

IN NEED OF A CORPORATE REBUKE –
AN APPEAL TO THE COVENANT LIFE ELDERS
JUNE 17, 2011

1 Timothy 5:19-21

[19] Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. [20] Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. [21] I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

Introduction¹

Over the past 18 months I have written three major documents for C.J. and the remaining Board of Directors – Joshua, Jeff and Dave. You will find them attached. They are “Response Regarding Friendship and Doctrine” (March 17, 2010), “A Final Appeal” (October 8, 2010) and “Concluding Remarks” (June 8, 2011).

I provide them because you are the ruling elders (1 Tim 5:17) of Covenant Life Church. C.J., Jeff, and Joshua are under your oversight (1 Pet 5:2). As members of the church, they are accountable to you as their pastors (1 Pet 5:3). These men are in submission to you, not you to them (1 Thess 5:12). According to Sovereign Grace polity, C.J., Dave, Joshua and Jeff have no authority over you as church elders. But that is not true of you. You are responsible for them in the Lord (Acts 20:28). This does not mean you are responsible to run Sovereign Grace Ministries. It means you are mandated to watch over their souls as those who will give an account (Heb 13:17).

All four of these men are in need of your shepherding care and accountability. Specifically, I believe Dave, Jeff and Joshua have been biased and partial in their application of 1 Timothy 5:19-21 and Sovereign Grace Polity as it pertains to C.J. They have not required of him what has been required of all other men under like circumstances. This is also true in relation to the actions of Dave Harvey, Bob Kauflin and Gene Emerson. All of these men need biblical counseling and close accountability going forward so the same abuses are not repeated.

Each of you are ruling elders. Each of you have a role in caring for the entire church. You all have the same authority from God if you’re an ordained pastor. You’re a pastoral team – a plurality of elders. Therefore, you must all be informed. That includes C.J.’s blackmailing of Larry Tomczak in the past. I’m afraid you have been kept in the dark far too long.

¹ I now know who posted my documents (Parts 1-4) on Scribd. I’ve asked this person to post Part 5, “In Need of a Public Rebuke” and Part 6, “Tell It to the Church.” At this point, people will be helped, not hurt, by having this material. I sent this document to the CLC elders on June 17 – over three weeks ago.

You know me as a friend. I've been one of C.J.'s biggest and most loyal fans. Obviously, you and he may feel completely different - especially now. But there is no lack of affection in my heart for C.J. I am not his opponent. I am his friend and I hope to be a faithful servant of the gospel by remaining true to Scripture.

Scripture requires the action I am taking when a leader continues in sin and I am under its authority. I wish it were not necessary but I trust in the wisdom of God. It is for C.J.'s good, the good of the movement, and the good of the gospel. I have avoided any public admonition of C.J. among all the elders of Sovereign Grace Ministries over the past 10 years. I have painstakingly sought to protect his reputation and cover his sin. But further action is required now. As an intermediate step I am appealing to you, the Covenant Life Church elders. C.J. and the Board are in need of your admonition which may lead them to repentance. You should also require C.J. to acknowledge his sins publically. Anything less is pure favoritism.

I know I'll be viewed as proud, independent, blinded by bitterness, and irreconcilable. I know much of what I've written will be dismissed as incomplete, inaccurate and revisionist. All of that is fine and to be expected. But my friends, there still remains a mountain of material that cannot be written off. It cannot be ignored. Don't bury your heads in the sand. You must speak up, probe deeply, and take action quickly. You are each elders and you each have a voice to be heard. Don't cower. Don't be silent.

In the text above, Paul gives Timothy a solemn charge to be unbiased and impartial in his assessment and discipline of elders. There were to be no favorites. No exceptions for nationally recognized leaders who lead large ministries. No exception for friends we love and respect. Over the years, both the apostolic team and the CLC eldership failed to conduct themselves in the manner Paul requires. This has been a grave disservice to C.J.. Please forgive me C.J. I've not faithfully served you in this regard. I mean it.

I am grateful for the action taken by some of C.J.'s friends as reported here by Jeff. More of this is needed.

"When the SGM board, the CLC governing board, and other involved parties met with CJ in November, he asked the 12 of us who know him best to identify in our own experience the things that you communicated in your documents. All of us could see his tendencies to withdraw when disagreed with, to make correction difficult, to be unduly confident in his own judgments (including his judgments of the motives of others), and to give insufficient attention to process in his leadership." (Jeff Purswell, March 11, 2011)

But these descriptions are inadequate and leave unaddressed many serious sins. For example, C.J. has demonstrated no remorse for his lording, deceit, hypocrisy, independence, and manipulation. He must be rebuked. In addition, the Board has required no public contrition and confession as taught by C.J. and practiced by Sovereign Grace Ministries throughout its history. Remember, the circle of your sin is the circle of your confession. C.J.'s sins have affected the entire movement.

Formal Accusations Are True & Just

C.J., when I sent you RRF&D last March, I hoped you'd make a public confession to the Sovereign Grace pastors at the Pre-Conference Gathering before Together for the Gospel in April 2010. I wanted the men to learn from your example and hold you in high esteem. The same was true after AFA and now CR. I've never desired that any of the CLC pastors learn of your sins from my documents. But confessions to them, Covenant Life Church, the movement and the SGM pastors has not been forthcoming; therefore an appeal to your elders is required. My motive is not to ridicule or mock you. I pray the pastors will redemptively learn from your sins "so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning." That is one of the reasons for reproofing "in the presence of all." Not just the Governing Board of CLC but among all of the elders.

I have worked exceedingly hard to make sure my formal accusations are true and just. In my writings, I avoid hearsay testimony and only draw conclusions when I believe they are supported by ample evidence. The issues I've raised are not contrived and the illustrations I've used not embellished. They are real. I don't share speculations or opinions as facts because I have no interest in false accusations or bogus charges. I've worked extremely hard to present accurate renditions in their historical context as supported by the facts. That's why I've always welcomed disagreement. I've wanted my record corrected where faulty.

I'm sure I fall short in my aspirations and I realize my writings are fallible. They contain error unbeknown to me. But this does not negate their fundamental accuracy. Some things may be dismissed as errant but a large body of credible material remains. The majority of which remains unaddressed. Therefore, I hope you will read charitably and sympathetically. I also hope you require action and take action in the immediate future with absolutely no favoritism, bias or partiality.

Larry and Doris Tomczak made some relevant comments in this regard. Consider their words.

“For years I made little concessions and compromised to stay in the good graces of certain leaders [in Sovereign Grace Ministries] and to avoid forfeiting privilege, promotion, provision or personal speaking opportunities.” (Larry Tomczak, *Reckless Abandon*, p. 135)

“I looked at my husband’s paycheck and that ministry as my source. We became fearful about speaking the truth about some different things because after 15-20 years and seeing how things went we realized that if we spoke and took certain courses of action we’d be out. And that eventually did happen.” (Doris Tomczak, Testimony, August 19, 2000)

Lastly, C.J. is a generous man but don’t be guilty of seeking his favor or friendship by compromising the truth.

Prov 19:6 Many will seek the favor of a generous man, and every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.

Faithful Stewards of the Good

What I’ve covered in my documents are some the worst parts of our history as Sovereign Grace Ministries. The untold story. I am aware there are many evidences of grace in our past and in the present. But it’s important to have a complete history (not a sanitized one) like Chronicles, Kings and Acts that record both evidences of grace and evidences of sin. We learn from both. From my perspective, things have deteriorated as the ministry has grown. Now it is more corporate and less personal. More denominational and less apostolic and prophetic. The sense of family has dissipated among the churches. The commitment to the larger mission has waned. The experience of the charismata has diminished. And there is a growing concern for reputation and acceptance by other men and ministries. Something of our radical edge has been lost. But my greatest concern is for a growing lack of integrity.

You may find my call for a public rebuke of C.J. among his peers completely fallacious. You may reject my appeal for a public confession as unfounded. But please be faithful stewards of whatever good you find in these documents. Benefit from them. Study them. Take notes and learn from them. Avoid the same mistakes and help others to do the same. The documents are tedious to read because of length and detail but still worth your diligent attention.

I leave you with a few recent emails that further explain the reasons for my current actions.

From: Brent Detwiler
Sent: Monday, June 13, 2011 10:48 AM
To: Ken Sande
Cc: Jeff Purswell; Joshua Harris; C.J. Mahaney; Dave Harvey
Subject: Coming Threats from SGM
Importance: High

I disagree with your perspective. I have been personally and profoundly engaged with C.J. and the Board for the past 18 months. What I have written is precisely what I would have shared in private. The truth be told, they are the ones unwilling to pursue “personal engagement” by writing out their thoughts in an open, honest and accountable fashion.

In keeping with the teaching of holy Scripture, C.J. should have been publically rebuked a long time ago. The witnesses against him number into the hundreds. Not just two or three as required by Matt 18:16 and 1 Tim 5:19. And “if he refuses to listen to them [the two or three, let alone the 100’s] tell it to the church.” C.J. has refused to listen to anyone’s correction for three decades.² The church should be told.

Furthermore, his sins continue as do those of others. He has not repented of lording, hypocrisy, deceit, etc. Here is what Paul the apostle commanded be done. “Those [elders] who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest will also will be fearful of sinning” (1 Tim 5:20). The only reason this has not happened is due to the disobedience of the SGM Board (which once included me) and the CLC pastors (though many of them have been kept in the dark). These groups of men have been extraordinary biased and partial in applying the disciplinary principles for elders. Hear God’s word, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His choses angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partially.” These fellow elders are in clear violation of God’s word. They have covered-up his sin...not covered his sin. I do not fear legal threats or lawsuits from the SGM Board. They are welcome to bankrupt me, force foreclosure on my house, further discredit me, excommunicate me, etc. It does not matter. God’s word is clear and must be obeyed.

Ken, you too have a biblical responsibility to publically rebuke C.J. and SGM. Last October, C.J. sought to involve you as a mediator. I was not in favor, nevertheless, you have been involved since then. Here is what I said to C.J.

² By “listen” I mean humbly listen to reproof without offense. There is some hyperbole in this statement. A better rendering would be, “C.J. has refused to listen to just about everyone’s correction for three decades.”

From: Brent Detwiler
Sent: Friday, October 01, 2010 3:36 PM
To: C.J. Mahaney
Subject: RE: Pursuing Reconciliation

By next week, I'll send "Part 2: A Final Appeal" which includes conditions for a just reconciliation process. It won't involve Ken, not because I don't respect him, but because I can't consider him a neutral party. The two of you are friends and Sovereign Grace Ministries has contributed thousands of dollars to his ministry. I am not implying anything about Ken's character. Ken may also need to publically expose abuses in Sovereign Grace Ministries and I don't want to put him in that position. I admire him greatly but mediation, if necessary, must come from people who have little, to no knowledge, of you or Sovereign Grace Ministries in order to assure objectivity. I desire reconciliation but it must be done in an honest, open and accountable manner. As I've said before the issues go far beyond anything limited to you and me.

In 32 years of ministry I have never seen God's word fail. If we had been faithful to discipline C.J. in accordance with Scripture we would not be in this position. We were cowardly. Instead we allowed him to manipulate us and orchestrate a cover up.

Here is the recent proposal for outside mediation from the SGM Board and my response to them.

From: Jeff Purswell
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2011 10:58 AM
To: Brent Detwiler
Cc: Dave Harvey; Jeff Purswell; Josh Harris
Subject: Your Last Document

Dear Brent,

We (the Sovereign Grace board) wanted to follow up on your last e-mail to let you know what direction we're planning to take in seeking a full resolution on the issues you've raised. Since you are at present still not willing to meet with an independent mediator, and because we nonetheless want to make sure that your concerns are thoroughly investigated, we are initiating a completely independent review of all the allegations you've raised concerning C.J. and the Sovereign Grace board's response to those allegations. Our goal in this is to

ensure the most thorough and objective process possible, and so we will seek to engage an independent panel of mediators who are spiritually mature, trained professionals who have no connection to Sovereign Grace. This panel will be able to review all of the written communications concerning this matter and interview any person, including yourself, whom they deem to have relevant information. The goal will be for them to provide an objective and detailed critique of C.J.'s and Sovereign Grace's actions, as well as any appropriate evaluation of others involved in these various events. They will also provide specific recommendations for what remedial steps C.J. and Sovereign Grace should take in the future.

Although our desire remains that you and C.J. could meet together personally with a mediator, we hope this step will be encouraging to you that your allegations and perspectives will receive a fair and impartial hearing. After much discussion and prayer, we feel that, absent a personal process of mediation and reconciliation, this is the best way to bring a God-glorifying resolution to these circumstances.

Yours in Christ,

Dave, Jeff, and Josh

From: Brent Detwiler

Sent: Thursday, June 16, 2011 9:46 AM

To: Joshua Harris; Dave Harvey; C.J. Mahaney; Jeff Purswell

Subject: Crucial Comments

Jeff,

I need to share some crucial thoughts on this paragraph and related matters. Two days ago you wrote me on behalf of Dave and Joshua.

“As for responding to your documents, we do not believe that we broke our word—we said that we would give you our perspective on your documents, and that’s what we did in our letter on March 11. Although we did not produce a lengthy document addressing the hundreds of pages you wrote item-by-item, we never committed to do that, nor did we feel that would contribute to a reconciliation. Indeed, the appropriateness of what you were requiring of C.J. and the board would in our minds constitute one of the many items where a mediator would be necessary and could prove helpful in moving forward.” (June 14)

You are twisting my words again. I never asked for an “item-by-item” account (though there is no reason not to provide one). I asked for a thorough response to RRF&D and AFA from C.J. I sent him 300 pages. C.J. could easily have produced a revealing and thoughtful 100 page response and the Board could easily have produced a 30 page, not three page response. Instead I received 19 pages from C.J. over 3 months and much of the second response was a restatement of the first response. Moreover, the greater detail I was promised never materialize unless you count the five pages of denials and rebuttals he added. Basically, that was the only new material.

So let’s be clear. I requested a thorough response as a prelude to a meeting but you believe such a document is detrimental to reconciliation and therefore refused to provide it. You withheld such a response knowingly and willfully. That’s your decision but please hear yourself! Your adamancy, not mine, is the only reason talks and meetings have not transpired. Your decision to withhold an open, honest and accountable response is to blame for any lack of progress toward reconciliation. Here again is what you said, “Although we did not produce a lengthy document [this understatement makes me laugh - you produced less than one page per hundred pages] addressing the hundreds of pages you wrote item-by-item, we never committed to do that, nor did we feel that would contribute to a reconciliation.”

So, [you provided] no substantial response because it would not contribute to reconciliation. I completely disagree. Have you found my documents detrimental? Of course not. Therefore my request for a full and complete response to RRF&D and AFA was not unreasonable. And please don’t distort or exaggerate what I requested and use it as an excuse for not responding. Your refusal to walk in the light is the only reason we have not met. It is wrong to say I am not willing to pursue reconciliation or that I am not willing to meet in person. That is not true. I’ve been very willing. If you had done your part, like I did my part, we might be reconciled. Here are your words.

We (the SovGrace board) received your latest document yesterday. We are grateful for the communication although saddened that at present you are still not desirous of meeting with CJ or any of us to pursue reconciliation. That remains our sincere desire, and we stand ready to participate with you in such a process. (Jeff Purswell, June 11)

And Jeff, please remember to interpret my words in context and avoid imposing a foreign meaning upon them. Of course, I am referring to your erroneous comment, “As for responding to your documents, we do not believe that we broke our word—we said that we would give you our perspective on

your documents, and that's what we did in our letter on March 11." I didn't say the Board broke their word, only that C.J. did. I hear they offer a good course on hermeneutics at the Pastors College. You might want to enroll in the class. Furthermore, I am open to an apology unless the entire Board determines such an apology is "unwise, inappropriate and unnecessary." A little humor my friend.

It sounds like you are following through on my suggestion.

You are welcome to submit RRF&D, AFA and CR to any outside "mediator." Better, give them to a panel of distinguished judges trained and proven in the rules of evidence. Consider my documents the results of a deposition. They are my sworn "courtroom" testimony. Far better than any board room conversation. (CR, p. 194, footnote 426)

Therefore, I think the following proposal is fine. You are welcome to proceed. I am not sure I'll participate, but they can still review my material.

We are initiating a completely independent review of all the allegations you've raised concerning C.J. and the Sovereign Grace board's response to those allegations. Our goal in this is to ensure the most thorough and objective process possible, and so we will seek to engage an independent panel of mediators who are spiritually mature, trained professionals who have no connection to Sovereign Grace. This panel will be able to review all of the written communications concerning this matter and interview any person, including yourself, whom they deem to have relevant information. The goal will be for them to provide an objective and detailed critique of C.J.'s and Sovereign Grace's actions, as well as any appropriate evaluation of others involved in these various events. They will also provide specific recommendations for what remedial steps C.J. and Sovereign Grace should take in the future. (Jeff Purswell, June 14)

If I do participate in this process the following guidelines must be adopted.

- All conversations or interviews with any mediator will be digitally recorded and electronically sent to me and everyone else on the Board of Directors.
- Only conversations and interactions between the mediators will be kept confidential. In others words, all other deliberations will be conducted in an open court.
- All email, correspondence, and documentation exchanged between us and any mediator must be copied to me and the Board.

There will be no secrets. Nothing will be “confidential” (i.e., hidden, concealed, withheld). These requirements are non-negotiable. None of these guidelines were followed during my assessment in June/July 2009. As a result, Bob, Wayne and Phil, were deceived by the lies and false witness of key individuals without me knowing what was being said and therefore unable to correct the record. Of course, Bob did little to investigate their veracity and happily believed much of their slander.

My willingness to consider participation does not mean I am going to withhold my concerns for C.J. and the Board until the findings of an independent panel are complete. I have been very patient with you men. For 18 months I worked to produce 3 major documents out of my deep love and concern for you. I spent all our savings, maxed out our home equity, and lived without medical care. We are broke. That is fine, but like I’ve said, we’ve come to the end of road. You have not provided me a substantial response on the issues, questions, and illustrations I progressively shared with you. So it is now time to broaden the court of appeals. I’ve been extremely loyal to all of you. I am not your nemesis. I mean you no harm. But it is time to tell others the truth since you are unwilling to speak to the blogosphere, the movement and the SGM pastors.

You are free to disagree with aspects of what I’ve written in RRF&D, AFA, and CR. But so much of what I’ve written is indisputable and it is serious. You should have quickly acknowledged wrongdoing, made public confessions and provided me reasons for any disagreements. C.J.’s confession on Dec 16, 2010 was a good start. But it was only a start. After that, it petered out and died.

I will not be sending my material to the blogs but it is inevitable that some of it will reach the blogs. I am not to blame. The additional actions I am taking are due to your intransigence. Hundreds of people have wondered what I thought about Dave’s “tyranny of the aggrieved” statement at KingsWay Community Church. The same is true of C.J.’s absence at the CLC Members Meeting on May 22. I’ve withheld comment. No longer.

I have done nothing behind your backs. I’ve been upfront about everything even when that put me at a strategic disadvantage. For example, I’ll be sending RRF&D, AFA and CR to all the elders at Covenant Life Church and a few others this week.

All of this I do with the good of the gospel in mind. It is time for you, C.J., Dave and Joshua to deal with reality, repent, and made reforms for the glory of God, not the public image of Sovereign Grace Ministries. It begins with C.J. and he has been silent, unconvinced any public contrition or confession is necessary.

I love each of you. I will continue to pray for the good of the ministry.

Brent