

READ TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELDERS JAN 11, 2019

From Pastor James:

In the absence of communication it is easy for those estranged to imagine the worst version of the person they were once close with as the entirety of that person. This reality makes reconciliation very difficult because time often leads both parties to imagine the other differently than what God has accomplished since their separation. I am not at all resistant to messages from friend or foe about patterns of sin in my character or flaws in my leadership and want to offer clarity here about those two matters.

Patterns of Sin in My Character

There is no way to explain the damage caused to myself and my family by the online and social media bullying that has been nearly unceasing for more than 6 years. It would be easier to bear, if I felt it entirely untrue, but I know there are facts at the foundation of it all, and missteps in responding that have increased the evidence of my many flaws. My three main flaws as a Christian pastor are 1) anger 2) holding on to hurt 3) fear

My Struggle With Anger:

I do not struggle to confess anger as the besetting sin of my life and have done so frequently. It is that a disqualifier of my service to Christ, I know some say yes, and I only wish that my progress in this area, by God's grace, was known to them and not marred by a couple of incidents about which I feel great shame. I have often taught or really testified that while growth in Christ eliminates some parts of our flesh, for me at least my growth in the sin of anger has grown only by length of time between failure and quickness to confess and make amends.

To any and all currently estranged from me and or Harvest Bible Chapel, I am very sorry for my role in your leaving, and any action taken or anger toward you that involved me personally, and I believe many of you know I would love an opportunity to hear you fully and to ask your forgiveness face to face in private. It is my fault alone that you may believe I am angry with you. As best I know my heart, I am actually not angry with you at all. Even as I sit looking at a list of people I looked at as I wrote the above apology, I do not feel any anger, only grief for the impact you felt personally and shame for my role in that failure toward you. For clarity, I am not angry with Julie Roys, or Ryan Mahoney or Scott Bryant. I am not angry with Dave Corning or David Jones or Brian White or Matt Stowell. I am not angry with any of the other people whose names have been publicized when they prefer to remain anonymous. I have felt wounded by certain actions some have taken but try to excuse them as reactive to my own. I do not blame you, I do love you as my brother or sister in Christ. While I struggle with the injustice of certain things or the conclusions drawn, I do not feel anyone has responsibility in this public argument, that exceeds my responsibility for the bad decisions I made or led others to make. I take responsibility for the failure in relationships and the subsequent fallout that dishonors Christ.

My Struggle With Unresolved Hurt

A second significant flaw in my ministry, is the one referenced by the 8 former Elders in their now published letter. I have not successfully resolved the hurt I have felt in ministry in a timely way. Instead I have allowed it to play into current relationships causing further injury to others. I, alone am to blame for that. I have tried to live in forgiveness I have released others again and again from my perceptions of their actions, but the hurt I have felt and the recurring pattern of mistrusting others or taking things too personally is not entirely broken, even yet. Those who

are current with me say they observe obvious “growth in grace,” but I am entirely unsure how to move beyond past failures with those outside our church I have wronged. I find it much easier to let my own hurt when I am able to meet mutually and resolve what has caused separation. I understand that is not easy for some and I don’t blame anyone else for what I have not yet been able to resolve with them. I know there is a smaller group that believes they will feel great relief and closure if they can achieve my resignation or firing and that they have given enough evidence to warrant that decision. I am not stubbornly holding onto my role as Senior pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel because I don’t see my flaws or sin. I have offered my resignation to the Executive Committee of the Elders many times even hoping they would accept it. I remain in my position not because it offers something I feel I must retain, but for 3 reasons: 1) I have not wanted to yield to the accusations that are false thereby appearing to affirm them, 2) We love the people of Harvest Bible Chapel who have given us much grace and remain committed to growing together in love. 3) The size of the churches mortgage in 2007, is almost entirely my fault and I feel responsible to remain, and ensure that it is paid off completely.

My Struggle with Fear.

It is not my place in this letter of disclosure to instruct, so I will only say, the bible teaches frequently that the fear of man and fear of the future are sin. I have always struggled with the fear of men. This was my earliest confession at Harvest, and was exposed through my fearful avoidance of conflict with certain founders, which left them in the end disillusioned with me. I feared the impact of their unbiblical requests, and at the same time I feared the impact of refusing them. In the end they left and the impact was much worse for my efforts to contain instead of speaking the truth plainly and living with the results. My battle with fear may not be as apparent to others, but those closest see how I have exhausted my flesh at times, attempting to keep people happy, keep conflict from occurring, keep employees from failing, keep people from leaving, keep the budget working, keep the mortgage falling, keep the church plants happy, until honestly my head is spinning so fast I just can’t make it stop. These would be occasions for the sins mentioned above and the flaws I will speak of below. Again, a better man, a more faithful prayer life, and most of all a willingness to do less to in order to live more faithfully and joyfully would have yielded a better result for all. Anyone thinking I see myself as a success story, or as a perfect example, simply does not know me. We are proud of our church and family and their devotion to Christ, but see so much of it as in spite of us, certainly not because of us.

The Power of Confession:

To some it would seem obvious, “an Elder can’t be angry, James is disqualified, let’s move on.” Or, “an Elder can’t struggle with fear and wounds from feelings of injustice, he should accept the verdict of his own failures and get out.” That refuge is attractive to me and offers far less shame, than what I currently endure, “I tried, I failed, I’m disqualified, I’m free.” The reason I don’t jump to that is because Harvest has always tried to be about authenticity and the true growth in Christ called sanctification. I have always believed that the more punishing or judging/ rejecting version of Christianity, where we part ways with one another over and over, actually discounts grace and the gospel which saves *and* transforms. Some will read this and believe I have chosen wrongly, and others will remember a time they believed in this too, and feel unfairly excluded from the mission. I am very sorry for the loss you feel and especially for

those who not felt there was a way to resolve their hurt as I know that pain very personally. I am truly sorry.

Flaws in My Leadership

I do not consider myself a great leader or at times even an effective one. I have a gift to preach God's word and while I have great joy in that it has brought many complications to my life that are not a source of joy. I wish more than anything else we had remained a one campus church in Rolling Meadows and been content to accept the size of our church and all the limiters that came with that. The addition of broadcast ministry, and multiple campuses and a school, camp etc. have all served to cause me great strain and struggle to be emotionally balanced. By misstep I mean errors in judgment. It was an error to go so quickly to multiple campuses. It was an error to attempt four kinds of construction at once in 2005. It was an error to allow the church to get into so much debt. It was an error to move so quickly on the Elder reorganization and to withdraw from some who made it difficult. I could go on with my night visions of many regrets, but to get to the present. It was an error to handle the blockages to HBF regionalization personally. It was an error to resign due to hurt and so suddenly from HBF. It was an error to invite those upset about the separation to attempt objectivity about HBF finances and no doubt they regret stepping in. It was expect a detailed reckoning of HBF dissolution which blocked a broader healing conversations which prevented many men that still love one another from moving further apart. **It was an error to file the law suit against the bloggers as we did.** It was an error to follow advice and include the bloggers wives. It was an error to follow advice and heap so many items in the complaint when at root we object to a few main repeatedly asserted errors. It was an error not to see that the trial discovery would cause great pain to others wanting only to remain uninvolved. While it is true that we withdrew the law suit to protect friends from our church plants and others we long to reconcile with it exposed us to the accusation that we are hiding something internally which we are not. There are certainly matters internal to Harvest that are too private to expose but there is nothing that is not seeable to objective parties or available to be verified in defeating what is not true.

From the Elders

We appreciate the vulnerability and humility we have come to appreciate about Pastor James being made available here to a much broader audience. He has tendered his resignation and we have chosen not to act upon it at this time. Instead we are proposing the following for Harvest Bible Chapel and those outside who are interested:

- 1) Pastor James has recused himself from the Executive Committee of the Elders through the process we now detail
- 2) We have retained Ken Sande, known for his life time of work in local church reconciliations and now with 360degree ministry. Under his direction a team of anonymous but experienced conciliation experts are going to do an extensive review of all accusations against Harvest Bible Chapel and Pastor James. Where they need financial or governance experts they will retain them. Their names will not be known to the public because we cannot subject them to the online and social media assault

poured out on anyone that supports our efforts to bring reconciliation and resolution. We invite the former 8 Elders and the GCC, to each appoint 1 representative who will work with the objective team in preparing a confidential report which will be shared first with the EC, then with the entire Elder board.

- 3) A summary of that report will be shared with the congregation recommendations including, accusations shown to be true or false, internal changes of staff and practice needed, internal changes already in place and their functionality, and a plan for resolution and where possible reconciliation with former Elders and staff now outside our church who desire closure and healing.

We are asking the Group to Focus on the Following

- Has there been any wrong doing at Harvest or any of its ministries including the former HBF in the area of spending or compensation?
- Has the new board and by laws increased the amount of shared authority in the church since 2010 and are things healthier today?
- How is Pastor James viewed among the current staff and is there any suppressed dissonance about his character or a fear or making their view known?
- How was the decision about the law suit made, funded, and what is the reason it was dropped?
- Has Pastor James made efforts at reconciliation with others, and have they been adequate and current or only crisis motivated?
- Is there a big secret of some kind that Harvest leaders fear becoming public?
- Is the blame for HBF separation and offense entirely upon Pastor James or were there others that contributed? (no disclosure of others actions will be forthcoming)
- Is Pastor James disqualified from ministry due to things he has done in recent years?
- ETC>