

Restoring Wounded Ministers

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INTRODUCTION

It has been said, "THE BODY OF CHRIST IS THE ONLY INSTITUTION THAT KILLS ITS WOUNDED." I believe that this is changing however. I believe the Heavenly Father has issued orders from the oval office of the universe: "Stop killing your wounded. Gather the scattered! Hospitalize the wounded. Recover your M.I.A.'s. Rescue your P.O.W.'s. Re-enlist your retirees. Heal your A.W.O.L.'s. Decorate your wounded leaders with purple hearts and give them another chance." Praise God.

The Lord has been gracious to allow me to directly participate in the restoration of two wounded ministers. In February of 1981, as my wife-to-be told me about a fallen man of God, a mighty evangelist for whom she used to be a pianist, the Holy Spirit spoke to me very clearly. He said, "I am assigning you the task of restoring him to Me." Immediately I tried to locate this runaway minister. He was nowhere to be found. I figured I misheard the voice of God. Seven years later, the Spirit spoke to me while I was studying: "Go to such'n'such place now." When I got to the place the Lord spoke of, there sitting before me was the man of God the Lord spoke to me about seven years before. Through a total of about 30 hours of prayer counseling, repentance, deliverance, inner healing, and physical healing, the man of God came back into vital relationship with the Lord. In between counseling sessions, that broken man spent hours on his knees and in the Word. Today, he is fully restored man of God. Here I will outline several guidelines I learned from the Lord about how to restore wounded or fallen preachers.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Galatians 6:1-2 KJV - Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

God flows through delegated authority. The highest authority in the kingdom is the office of apostle, then prophet, then evangelist, pastor, teacher and so on down, staff elders, (assistant pastors), deacons, class teachers, mature saints, and finally new converts. See I Cor 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11,12. God's family has lines and limitations of authority similar to God's order for the domestic family: husbands, wives, then children.

A deacon would find it difficult to restore a wounded pastor because of a conflict of authority. A deacon can only relate to a pastor as a pastor and not as a wounded brother. A man of God whose mantles are pastor and teacher would find it hard to restore a fallen evangelist because the office of evangelist is a higher authority. An apostle, prophet, or possible another evangelist could restore him, however, because submission is natural in these cases.

The "restoree" must be able to sense the kingdom authority as well as the compassion that is invested in his "restorer". Can you see this principle? This is not meant to be dogmatic doctrine, but merely a principle to understand.

TIME IN COUNSELING

The restorer must invest hours of time and love into the restoree's life.

ELIJAH - ELISHA PRINCIPLE

The restoring minister should open his home to the restoree (and family if feasible). The previously backslidden preacher must be put in a spiritually and socially sterile environment for a season until he can recover the Christ-lifestyle. The restoree must apprentice again under spiritual authority. The restorer's local church congregation needs to be prepared and participate in surrounding the restoree with love, acceptance, and forgiveness. The local church must offer the restoree four things: ATMOSPHERE, PROTECTION, EXPRESSION (opportunities to preach again), and perhaps even PAY while he is being restored.

TIME ESTABLISHED GOALS

The restoree needs to have tangible goals to work towards. Thus the restoring minister should plan a period of restoration with landmarks of recognition, responsibility, and confirmation. Most restoration will take from between six months to two years, depending on the depth of rebellion and the restoree's new prayer life and Word time. Goals such as a time for interim licensing to preach, certain responsibilities or positions in the church, pay increases, eventual ordination, etc., will greatly enhance progress. Obviously, there must also come a time of release as God may lead.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The restoree must develop a sense of accountability to his restorer. The restorer must not be afraid to monitor progress and offer loving correction. (See Hebrews 13:7, 17). As the restoree practices submission, his perception of accountability to God is restored, thus re-qualifying him to lead again.

THE WORD AND PRAYER

Acts 6:4 "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." Regardless of the circumstances provoking the rebellion of the backslidden minister, **THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT HE LOST HIS LOVE FOR THE BIBLE AND PRAYER**, or else he never established a daily disciplined Word and prayer life to begin with. Public Ministry must be an overflow of one's Private Prayer Life and Word Time. **THESE TWO THINGS MUST BECOME A WAY OF LIFE FOR THE MINISTER**. I recommend Dr. Larry Lea's video tapes and manual on "COULD YOU NOT TARRY ONE HOUR?" as a starting point. The restorer must monitor and ensure the progress of the restoree in these two areas. Theory is not enough. Lifestyle is essential.

CONCLUSION

I trust these nuggets of truth and experience will encourage you to reach out to the wounded. I also pray that there will be a great exodus of wounded leaders out of their "Egypt" back into their lands of promise.