

GRACE
GODLY RESPONSE TO ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

Case Study
Battlecreek Christian Church

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Case Study

- **Preliminary issues to consider**
 - Pastor has only been at Battlecreek for two years.
 - Struggling Church
 - Pastor does not have the full support of the church leadership.
 - Watts has been supportive of Pastor.
 - Pastor considers Watts a "close personal friend".

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Case Study

- **Relevancy of these facts?**
 - A. Benjamin Long**
 - Family has only been members for 1 year.
 - History of behavioral problems.
 - Wishes previous youth pastor would return.
 - Mr. Long has indicated full support for Benjamin.
 - Any others?

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Case Study

- Relevancy of these facts?
 - B. Tom Watts**
 - Member of Battlecreek for 25 years
 - Elder
 - Close personal friend of Pastor.
 - Impeccable reputation – community & church
 - Married for 30 years
 - Youth volunteer for past 7 months.
 - Alleged prior molestation incident.
 - Any others?

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Case Study

- Considerations For Church Leadership
 1. Get on your knees and pray without ceasing!
 2. Pastor must immediately report abuse to law enforcement.

*Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13: 1-2*

 - A crime has clearly been disclosed
 - Most states have mandatory reporting requirements if Mr. Long refuses or procrastinates in reporting
 - Statute of limitations issues

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3. Who attends emergency leadership meeting?
 - This depends upon the church leadership structure?
 - Mr. Watts must not attend
4. Issues to be addressed at emergency meeting
 - What is the role of the Church in this situation?
 - Church is **not** a prosecutor **nor** a public defender
 - Implement immediate measures to protect the congregation
 - Determine when, how, and who will confront Watts with these allegations – potential church discipline.
 - Assign leaders to act as liaisons between the parties and the church leadership.
 - Determine how the church can serve both parties and the congregation during this crisis.
 - Consider obtaining outside assistance.

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5. How can the Church best serve Benjamin Long and his family during this crisis?

- Be good listeners of the Long family.
- Assign a leader to be in constant and open communication with the Long family and to shepherd them through **prayer** and **spiritual guidance**.
- Assist the family in locating and paying for a qualified Christian counselor.
- Develop a support network within the church especially during the criminal prosecution process.
 - Those within the support network must be exhorted to refrain from "taking sides" but to simply provide encouragement to a family during a very difficult season.
- Benjamin Long & family must feel comfortable and safe on the church premises. This may require the imposition of strict parameters for Tom Watts when attending corporate worship or any other event.

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Case Study

6. How can the Church best serve Tom Watts and his family during this crisis?

- Immediately emphasize that the church will not "take sides"
- Assign a leader to be in constant and open communication with the Watts family and to shepherd them through **prayer** and **spiritual guidance**.
- Church leadership will have to eventually confront Mr. Watts about the allegations... timing is critical. Seek counsel.
- Encourage the family to find qualified a Christian counselor and be willing to pay for such counseling.
- Develop a neutral support network within the church especially during the criminal prosecution process. It may be necessary to create a specific support network of church ladies for Mrs. Watts.
- Exhort Mr. Watts to submit to church leadership and to serve Benjamin Long by putting his needs first.
 - Mr. Watts' response to this exhortation will most likely expose the true condition of his heart.

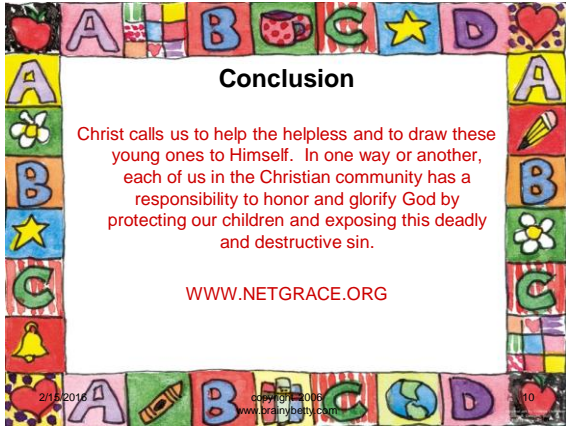
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7. How can the Church best serve its congregation during this crisis?

- Constantly be seeking God's guidance as to how He can be glorified and His people drawn closer to Himself during this time of calamity.
- Appoint a pastor/staff as the liaison between the leadership and the congregation.
- Communicate only what is **necessary**.
- Make sure the congregation knows that the leadership has taken immediate measures to insure the safety of their children.
- **Discourage any and all rumors** – all questions must be directed to the liaison!
- Be prepared to direct parents of youth supervised by Mr. Watts to law enforcement should they have any concerns about their own child.
- Be prepared the secondary effects of such a crisis!
 - I.e. Survivors of past abuse
- This crisis creates an opportunity for **testimony and service!**

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Conclusion

Christ calls us to help the helpless and to draw these young ones to Himself. In one way or another, each of us in the Christian community has a responsibility to honor and glorify God by protecting our children and exposing this deadly and destructive sin.

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