

IS C.J. ABOVE REPROACH?
JULY 17, 2011

1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach.

The Pastor's Priorities

Here's what I was saying before C.J. announced his leave of absence on July 7. This email was sent to the Covenant Life pastors, the SGM Board and some others.

From: Brent Detwiler
Sent: Tuesday, June 28, 2011 11:56 AM
To: Adam Malcolm; Ben Wikner; Braden Greer; Brian Chesemore; Corby Megorden; Dave Brewer; Don DeVries; Eric Sheffer; Eric Simmons; Grant Layman; Greg Somerville; Issac Hydoski; Jamie Leach; Joe Lee; Jon Smith; Joshua Harris; Kenneth Maresco; Mark Mitchell; Matt Maka; Mike Bradshaw; Robin Boisvert; Bo Lotinsky; Bob Kauflin; C. J. Mahaney; Dave Harvey; Gary Ricucci; Jeff Purswell; John Loftness; Ken Sande; Pat Ennis; Tommy Hill; Tony Reinke; Gene Emerson
Subject: Watch Your Life

The following is an excerpt from C.J.'s chapter in *Preaching the Cross* on the consequences of neglect. [see C.J. Mahaney, "The Pastor's Priorities: Watch Your Life and Doctrine," in *Preaching the Cross* by Mark Dever, J. Ligon Duncan III, R. Albert Mohler Jr., C.J. Mahaney, John MacArthur, John Piper, R.C. Sproul (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007), 121-122.]

"Sound doctrine is not enough, because, according to Scripture, the fundamental qualification for pastoral ministry is godly character. Neither skill, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, nor reputation, nor personality, nor apparent fruitfulness of public ministry will suffice. Scan 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and you will encounter a profile of personal piety.

"Yes, the pastor must be able to teach. Certainly, he must handle the Word of truth accurately and skillfully. But the foundational assumption of Scripture—both for appointment to or continuation in ministry—is that the pastor provide a godly example, not a *perfect* example but an authentic example. As Spurgeon exhorted his students, "Our characters must be more persuasive than our speech."

“If we neglect the command of 1 Timothy 4:16—if we fail to watch our life closely, carefully, and uncompromisingly—negative consequences are inevitable, for ourselves, our family, our pastoral team, and our church. A marked or prolonged inattention to personal holiness in a pastor is a grave matter that must be addressed. At Sovereign Grace Ministries we have sought to apply this passage in relation to the pastors of our local churches. We believe that the biblical requirement for a pastor is not flawless character but mature character. We are all progressively growing in godliness. A pastor who recognizes an area of immaturity and takes specific action towards change demonstrates close attention to his life and doctrine. Likewise, if a particular instance of non-disqualifying sin occurs in a pastor’s life, but he genuinely repents before God and the appropriate individuals, this also honors the passage we are examining.

“There are, of course, some sins that are particularly serious, both in the effect they have upon others and what they reveal about the condition of the heart. Even a single instance of such sins—sexual immorality, financial impropriety, violent behavior, and others would automatically disqualify a man from pastoral ministry. In addition to such grave instances of sin, a serious, ongoing pattern of disobedient deviation from biblical requirements in the life of a pastor can also be disqualifying.

“For example, a single lustful look, quickly confessed and repented of is part of growing maturity. However, a pattern of pornography could be disqualifying. Similarly, an isolated instance of lying speech, promptly brought into the light is evidence of ongoing sanctification. Repeated examples of deceptive behavior, on the other hand, call into question a pastor’s trustworthiness. Likewise, an outburst of irritation immediately regretted and repented of is proof the Holy Spirit is at work. But a reputation for anger is not consistent with the biblical requirements for a pastor.

“Where such patterns of sin exist, we believe that genuine care for a pastor and a church involves a corrective process. Of course, this must be administered with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Occasions requiring the loving confrontation of a pastor in sin have been among the most difficult and painful of my ministry experience. But in the end, the corrective process has normally produced God-glorifying and fruitful outcomes in a pastor’s life, family, and church.”

I'd encourage you to read the entire chapter before your meeting with C.J. At this juncture, you must ask serious questions about C.J.'s qualifications and whether he should continue as the President of Sovereign Grace Ministries.

I remember listening to C.J. preach this message at Together for the Gospel in April, 2006. I was glad for his content but terribly grieved by his hypocrisy. C.J. was not practicing what he was preaching (Matt 23:3). In reality, he defied his own teaching. Later this message was written down.

It is difficult to read "The Pastor's Priorities: Watch Your Life and Doctrine." There is so much I could say about its content in comparison to how C.J. lived his life. Suffice it to say, he was not paying attention to himself.

Hypocrisy of this magnitude is a serious sin. We should all study Matthew 23 - it speaks of outward appearances, the love of reputation, requiring action of others we don't follow ourselves, etc. I care deeply for my friend, but he is not above reproach. He is assailable on many fronts. Therefore, C.J. should not continue as President of Sovereign Grace Ministries. It is time for a transition. A new beginning is in order.

Are You Above Reproach?

Two days later I wrote C.J. again.

From: Brent Detwiler
Sent: Thursday, June 30, 2011 5:09 PM
To: C. J. Mahaney
Subject: Resignation as President of SGM

Dear C.J.

I am sure these have been difficult days for you. My heart goes out to you. Coming face to face with your sin and its consequences is a painful, frightful, and discouraging experience. In the midst of it all, I hope you are also experiencing God's love revealed in the cross of Christ and poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

Recently you wrote me about your progress in grace.

From: C. J. Mahaney
Sent: Saturday, June 25, 2011 1:58 PM
To: Brent Detwiler
Subject: Confidential

Brent,

I was reluctant to send this but decided to do so. I am not trying to impress you or convince you about what I am perceiving in my heart. But since I began to reengage with your documents a couple of days ago and with the help of others I have already perceived a couple of areas of sin I didn't clearly perceive previously. It's discouraging how slow and dull and blind I can be. My pride/self-righteousness are no doubt the root cause. Pathetic really.

Just wanted to inform you of the small incremental stuff that seems to be happening. My hope is that it continues.

Thanks for your patience and care my friend. Please keep praying for me.

With my gratefulness,
C.J.

I sincerely rejoice in any additional illumination you are experiencing. I look forward to hearing about it.

Yesterday was an important day; you met with all the CLC elders. I hope their rebuke impressed upon you the seriousness of your sins. In 1991 you replaced Larry as team leader. The year before, all of us recognized and talked about God's opposition to People of Destiny International. You, Steve, Bo and I were ready to resign if Larry did not step down. Part of the reason was due to limitations of gifting and part was due to deficiencies of character that Larry was not seeing. We knew change was needed. The same is true today. Sovereign Grace Ministries has increasingly experienced the opposition and discipline of God. I don't want God's discipline to become God's judgment. Sovereign Grace could easily end up in the ditch.

Your confession and resignation are keys ingredients in restoring God's favor to the ministry.

James 4:5-10 "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? [6] But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." [7] Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Now is the time for submitting, resisting, drawing near, cleansing, purifying, lamenting, mourning, weeping and gloom. Therefore, I say the following with no joy in my heart, satisfaction in my soul, or retribution in my mind. It is time for your resignation as President of Sovereign Grace Ministries. This should be obvious to you by now. No one should have to ask for your resignation. There is no need for any further assessment. It is clear - you are not above reproach. You should not be overseeing Sovereign Grace Ministries.

In your case, there has been no conspiracy, betrayal, rush to judgment, piling on or false witnesses. Everyone has been merciful, patient, long suffering, and forgiving. You have been afforded a degree of kindnesses no one in the ministry has ever been extended. So if the Bible has a normative and causative authority in your life in the matter of qualifications for leadership, you will resign immediately.

Of course, you can proceed with an outside evaluation of Sovereign Grace Ministries. That is fine. You can hold on announcing your resignation until the Pastors Conference in November. That is fine. You can wait on disciplining Dave, Steve, Bob and Gene. That is fine. But staying your resignation is not fine. You should not object or resist. To do so is a blatant repudiation of Scripture.

*1 Tim 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach. The word (Gr., *anepileptos*) literally means "not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of; hence that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable," blameless," "irreprehensible, unassailable." It bespeaks of irreproachable conduct and it also means "not only of good report but deservedly so!"*

*Titus 1:5-6 ...appoint elders in every city as I directed you, [6] namely, if any man is above reproach. The word (Gr. *anengkletos*), literally means "that cannot be called to account, unprovable, unaccused, blameless."*

We are not talking about minor offenses that disqualify you like a hypothetical speeding ticket in 2000, a conflict with Carolyn in 2004, an unkind word about

Larry in 1997, or a sinful judgment of Brent in 2006. No, we are talking about longstanding sins of a serious nature. There is only one reason people believe you are above reproach – they don't know the truth about you. It has been concealed and covered up.

C.J., it is not God's best for you to resign in protest, under pressure, begrudgingly, out of self-pity or resentment. You should resign in faith with the full assurance it is right and pleasing in the sight of God. Not because you've been asked to resign; but, because you want (as in need) to resign.

Honestly, there are no decisions any of us need to make with regard to whether you should resign as President. You, me, the SGM Board, the CLC elders, Ken Sande, and the outside mediators don't have a say in the matter. The decision was made for us a long time ago. Around A.D. 63 when 1 Timothy and Titus were written. All we need to do is obey the clear teaching of Scripture. There is no uncertainty, ambiguity, or question about its relevance to you. This is not a matter of interpretation. If you are "above reproach" than every leader you've disciplined in the history of Sovereign Grace was above reproach. Their sins were never greater than your own.

This doesn't mean you don't have anything to offer Sovereign Grace Ministries or the Body of Christ. It doesn't mean you live in isolation and disgrace. It means, first things first. Like being under authority rather than in authority. Like serving instead of leading. Like discipleship in place of discipling.

You planned to turn things over to Josh at age 60. God has moved up the timetable by two years. Like you've always said, his character and gifting exceeds yours and it exceeds mine. It is time for a new birth in Sovereign Grace. Men like Aron need to replace Dave Harvey and Craig/Tony need to replace Steve Shank. Dave and Steve have sinned greatly. God will reveal it as it has with you. So it is time for men to step down and aside and let others learn from our successes and our sins.

I look forward to the recovery of our reputation and the return of good people to our churches. I look forward to true pluralities among elders instead of autocracies and timocracies. I look forward to honesty instead of partiality. I look forward to justice in dealing with others in place of sinfully judging others. I look forward to transparency instead of hypocrisy. The best is yet to come.

I did not hear from C.J. so I wrote him again.

From: Brent Detwiler
Sent: Friday, July 01, 2011 9:07 PM
To: C.J. Mahaney
Subject: Resignation

Are you going to resign or do you believe you are qualified to continue as President of SGM? I'd appreciate a prompt answer. I want your thoughts. No one else's. What do you believe about yourself? Are you above reproach? Yes or no?

God's Word Is Our Final Authority

After several email exchanges I sent C.J., Dave, Jeff and Joshua the following.

From: Brent Detwiler
Sent: Sunday, July 03, 2011 1:38 PM
To: C. J. Mahaney; Dave Harvey; Jeff Purswell; Joshua Harris
Subject: "Am I Qualified?"

You say, "Am I qualified to lead SGM? That is for others to determine, not me." This is only half true but here's what important. Dave, Bob, Steve, Joshua, Kenneth, and Grant enabled you to continue in sin without consequence, without discipline, and with little (or no) accountability for the past six years. After 2004 all of them (in varying degrees) opposed me and defended you. Steve began in 2004. I was thrown under the bus and run over. This was especially true of Bob, Kenneth and Steve and the least true of Grant. Dave's opposition to me and defense of you began in 2006 after he decided in 2005 to accommodate your sin and relate to you as though a "teenager." None of these men, including Jeff, have ever required of you what has been required of others or commanded in Scripture. Furthermore, they show no signs of obeying Scripture now. To my knowledge, none of them feel you are unqualified to lead SGM or asked for your resignation. For a fact, that is true of Joshua. In the end, it won't matter, you'll be forced to resign or suffer dire consequences. I say that with absolutely no malice.

Any progress we have made in the past 18 months (or 11 years) has been over my dead body. An almost literal statement. The past year and a half, I have dragged all of you along every step of the way. Nothing has come easy. Everything has been resisted, contended, or initially dismissed. Even now you are forbidden by the Board from sharing your self-assessment with me. Very little has changed. To my knowledge, no proactive measures have been taken by any of them throughout the 18 months. Even the independent panel was my

idea. All action by you and them has been in response to my constant appeals or reproves or requests. Please correct me if I am wrong on any particular.

Instead they've applauded you when they should have been confronting you for lying, deceit, hypocrisy, abuse, etc. They have been weak, docile, and cowardly. They've demonstrated no "backbone" in their dealings with you. Nothing has been volunteered or initiated by them. Everything has been required by me. They have protected you, catered to you, and required little of you throughout the process. Even now, they won't tell me if they've been in contact with the mediators and had conversations or exchanged documents; both of which are in opposition to my conditions for participation. I'd like to know what has been going on? But these men have not walked in the light with me. At best, they have walked in the shadows. I've had to build a case using 600 pages of documentation and telling you of my imminent appeal to all the SGM elders before getting any substantial response. Listen, I am not a Board member. I am not paid by SGM. This should not be my job. My goodness, I've even financed the whole project myself. And now, Joshua is presenting me as the one and only witness against you. He said, "The challenge I face is that all of this documentation [RRF&D, AFA, CR, TUS] is coming from just one witness (you)." Holy Hanna! We can't find a second or third witness anywhere! Well drop all charges against C.J. immediately! We are transgressing God's Word! We are forbidden to proceed. Stop!!! The Scripture says, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses" (1 Tim 5:19)

May I make a request? Can I ask a favor? Would you do me a service? Shoot that dam witness and put him out of his misery! I mean, "Dear Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Is this the strategy the Board is taking with the evaluators? It appears so and also with the CLC elders last week. From Joshua's report to me, it does not appear you were rebuked in keeping with 1 Tim 5:20. They only asked "hard" and "serious" questions. And recommend your resignation, God forbid, that appears to be is the job of the independent evaluators. I know all of this is new for some of the elders, but not for many of them.

So now I am the only witness against you. Well, that brings back a lot of bad memories. But it is nothing new. Since Dave bailed, no one has stood with me. No one has listened to me. No one has supported me. I suspect there will be many secret (oops, I'm sorry, I mean confidential) conversations with the mediators where all of you bludgeon me again. This time can you use butter knives instead of butcher knives? When has this not been the case? Never. And when has Bob confronted your abuse of authority? When has Steve reproved your deceit? When has Jeff rebuked your extraordinary hypocrisy? All of these things have been left to me and I have paid a big price.

Back to the original subject. After all this I am supposed to trust Dave, Joshua and Jeff to determine if you are qualified. I don't trust them. They have been partial and biased since August 2004. In addition, I've addressed serious abuses by Dave, Bob, Steve, Kenneth and Gene. At no point in time, have any of these abuses been acknowledged, let alone addressed. No one has ever returned to me. Not so much as an "I'm sorry." On countless matters, these men should have beat down my door by now to ask forgiveness. But not a word. And please don't use the excuse of waiting for a final report from the "independent panel of evaluators."

I don't trust you. I can't trust you (as much as I'd like to). And I trust Dave the least. He has become a master manipulator. I'll make that case clearer in additional writings. But for now just one example, he covered up Gene's evil actions and kept it from the leaders and the church. I asked him not to do this but he continued without ever responding. Let me add he did not act alone. He did it with the full knowledge and approval of you, Joshua, Jeff and Pat. This documented in "The Untold Story" (pp. 27-31). But I imagine after each of you have talked the mediators, the record will be "set straight" without me knowing what bogus or deceitful arguments are put forth. Well, given the events of last week, I have decided not to participate in the independent review. The process has been compromised already. My trust in the Board has vanished. So far as I know, my conditions for transparency and accountability have been utterly disregarded by Joshua, Dave and Jeff.

I still have not come to the end. "Am I qualified to lead SGM? That is for others to determine, not me." Given the above, it should not be for Joshua, Jeff and Dave to determine though that is their rightful role and responsibility but they have failed. And it should not be for independent evaluators to determine. The only way trust will be restore in SGM is for the Board to governing itself with integrity. I don't think that is possible unless men are replaced.

The Board may not require your resignation but that does not in any way absolve you. The half you got wrong, that is untrue, is your responsibility to weigh yourself in the sight of God, in light of Scripture, and in accordance with your conscience. If you believe you are above reproach, you should say so and defend yourself. That is encouraged in Scripture though condemned in SGM. Of course, your assessment may be wrong or their decision unjust. You may still be fired but at least you have been honest.

And if you believe you are not above reproached, then you should resign. Don't passively wait to be told what to do. That does not please God. Assess

yourself. Do you qualify? Should you continue as President of SGM? What do you say? Do you really need more evidence before making a decision?

Unfortunately, the churches of SGM will have to determine if you qualify.

I look forward to the completed report of the evaluators. I will write an endorsement, or repudiation, or a combination of the two, and post it on the internet. As I told Joshua. I have much more to say about the events of this week.

Sincerely,
Brent