

REMOVAL FROM LEADERSHIP AND PROCESS OF RESTORATION

REMOVAL FROM LEADERSHIP

God takes sin seriously and so must the church. Scripture calls us as the body of Christ to judge ourselves. "When another person is overtaken in a fault or failure, you who are spiritual people will see to it that you graciously set about the extended task of seeing that person mended and returned to full fitness; doing it in a way that clearly indicates you do not hold yourself as superior to them for their having fallen and all the while remembering your own vulnerability."³ The leader who submits to temptation and unrepentantly continues compromises their office. They sin against the Body they serve. The emotional impact and spiritual injury to their relationships is severe.

A fallen leader requires time for healing, the restoration of relationships and the reestablishing of trustworthiness. A leader's desire for a quick return to service should be discouraged because it may indicate a shallow repentance. Moreover, the fallen person's injury may be deep. Efforts to reinstate a fallen person back into service too quickly may indicate an immature perspective on the nature and requirements of spiritual leadership. A spirit of submission should be at the foundation of all true spiritual authority.

IMPLEMENTATION

When the immediate ministry supervisor observes or receives information that indicates a leader under their supervision has breached the leadership or moral/ethical standards, the following steps should be taken as needed:

1. It is the responsibility of that supervisor to meet with the leader and discuss the matter.

The Program Staff Team (PST) member who has overall responsibility for the program

³ Taken from "Restoring Fallen Leaders" by Jack Hayford. His comments on Gal. 6:1.

should be advised before the meeting takes place and may or may not attend depending on the circumstances.

2. The PST member brings the matter before PST. That group will determine the necessity for any part of the process to be public.
3. If the leader resists stepping down from leadership, their appeal process is first through PST and then to Session.
4. In the case of an Elder who has breached the standards, the Book of Order takes precedence. Likewise, if a congregational member who is not in leadership requires church discipline, the Book of Order describes the process.

RESTORATION TO LEADERSHIP

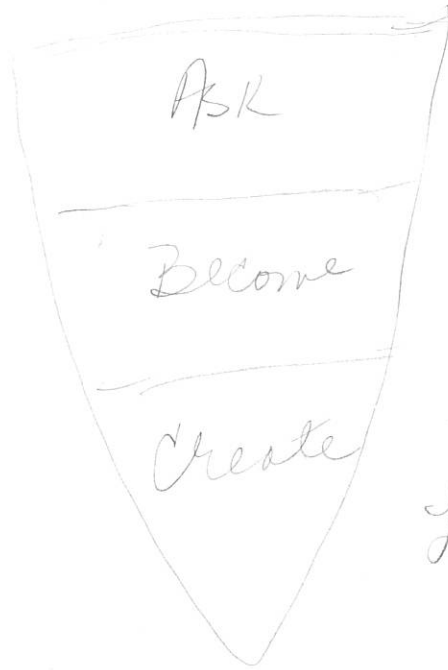
We are all sinners and in need of the ongoing process that involves the daily confession of sins and the receiving anew of the cleansing flow of the Holy Spirit. Among the most precious gifts the church has to offer is restorative grace. This grace is found in a community where one can confess failures, find forgiveness and counsel so that there will not be a repetition of early choices. The final goal is to experience usefulness in serving God again. In talking about restoration we begin with the assumption that the fallen person has acknowledged actions and attitudes (confession and repentance) that have led to offenses grievous to the Christian community. The repentant person cannot restore themselves; they must be restored by others.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Restoration first requires confession by the fallen leader. This is a confession of guilt and responsibility. It avoids all excuses and rationalizations. It makes no attempt to blame others or to shirk responsibility for what has happened.
2. A second aspect of the restoration or rebuilding process takes place when the fallen person and a restoration team take time to go into the history of the events that led to misbehavior. This is an important process, but does not require a large number of

people. The participants should be mature enough to sit with someone who has experienced trouble and wants to bring the truth to the surface. Counseling at this point can be very helpful.

3. Third, restoration requires discipline. The fallen person cannot take this into their own hands. Along the way some painful steps must be taken to regain the confidence of others and to experience healing. The members of the restorative team should determine how much time to allow. Discipline usually means restrictions: being relieved of certain responsibilities, being asked to account to others on personal spiritual activities, and being required to submit to pastoral oversight or counseling. In some cases, restoration may even require the act of restitution and reconciliation of relationships.
4. A fourth aspect of restoration involves comfort. The committee working with the individual desiring restoration needs to provide needed comfort and care. A relationship that is prayerful, encouraging and Christ-like needs to be established and maintained.
5. A fifth aspect of restoration is advocacy. The process of rebuilding always has a stated objective which is healing and return to service. Those involved in the rebuilding actually take on the responsibility to speak for the fallen person and to represent to others possibilities for restoring the fallen person.
6. Finally, restoration requires an official declaration when it is accomplished. This may or may not be a public act depending on the circumstances.



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