

While we have touched on this in other places, we thought it would be good to lay out some of the reasons why we believe it is biblical to make our stories and our call for repentance public at this time.

We should start by saying that many individuals have repeatedly addressed these issues with BF and many other leaders in person and [in writing](#) on multiple occasions.

Some people are reluctant to discuss these issues because they believe the way we are going about it is a violation of Matthew 18, and therefore it fundamentally invalidates or discredits what we are saying. This stems from a misunderstanding of the primary application of Matthew 18 as well as an oversimplification of this situation. Unfortunately, this is a passage and a tactic that leadership at Grace Church has often used to its advantage.

The verses in question are listed below:

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)

It's quite clear that this passage is talking about *personal offenses* that one believer commits against another. While this passage provides principles that can apply to various types of biblical conflict resolution, it is not specifically telling us how we should address the sins of pastors/elders or other spiritual leaders, nor is it telling us how to address sins that have been committed publicly instead of privately. It is also not giving us any specific commands related to how we are to address institutional sin that has caused great harm to many people scattered around the country and to the community it resides in.

As long as we understand that this passage is not giving direct commands regarding pastors/elders or institutional sin and the people who lead those institutions, we can now look at the principles it gives and attempt to apply them to the current situation.

Principle #1: Begin as personally and privately as possible.

If you read the [emails to leadership](#) you can see that this had been done numerous times over the years. And these emails are only a small sampling of what has been communicated in writing to say nothing of what has been expressed verbally.

Principle #2: Involve other believers who either have first hand knowledge of the facts, or who can serve to confirm the validity of one side or the other.

In his commentary on this passage, John Gill describes the “one or two others” as:

Members of the church, and perhaps of weight, reputation, and character, who either know some thing of the matter, and so can confirm, by their testimony, what has been alleged, in order to bring the person to conviction and acknowledgment; or if they do not, and which seems rather to be the sense, they may, by hearing what is said on both sides, judge where the truth lies, and join with the offended person in the admonition, that it may fall with the greater weight, and become more effectual:

However you understand it, both methods have already been attempted in this situation, as BF and the leaders were not only confronted by multiple individuals but by couples and even groups of people in certain situations. You can see this on the [email page](#) as well. And almost every time they deliberately sought to prevent that information from spreading to others within the congregation. Even now, many in the congregation will be opposed to reading what's posted on this site because they have been taught that entertaining accusations against a leader is one of the most dangerous sins you can commit. They have been convinced that it will harm their own souls and they have learned that they will face all sorts of consequences if their leader finds out they are listening to or taking any of those concerns seriously.

Principle #3: Take it to the church.

This would appear to be a clearly defined group of people who had the authority to make a final judgment and impose the consequences of that decision. This would also seem to be confirmed by another passage referring to church discipline in 2 Corinthians 2:6 as well.

The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. (2 Corinthians 2:6)

However, in Grace Church, no such clearly defined group of people with that type of authority existed at the time many of these things were being addressed. It appears that it has only been since 3/14/18 that they have tried to [define their membership](#) in a slightly different fashion. However, if that membership does not have the authority to make any judgments or impose any consequences, and if there's no good way to get them the information because the same leadership who has kept it from them in the past controls all the channels of distribution at the present, and if the leadership has a history of bullying those who disagree with them or are sympathetic to them, then the situation gets a bit more complicated.

And once again, we're not just talking about one Christian stealing money from another Christian. We are talking about longstanding patterns of personal sin in *leaders'* lives and the unhealthy church structures those leaders are responsible for. In addition, they are the only ones with the authority to change those structures. Matthew 18 does not apply to this situation quite as simply or directly as most Grace Church leaders would like you to think.

Instead there are a couple of other passages that apply much more specifically. The first one is from 1st Timothy.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. (1 Timothy 5:19-21)

Here's the sad reality of how these passages are so often twisted to the leadership's benefit. First, you are expected to address any criticism of the leader or the organization directly with the leader themselves. But if the leader disagreed with you and you tried to get a couple witnesses like the Bible teaches, you were often accused of pride, rebelliousness, stubbornness, divisiveness, and gossip. And even if you could get those witnesses together there was never a clear way to bring it before the church, whoever that might be.

But here we see that the elders, which is just another word for pastors, are supposed to be reproved publicly, "before everyone."

Now some would like to limit that to just that particular local church, but there's good reason to believe that the audience is understood to extend beyond that when necessary as well. We see this demonstrated in Galatians 2 when the apostle Paul publicly rebukes another leader, the apostle Peter, and then writes about it and sends the information to other believers scattered all over that part of the world ([Galatians 1:1](#)). And then God preserves it for all history. Talk about a public rebuke!

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (Galatians 2:11-14)

Principle #4: The more public the figure, and the more public the sin, the more public the rebuke and repentance need to be.

And remember, these were the *personal sins* of an elder that were being rebuked publicly. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that it is wrong to speak out against the harm that is being caused by sinful structures within a particular public organization. If you can speak out publicly to address the personal sins of elders/pastors, then you can certainly speak out publicly to address the institutional sins those leaders are responsible for. And if those leaders have structured the organization in such a fashion that it's practically impossible to separate their personal sins from their institutional sins, leading to the unavoidable exposure of both, then that's certainly not the fault of those they have harmed.

There's a great article on Christianity Today's website that makes many good points along these lines and we would encourage you to read it. It's called, [When Pastors Fall: Why Full and Public Repentance Matters](#) by Ed Stetzer

We would also encourage you to read the article on [Institutional Sin](#) by Diane Langberg PH.D. which we have posted to the site.

In addition, it should be noted that this effort to expose what is being done at Grace Church is full of many separate individuals who must decide for themselves what they believe is the best way to move forward. Many stayed behind the scenes for years in an attempt to minimize as much damage to the reputation of the church and its leaders as possible. However, as the emails and other [stories both here](#) and on [Reddit](#) indicate, it seems that instead of things getting better, as the leadership likes to claim, it's actually getting worse. And when people finally started coming forward in order to protect their family and friends as well as others, many of us had to decide whether it was more honoring to God to keep working in the background, or to stand with them in the public arena. I'm proud to say that many are standing with them, and we expect more to do so in the days to come.

"Take it to the church" Principle #5: The church is bigger than just one local congregation.

Another reason for going public is that we believe this is no longer just the problem of one local church, but the entire Christian community in Mt. Pleasant. We believe they need to know what has been and is currently happening in this church.

- They need to know because they probably have Christians in their midst who were former Grace Church members and who are still dealing with the wounds they received during their time there. We hope other church leaders will listen to, support, and care for these people.

- They need to know so they can inform and protect others in the community who may be considering this place as a church home.
- Not only has the leadership of Grace Church hurt many individuals, but it has hurt the greater testimony of Christ in many ways. And while we don't presume to know exactly how each church should respond, we believe there is a need for the Christian community in Mt. Pleasant to recognize the seriousness of these issues and take a public stance against them so that everyone will know that this is unacceptable Christian behavior which is not an accurate reflection of the character of Christ or the vast majority of the churches in Mt. Pleasant.
- Since the leaders of Grace Church seem to have no other human authority to hold them accountable, we believe this is an issue which the broader church in Mt. Pleasant needs to know about and address as they see fit.

Principle #6: Love

And lastly, we are going public because while so many of us love the people of Grace Church, and we want to minimize their pain as much as possible, we also love the rest of the community, and all those families who are sending their children off to college at CMU without realizing the dangers of this organization and its history of religious malpractice.

Regardless of whether you think going public like this is the best or most biblical way to go about this, we would ask you to consider something.

Think of a young high school student you love. Maybe it's a family member, or a friend or yours. They've just finished up high school, or their time at a community college and they are getting ready to move to Mt. Pleasant in order experience what should be some of the best years of their lives. And maybe that person you love is a Christian, or maybe they're not yet, but they're going to become interested in learning more about Christianity and they are considering attending or getting involved in a church. Picture that person you love. Now imagine them sitting down several years later to write a [story](#) like so many of the ones you'll find on this website. And they end it by saying, "I wish someone had warned me. I wish I had known about this history before I decided to get involved."

Are you going to be okay with that? We are not.

There's a principle of interpreting Scripture which is referred to as the "analogy of faith" and it says that you must interpret the unclear passages by those that are clearer. And we'll be the first to admit, this has been a complicated situation.

But there's one verse which has helped make things a lot clearer, and it's in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus says the following:

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

That's all we're trying to do here, and we hope you'll do the same. God bless, and please pray for us and all those involved.