



Dear Prayer Partner,

As a monthly financial contributor to (or a board member of) the Sharing Org I consider you to be one of our partners in this ministry. By your participation you are communicating that you have a deep commitment to taking the Gospel of our Lord to the residents of care facilities and that you are committed to the mission of providing weekly worship services for those who cannot get out of their homes to attend a local church. For this reason, in addition to your monthly prayer letter, I will be including additional details about the ministry in order to give you a fuller view of how the Sharing Org touches the lives of the people that we serve. In doing so I hope that you will gain a deeper understanding of how you are a part of a powerful and meaningful ministry that loves people who are often overlooked in our society.

I remember a time when my pastor tripped as he was walking up the steps to the podium where he was going to preach the morning's sermon. I'm not talking about a simple misstep here, I'm talking a *full-fledged-fall-on-your-face* sort of *catch-yourself-on-your-chest-and-know-that-all-fifty-five-people-saw-you-do-it* type of fall. I was mortified for him. What would he do? I think that I would have run out of the place crying, but he did not. So I wondered, what would he say? The moments that passed between the time that he stopped falling and the time that he got up to the podium seemed (*to me*) like an eternity, and it all happened in slow motion. When he got to the podium he nonchalantly brushed himself off and laughed as he said, "Well, they never taught me what to do about that in seminary." I've never forgotten his coolness nor his ability to make the best of a bad situation.

Well, you know what my professors never taught me to handle in my Bible training? They never told me how to handle mentally ill congregates who are romantically (*and I suspect sexually*) involved! Ughh! I am emotionally torn between Christian morality and the reality that some of my residents can no better respond to a message of chastity than my daughter can respond to the "*quit climbing!*" message that I continually preach at her. I once had a female resident approach me and accuse a male resident of forcing himself upon her during the night. I was flabbergasted, and I alerted the proper channels about the accusation, but I was at a terrible loss of how to handle the situation as minister to them both. So I did what any coward would do – I waited to see what would come it.

I struggle with the reality that many of the people that I serve are fully functional human beings with the same sexual desires as anyone else but who are basically adolescents (*or even children*) in their mindset. Should I focus my messages

on chastity, or should I continue to preach the gospel of grace in the hope that the Holy Spirit will get through to them? Or maybe I should I preach about sex only within marriage when I know full well that marriage is not a real option for most of them? I know what my Christian Ethics professor would say if I were to pose these questions to him. He would just smile at me with the eyes of a man who was happy that he was not in my situation and tell me that he would pray for me. *Why not? That's how I would respond!*

I struggle with questions like these and I have not yet found a solution that sits well with my soul. Many of my friends are ministers and they have shared with me some of the tough situations that they have found themselves in throughout their years of ministering to people. A "Matthew 18 solution" to sexual immorality among unrepentant church members is simply to force them to leave the church. I, however, cannot ask people to leave their homes when it is I who is coming to them each week. I cannot "disfellowship" my congregates nor do I think it is wise to use such measures on the mentally ill or challenged.

When I consider the ministry that I am doing, I often remember my pastor who fell on his face while walking up to the podium. I too often feel like I have fallen on my face and things are moving in slow motion as I try to regain my composure. However, unlike my pastor, I lack the nonchalance about the situations that I often find myself in during the course of a week. While I love my ministry and the people that I serve, I just wish my college would have had a course on how to make the best out of these bad situations.

~John