

From: James MacDonald

Date: July 3, 2019 at 10:00 AM

To: David Sciachter, Paul Cornwell, Karl Jackson

Brothers:

David Schlacter is a good man and his efforts sincere but please consider releasing him to less complex peacemaking matters elsewhere - i believe he will be relieved.

My Guidance:

I am under Chris Clark, Mike Lankford, and Jim Dvoratchek - all men of Elder status in that they have served or been invited to serve in the positions you now hold. Per the bylaws - a man does not become an Elder when he joins the board nor does he cease to be one when he leaves the board in good standing.

My Sin:

In addition to my sin and failing which i fully own and repent of.

My sin of leading the church out of hurt and foolishly leading to file the lawsuit which had such devastating consequences - which prompted me to resign and desire to leave after confessing same to entire congregation which i offered to do and am still willing. Beyond my ultimate failure to live beyond the hurt i experienced and find effective partners to bear the load with me and my sinful idolatry of paying down the debt - i am deeply grieved to learn of those who felt hurt by my management of them and would yet welcome an opportunity to confess this publicly or seek their forgiveness in private or both as you men believe would be best for the church. There is much more on the subject of my failings i would gladly confess in person and have so long sought that opportunity without response that at times i have despaired.

Understandable Hesitance

Your apparent reluctance to seek out significant responsibility elsewhere in this relational disaster, is understandable given the consequences if that turns out to be true. But time only accumulates consequence to the church you are called to protect, thus my strenuous and at times too shrill, (please forgive me), efforts to meet as brothers in Christ and consider the best interest of Harvest and all concerned.

Why Arbitrate:

There is zero reason to waste God's money on arbitration, but genuine oversight in my view needs to attempt understanding what is concealed versus your May 1 debut of beating the drum 🥁 handed you and widening the gap of offense significantly. The focus needs to become doing what is right and trusting God with the outcomes rather than defending the indefensible - a foundational principle in a Vertical Church.

Thank You for Taking a Tough Task

Thank you for undertaking such a difficult task for the Lord and for Harvest - i am very aware that unlike me, you did nothing to contribute to the mess you inherited. But please consider more carwfully who you are listening to...

Even if the "captain" truly had to go - the truth is never learned by talking to the pirates that made him walk the plank is it? - And the congregation is better served by obvious Elder objectivity and disinterest in the rabble. I do not judge you in this having listened far too much to the loudest over the wisest and knowing the immense pressure of the mob. No doubt washing your hands of it all is a great temptation.

Are You Humble Brothers?

Is there humility among the current Harvest Elders. Is there any sense that maybe those who proceeded you have wronged us and the church in ways you may not have understood? Is there any openness to the things expressed by the men named above, in the correspondence they have written to you? I am puzzled at David S. offering dates to meet like July 17 when you already know i am far away many hundreds of miles in an overdue time with kathy and i to seek healing and renewal with the Lord that we had hoped to have your assistance with - thus the heavy pressure to meet before we left on this personal journey.

Are you humble Darren? Brian? Tim? David? Karl? And others i do not know personally? Do you esteem others better than yourself? I beg you to be better than i have been in my failings and better than those who campaigned for my ruin ...

I waited 85 days to meet with w any pastor or Elder anytime anywhere. Last tuesday i was 5 minutes away as you met ... and I am told you were informed of my availability - i was willing to come but alas - the circled wagons of "we must all be present" seems to have taken precedence over actual scripture such as Matthew 5:25 which exhorts us to "come to terms quickly with your adversary."

I am alone with Kathy in Nova Scotia and we have driven here. We are on our way to a never before - once in a life time MacDonald family reunion and cannot be back in Chicago until July 24. August 5-10 i have promised a group of men to be away with them. By then the arbitration will be irrevocable as it nearly is now.

Inside those restrictions i will do what ever Mike, Chris and Jim request of me. We cannot be better until we do better - i have much to be offended about, yet i reach past the injustice and needless delay to again own some of my sin and invite interaction with men i barely know ... what are you doing to bridge the gap brothers? The "it's all James" scenario is a staff self-protection invention, and the church will [not] be protected if its current elders keep the many realities they do not yet know from coming to light in a legal proceeding. I seek to cover the sin of a church that uncovered and publicized my own and added much more falsehood to it. I offer grace still but the hour grows late and the opportunity to gain ground as brothers grows mold in your laps ...

Please take a courageous step and believe that at heart I am the man you loved for many years - broken not angry - aware of his own sin as well as seeking the resolution of what others have done - nuanced matters needing elder dexterity not broad brush strokes and generalized condemnation - this is my appeal - why not run to me and break bread and inventory what has happened and let me own my sin - and together seek to right the wrongs that have been done and then let us go our way in peace.

James

From: James MacDonald

Subject: To the men of Elder status at Harvest Bible Chapel

Date: November 5, 2019 at 7:12 PM

To: James MacDonald

JM

To the men of Elder Status (per bylaws) of Harvest Bible Chapel:

I received your letter dated November 2, 2019, which caused Kathy and me to weep.

Last January, in what turned out to be my final communication to the Harvest family, I confessed:

"For a long time I have felt unequal to all but the preaching task at Harvest. I have battled cycles of injustice, hurt, anger, and fear which have wounded others without cause. I have carried great shame about this pattern in certain relationships that can only be called sin. I am grieved that people I love have been hurt by me in ways they felt they could not express to me directly and have not been able to resolve. I blame only myself for this and want to devote my entire energy to understanding and addressing these recurring patterns."

I also sought to resign, as you know, but was encouraged to continue serving as Senior Pastor. I gave very specific and lengthy expressions of my repentance to the leading Elders. I requested permission multiple times to share my confession with the whole Board and the congregation before I left.

From a communication to my Elders in February 2019:

"I was, am and will remain very sorry for my careless and hurtful words that were recorded and publicized. I immediately sent written apologies where appropriate, grieving what it revealed about the state of my heart at the time, as well as the hurt caused to those who trusted me to be a more consistent example of Christlikeness. I have no excuse, and I am truly sorry."

Further, in the spirit of repentance and wanting to meet, I sent an email, which went unanswered to the current Elders on July 3, 2019:

"My Sin:

In addition to my relational sin and failing which I fully own and repent of. My sin of leading the church out of hurt and foolishly leading to file the lawsuit which had such devastating consequences - which prompted me to resign and desire

to leave after confessing same to entire congregation, which I offered to do and am still willing. Beyond my ultimate failure to live beyond the hurt I experienced and my sinful idolatry of paying down the debt - I am deeply grieved to learn of those who felt hurt by my management of them and would yet welcome an opportunity to confess this publicly or seek their forgiveness in private or both as you men believe would be best for the church. There is much more on the subject of my failings I would gladly confess in person and have so long sought that opportunity without response that at times I have despaired.”

Given these multiple expressions of repentance, I am confused and grieved by the Elders’ decision to draft the November 2, 2019, letter and to disseminate it publicly.

I know you to be men who love the Word of God, yet all biblical texts on offense resolution and public rebuke (including the 1 Timothy 5 passage you have leaned upon) include the presence of the accused. Why then am I publicly rebuked for sins I have already confessed? Why am I publicly rebuked for distortions and misunderstandings that face-to-face brotherly conversation might resolve?

Such a dialogue might have answered many residual questions: why we spent money as we did; who gave the approvals; how generous gifts were funded; why some thought a gift was personal; who approved those decisions; how we viewed fundraising expenses; how much we raised; why we expressed generosity in honoring others. Even if we remained with different convictions in these matters, we might have realized that there was no ungodly intent. There could have been a more grace-filled view of our differences.

My insistent appeals, in an effort to reach resolution before arbitration regarding certain more personal matters, are now used as evidence that my repentance is insincere. I believe that view is unfair. I remained in silence through every Elder action of winter, spring, and summer because I recognized my role in past conflict and have offered my silence, waiting, and private appeals as a fruit of repentance.

The other biblical fruits of repentance are open confession of sin, absence of rationalization, and restitution—each of which I seek to express more fully but cannot complete in isolation from those you have now mandated not to speak

to me. Given my isolation and the aforementioned confessions not being read to the congregation or posted to the Harvest website, it seems I am left without remedy for what appear to be preferred conclusions. What was hardest to hear in your weekend words was the offer to meet, given my awareness of how unresponsive you have been to all my appeals.

HBC's bylaws provide that Christian mediation and arbitration with the ICC is the appropriate forum for us to resolve our differences. When you allowed the agreed-upon mediation settlement to be canceled, you left me no alternative, given our bylaws, other than arbitration. Am I to walk away from my pension? Surely you don't believe we are set financially? We live the generosity we preached and gave like we believed the covenants and promises made to us by previous Elder boards would be honored.

Am I to abandon all of my sermon recordings that have meant so much to so many, as though the Elder agreements about my intellectual property from more than 20 years ago mean nothing? Am I to walk away from Walk in the Word and its donors because you believe I am unworthy to teach God's Word to them, though you have never even spoken to me?

Surely you know we will not stop serving the Lord and preaching His Word anymore than you would. My calling to preach God's Word began 10 years before Harvest Bible Chapel, and by God's grace, continues into the future in His timing. I have been out of all ministry for 10 months already and my readiness to return is now in the hands of another New Testament church, please respect that.

If you will not pass along the good work of grace God has been doing in my heart these many months, or share my prior confessions with the congregation we have loved so long, or allow me to bring clarity to harsh conclusions reached in our absence, please at least release us from your concern and speak of us no more.

Above all... let us begin to believe there are days of mutual humility and forgiveness yet in our future as we allow our hearts to be shaped toward the love exemplified by our common Savior.

Warmly and always your brother in Christ Jesus, James MacDonald

From: James MacDonald
Subject: Another appeal
Date: November 17, 2019 at 4:15 PM
To: Pastors and Elders of HBC



To the men of Elder status at Harvest Bible Chapel:

I continue waiting for the promised opportunity to meet. We have silently borne the weight of false accusations, believing since May 1 that this newest Elder board would adopt a more impartial approach to overseeing what preceded you.

We have remained silent through spring/summer/fall and many troubling church actions, believing that a meeting would soon happen and a better reckoning of truth and error would result.

I own my sin and fallings as well as I can under your mandate that all involved have no communication with me. Submission to false condemnation is not a fruit of repentance, brothers. This Tuesday (11/19) will be two weeks since I wrote, yet again, requesting the meeting you promised in your public condemnation of my character on November 2-3. Your response promising dates to meet was more than a week ago yet still nothing is scheduled.

My letter mentioned no change or delay in the arbitration process, nor any move back to mediation. 'Truth before reconciliation' is the only meaningful path to reconciliation, which we still desire. I am available, you guys are meeting regularly – still, you offer no date?

Since February 2018, multiple staff and elders have assured me that a meeting would happen prior to any public announcement of financial investigation results. Yet you have now announced a Thursday, November 21st public airing of your financial review. Many Harvest members are praying, even at this late hour, that you will break the cycle of partiality and public announcements that ever widen the gap between us, and meet with me as promised.

If you will not, why not wait for the objective arbitration results – detailed in church bylaws as the path to conflict resolution. Please do not put me in the awful position of possibly needing to refute errors that could have been avoided if the promised meeting had happened.

I am prayerfully awaiting a chance to talk face to face with a Harvest Elder board, for the very first time in 2019 – prior to Thursday November 21, while there is still potential benefit to the people you shepherd. All truth will come to light in arbitration... why make an announcement having never met with me, that I must refute and arbitration will resolve? Why?

A meeting is long overdue, brothers. The time is short. Anytime, Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday this week, anywhere – we have waited so patiently.

Prayerfully,

JM