire is going to affect the house. It’s going to hit the house. Okay. Now listen to this. “If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.” What’s the reward? The reward is that the teaching worked.

If the teaching doesn’t work and the stuff you learn from the teacher gets burned up when it finally gets tested — okay, it didn’t work. The reward is that it worked. If it’s good teaching, it’s going to have good results. Verse 15: “If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” What does that mean? That means you’re just going to have to deal with the fact that you went out here and you tried to apply a teaching that did not work to something. And because of the failure rate on whatever that is, now you just got to deal with it and you got to live with it.

Doesn’t mean you’re going to go to heaven or hell because you got teachers who are using different materials. That’s not what it’s talking about, because everybody he’s talking about here is a good teacher. He’s not talking about false prophets and false preachers here. He’s talking about his buddies, Apollos and Peter. He ain’t talking about Jim Bob down the road who has great faith today while people hear rattling coming from a box. Amen. That’s a snake handler joke, if y’all missed that. Amen. No, no, he’s talking about good teaching. But here’s what I want you to hear.

There’s two types of material. You got gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, and stubble. There is some teaching that is timeless and it’s sturdy and it’s weighty and it’s going to make it through anything. There are some teachings that are just going to work no matter what, because good teaching. There’s also teaching that’s wood, and some teaching that’s wood is good for right now and it’ll get you through right now. You’d frame up a house in wood, but under certain circumstances, such as, oh, let’s say fire, it ain’t going to last.

It’s going to get burned up, but for the time it’s going to be good. Still amazes me driving around here, people framing houses with wood. Where we came from in Florida, it’s all CBS construction, baby. We’re building fortresses down there where we’re getting insurance policies up here. Amen. That amazes me. Okay. So wood, hay and stubble. Some of y’all have invested yourself into teaching that is such utter nonsense, and then you wonder why you get the results you get. You can’t invest yourself into teaching that doesn’t even take a fire.

It takes a spark. It takes a minor inconvenience. It takes the littlest things to unravel that teaching. Some of y’all have bought into stuff that people teach that if you read three more verses down, you’d go, oh, that don’t work that way. So the type of teaching that’s built on the foundation matters. Now, if you can get mature, the cross is enough. I’ll tell you this, I can bear up a greater measure of false teaching than the average person, because I can sit there and just go, I don’t feel good about that. I don’t know about that. I’m going to take that under advisement.

I’m not sure about that. But if you don’t know any better and you haven’t matured and you haven’t grown, you’re going to be tossed, as he says in another epistle, by every wind and wave of doctrine.

EPHESIANS 4:14 ESV

¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

And you got to be careful of that. Well, why does this matter? Well, because preachers are going to fall. They're going to fall, but you've been taught all this stuff. You've been taught how to be faithful and how to serve the Lord and how to pray and how to read the Bible and how to serve people and how to love one another and how to be faithful to your spouse and how to be kind to your children while being a disciplinarian and how to serve the Lord with gladness and how to give, and even how to receive.

You've been taught these things. Well, my friend, if a preacher falls and you think that that teaching is contingent on that preacher's survival — no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. All things are yours. Once the revelation jumps off of one person and gets into the other person and it starts to burn, that revelation is yours from that point on, in Jesus' mighty name. So I want to close with this this morning, because I'm out of time. I listened to the computer for the first half of service. I listened to the clock for the second half of service.

One day we're just going to come in here and I'm going to go for seven hours, and me and Miss Lois will be in here when we lock up. Amen. And everybody else will go, I think I'm done. Hour three is enough for me. Amen. I want to go back to this idea of church hurt for just a moment. I just want to give you some direct advice that I hope you take with a pastoral spirit, but I'm going to talk with you just straight for a minute outside of church hurt. Some of you have been through the most egregious stuff in the world. Like, you know, and I've told the story.

So if we haven't met, and I'm telling this kind of flippantly, I want you to forgive me, but for the sake of brevity — you know, I've had my own father pull a gun on me. I've watched my mother drive off and abandon me at the house when no one was there, and I was a child. I've watched my grandmother try to manipulate the whole family situation while only caring about what other people thought. I've been through this stuff. I've seen this stuff happen. I've seen stuff happen to other people. I've been slapped in the face by a parent before.

I mean, I've had these things happen. I'm with you. I know you've gone through stuff. At the end of the day, though, you get a choice, and you can either choose to see that person pay the price — which I just need you to know almost never happens. This isn't me trying to absolve anything. This isn't me saying it's okay. I'm just trying to talk reality to you. We had a situation where I had to call the police earlier this year, and it had come out late. There was child abuse that had come out late. And the guy on the phone told me, he said, we will write it down and we'll take a police report.

But I just want you to know this almost never goes anywhere. But I'm not going to be that guy. Y'all just need to know it's to take care of you, and it's to take care of me. Nobody's putting me on NBC News. It ain't happening. I am not that pastor, to get hate mail over not dealing with stuff. So I'm picking the phone up, you know. But he told me, he said, almost never gets resolved. Almost never. Nothing ever comes of it. And you need to know that the pain you faced in your life, you're probably never going to get the apology. The person's never going to know what they did wrong.

If they knew better, they'd have done better. I don't know if this will help you today. Maybe it will. The person who hurt you is stupid. They ain't smart enough to know better. If they'd have known better, they'd have done better. But you got a problem. You can fix everything but stupid. You know, ugly is skin deep. Stupid goes down into the bones, folks. In fact, the proverb says you cannot separate a fool from his folly.

PROVERBS 27:22 ESV

²² Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him.

It's just not going to happen. Here's the deal. While they're mad, they may never pay. They may never apologize.

They may never get what they deserve. You have a choice. You have a choice. You can look at that for the rest of your life, or you can do the work to move forward in your life. I'm not telling you to get over it. I'm not telling you to suck it up. Some of you need to do a counseling session three times a week. It's just what it takes. When I was in fifth grade — I don't think it's a great faith confession, but my fifth grade science teacher, I think she was a science teacher, fifth grade science teacher, Ms. Noble — Ms. Noble said this every day in fifth grade. She said, "Life's hard.

Then you die." And I would only adjust it this much, just to say that life is hard, but have no fear because Jesus Christ has overcome the world.

JOHN 16:33 ESV

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

You've got more than you think you've got. And it's not all going to happen in the prayer place. It's going to happen by waking up and making a confession and moving on and dealing. You're going to have to do what you got to do. You're going to have to do the work. You're going to have to see a therapist. You're going to have to see a counselor. But the best thing you can do today when it comes to these preachers, particularly, is be prepared, be prepared, be prepared.

The preachers are falling. People are going to mess up. You're going to get disappointed. You're going to get hurt. In this church, we're going to do everything to make sure that you and yours do not get abused. But I don't know what happens when y'all leave here. Something's going to happen in your life. What I'm telling you today is if you'll follow those steps — get ready, get clear, get mature, and get yours — store up that teaching that you're given. Store it up as your own. I'm telling you, when it happens, you'll be able to survive that moment. Here's my pastoral encouragement for you.

If you're disappointed, get over it. I'm sorry they threw your Nutri-Grain bars away. It's been five years. Let it go. If you've been hurt, you got to get through it. I know it's with you. I know it's on you. I know it's hanging on to you. And I know it might even haunt you to some degree, but you got to get through it. You got to press on. I know it's Mother's Day, but sometimes you just need to man up. If you've been abused, if you faced any kind of abuse in your life, you need to get help. You cannot do it alone. If you want to come talk to me, you can.

I don't know that I'll help you. I told you at the beginning why preachers fail. I don't have the training for it. There's somebody who's going to be able to tell you something more than — go talk to a counselor. Change your life. If you've gone through that, so just go talk to somebody, in Jesus' name. That's my whole message today. If you receive it, give the Lord a hand clap of praise.

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

These notes were built from the transcript of the message. There were no original preaching notes.

This message followed “The Spirit of Doeg,” which promised it: the real issue is not the preacher who falls but what the hearer allows to compromise their trust in the Word. It was preached on Mother’s Day, from the floor, with a graphic of the spectrum of church hurt and a graphic of the attack surface on the screen. Both graphics are worth rebuilding if you preach it.

Three cautions. First, say clearly that this is not a defense of every preacher who has fallen. Abuse must be dealt with, swiftly and openly. Second, the closing section speaks directly to people who have been hurt or abused. Keep its tone pastoral, and point people who have been abused to trained help. Third, the message names no fallen public figures; keep it that way.

Introduction

If you have been online in the last year, you have probably seen it: another preacher, another fall, another wave of stories about pain connected to the local church. We even have a phrase for it: church hurt.

Inevitably a preacher is going to fail you. It may not be catastrophic, but to some degree, your pastor will let you down. Somebody will. And one day you will turn on the news and see a preacher fall that you never saw coming. Today you will walk away with tools that protect you from the fallout.

The Spectrum of Church Hurt

There is no textbook definition of church hurt. A coined phrase means whatever the person saying it thinks it means. So picture a spectrum. Not every situation carries the same weight.

- **Disappointment** sits on the low end.
- **Hurt** sits in the middle.
- **Abuse** sits on the far end.

Illustration: “You’ll never lead worship for me.” Growing up, I felt called to be a worship leader. My youth pastor looked at me in the foyer, in front of people, and said, “You’ll never lead worship for me.” It was not egregious, but it stung, and it left a bruise that is still with me. That is hurt.

Illustration: the voicemails after the cruise. A pastor friend came home from a cruise, years before you could stay connected at sea, to a string of voicemails. Sarah Beth is going to the ER. She is being admitted. She has been

moved to the ICU. It might be time to come pray with the family. Then: Sarah Beth died. For him, she went from the ER to gone in thirty seconds. It is easy for a family to carry that offense, but it is really disappointment. You cannot expect a pastor to know what is happening by telepathy and teleport off the ship.

Abuse is a big deal. Child abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse must be dealt with swiftly and openly. Nobody should be able to say twenty years later, “We told the pastor and he never did anything.” The line between hurt and abuse can be fuzzy, and someone who grew up in a rough household may not recognize abuse for what it is.

Mixing up the categories causes real damage:

- **People who treat disappointment as hurt become unreasonable.** If someone throws away your Cheerios and you respond as if they cussed you out on your front porch, no amount of Cheerios will ever make it right.
- **People who treat abuse as mere hurt downgrade what they have been through.** It stays unresolved, sometimes for twenty years, and they carry pain and torment without knowing what to do with it.
- **People who treat disappointment or hurt as abuse** can spend years and an entire social media following trying to ruin someone’s life over being asked to wrap the microphone cables one too many times.

Knowing where you are on the spectrum matters for your own healing. The goal is not justice; a pastor cannot deliver that. The hope is that you get better, find healing and hope, and move forward.

WHY CHURCH LEADERS FAIL

Often it comes down to training. Pastors are not trained to be financial people, legal people or counselors, and much of what pastors end up doing is accounting, legal work and counseling. That is not an excuse for anyone. It is a reality worth understanding.

The best way to not get hurt is to not get hurt. The next best thing is to get better when you get hurt. So here are four tools.

1. Get Clear

1 CORINTHIANS 1:11-13 ESV

¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

“Was Paul crucified for you?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). That is the clarity question.

People say, “It was the people, not the church,” or “It was the church, not Jesus.” That is easier to type in a comment than to realize. To many people, the pastor is the representation of Jesus. They do not see past him to the cross. A pastor should work against that every week, but it is the reality.

Get clear on who Jesus is. It is not your pastor, not this church, not a denominational figure, not even Billy Graham. Jesus Christ is the one who died for you. You need help because the preachers are falling, but you need no help when it comes to Jesus. He never fails.

The equation: Ministers times Church does not equal Jesus.

Paul says the leaders are servants: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Illustration: the First Priority list. In high school I never went to First Priority, the Christian student group, though the yearbook put my picture on its page every year. My senior year, the group made a list of people to pray for, and it got out in about thirteen seconds. A girl on the basketball team screamed in my face in English class because she thought I was part of it. She confused a bystander with the whole thing. You cannot confuse a servant with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Get Ready

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5 ESV

¹ And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Paul was a scholar with plenty to talk about, yet he wrote, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). That is cross-centered preaching: the finished work of Jesus Christ. And he did it “so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:5).

Simplified: so that your faith might not rest in men, but in God. Getting ready means moving your faith out of people and into the Lord before anything happens.

THE ATTACK SURFACE

Cybersecurity uses a phrase called the attack surface: the breadth of vulnerability a system has, every point where something could hit it and cause it to fail.

There is an attack surface for the Christian. **The typical Christian attack surface** looks like this:

- Jesus
- the church
- the denomination
- the local assembly

- the pastor
- the services
- the ministries
- leaders
- the team
- members
- attendees

Most people's faith is built on a lot of that list. People leave churches all the time because one person got disgruntled, which shows their faith rested partly on that person's satisfaction. With an attack surface that broad, almost anything can take you out.

The ideal Christian attack surface is Jesus. If Jesus fails, your faith fails. That is good news, because Jesus does not fail.

Minimize your attack surface. The more your faith relies on anything other than Jesus Christ, the more vulnerable you are. A believer who spends time in the Word and prayer every day can watch a preacher fall without being knocked down.

3. Get Mature

Have the congregation look at a neighbor and say, "Grow up."

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-12 ESV

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

"Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:6). Paul has just said he preaches only Christ crucified. He does not say he preaches anything else to the mature. So it stands to reason: **for spiritually mature people, preaching the cross is enough.**

Why? "These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:10). We have received the Spirit "that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). Did it cost you anything for Jesus to die for you? Can you buy or work your way to what His death provides? No. Everything that comes from

the finished work of the cross is freely given, and the Holy Spirit shows you those things. A mature believer can hear the finished work preached and walk out with revelation, insight and wisdom that were never spoken from the pulpit.

Not everyone welcomes that. Some want five ways to be a better employee or a better friend. A preacher can choose to keep preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Preaching anything other than the cross increases the attack surface. When preachers mostly teach behavior (do this, act this way), the preacher becomes the authority and the proof that the teaching works. When he falls in that area, or any area, people conclude, “If he didn’t do it, maybe I’m not supposed to either.”

Illustration: “I guess I cannot preach on adultery anymore.” A pastor who had an affair told the woman involved, “Well, I guess I cannot preach on adultery anymore.” Many preachers think the same way about simpler things they have not mastered: “I can’t talk about it because I haven’t done it.”

But the Lord spoke to me years ago: **“I have not called you to be perfect. I’ve called you to preach the word.”** The preacher is never the proof of the Scripture. The Scripture speaks for itself, and God honors His Word.

4. Get Yours

Paul writes, “For all things are yours” (1 Corinthians 3:21).

1 CORINTHIANS 3:22 ESV

²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,

Paul, Apollos and Cephas, your teachers, belong to you, not the other way around.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-11 ESV

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- **Teachers are servants.** They are the ones “through whom you believed” (1 Corinthians 3:5).
- **God gives the growth.** “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6). Preachers participate in the process, but God does the work.

- **Watch the metaphor change.** “You are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Paul moves from planting to building, and the builders are the teachers.
- **There is one foundation.** “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). That is Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Teachers will build other things on that foundation. Sometimes a teacher has specialty revelation from God, a subject where God has shown him what works. And sometimes hearers are not mature enough for the cross alone; if you are flipping people the bird in the parking lot after church, we need to talk about behavior.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-15 ESV

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Read this in context. Paul is describing good teachers here (Apollos and Cephas), not false prophets, and the fire is the testing every life goes through. Every house in this room will face a fire at some point.

- **Gold, silver, precious stones:** teaching that is timeless, sturdy and weighty, that makes it through anything.
- **Wood, hay, stubble:** teaching that may be good for right now, but will not survive the fire. Some teaching does not even take a fire; a spark or a minor inconvenience unravels it, and reading three more verses would have shown it did not work that way.
- **The reward** is that the teaching worked. **The loss** is living with the results of a teaching that did not hold up. It is not about heaven or hell; the builder “will be saved, but only as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Illustration: wood framing. Coming from Florida, where houses are built of concrete block and stucco, it is surprising to see houses framed in wood. Wood frames a fine house, but in a fire it will not last.

A mature believer can bear up under more false teaching than the average person, taking things under advisement. An immature believer will be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

Here is why it matters. You have been taught how to be faithful, pray, read the Bible, serve people, love one another, be faithful to your spouse, raise your children, serve the Lord with gladness, give and receive. If a preacher falls, that teaching is not contingent on his survival. **Once a revelation jumps from one person into another and starts to burn, it is yours from that point on.**

Conclusion

Speak plainly and pastorally to anyone carrying pain.

Some in the room have been through the most egregious things. (As preached, this section included painful details from Pastor Jason's own childhood, offered as "I'm with you." Use your own judgment about what to share.)

You have a choice. You can wait to see the person pay the price, which almost never happens. This is not saying it was okay. It is reality. **You will probably never get the apology. The person will probably never know what they did wrong. If they knew better, they would have done better.** Scripture says a fool's "folly will not depart from him" (Proverbs 27:22). They may never pay, never apologize, never get what they deserve. You can look at it for the rest of your life, or you can do the work to move forward.

That is not "get over it" or "suck it up." Some people need counseling three times a week, and that is what it takes.

Illustration: "Life's hard. Then you die." A fifth-grade teacher said it every day. Adjust it this much: life is hard, but take heart. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Be prepared. The preachers are falling. People will mess up. You will be disappointed, and you may be hurt. Follow these steps: get clear, get ready, get mature and get yours. Store up the teaching you have been given as your own, and when it happens, you will survive that moment.

Pastoral encouragement:

- **If you are disappointed, get over it.** It has been five years since they threw your Nutri-Grain bars away. Let it go.
- **If you have been hurt, get through it.** It may still be with you, even haunt you, but press on.
- **If you have been abused, get help.** You cannot do it alone. A pastor is not trained for this. Go talk to a counselor who is.

Close with a hand clap of praise for the Lord, who never fails.

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:11-13

¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

¹ And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-12

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:22

²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,

**1 CORINTHIANS
3:5-11**

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**1 CORINTHIANS
3:12-15**

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

**1 CORINTHIANS
4:1**

¹ This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

PROVERBS 27:22

²² Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him.

JOHN 16:33

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

EPHESIANS 4:14

¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

ABOUT THE PREACHER



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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