

# Friends opinion re the power of a hierarchy

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I would like to talk about a few things that have been heavy on my mind lately. Maybe I should add a trigger warning for CSA/SA because I am going to speak bluntly.

Lately I have heard and read some very disturbing reactions from some of the friends and workers. It feels like there is a lot of lip service to the child sexual assault, sexual assault and sexual misconduct issues, and a hope that this will soon blow over and everyone will forget about it. To be fair, I have also heard some very positive things, but I am not writing about that today.

To be specific, I have seen statements that indicate some feel that if there is not significant evidence or offence to secure a legal conviction, the accused should be considered innocent. One such example was from an overseer speaking about an admitted pedophile and long-time sexual predator with a huge list of survivors in his wake. "but he was never convicted".... Are you kidding me? Anyone with half a brain could determine that this man should never be allowed to attend meetings or church functions. And he would have been convicted if you hadn't covered it up years ago.

Or what if it is just "innocent" touching? Hypothetically, if a young girl complains about a worker who hugged her awkwardly and felt her butt, the likelihood of a legal conviction is almost zero. But that should still be a huge red flag. Was it an accident? Highly unlikely, you don't grab a young girl's butt or feel her chest accidentally. But let's say there are multiple complaints of the same behavior from different girls. Still, he's probably not going to be convicted and sent to prison. But it's proof that he is a sexual predator and has no business attending church functions let alone being a minister.

This old, "that's just uncle Brad, he's just kinda handsy but he's harmless" way of thinking is just plain wrong. And no, the hell, it's not harmless, not even a bit. The harm that comes from incidents like this are real and the harm of sweeping it under the rug is worse. Like it or not, ministers and elders are held to a higher legal standard when it comes to stuff like this, whether committing it or reporting it.

And let's talk about consensual relationships. We hear a lot about that. "Well, it was inappropriate behaviour for a worker, but it was a consensual relationship, so no harm done. Who can blame two people for falling in love?" This is a very slippery issue. First of

all, whether we admit it or not, there is very much a hierarchical order of organization within the "Truth". There are country or regional head workers, state or area overseers, older brother workers, younger brother workers, older sister workers, younger sister workers, elders, back up elders, saints, and wives, unmarried men and women and children. Pretty much in that order. In the business world, if an executive manager has a relationship with a subordinate they are sacked. Why? Because it isn't appropriate and there is too much room for the more powerful person to persuade the less powerful person to do something that they wouldn't otherwise do.

I get it, people fall in love and that can be a beautiful thing. But in a hierarchical organization, where the man has power over the woman, "consensual" relationships are more often than not, not actually consensual. Let's say, good ole handsome brother worker Tom likes the ladies, and the ladies like Tom. But what the individual ladies don't know is that Tom is a player, he has a lady in every state. So, when the lady in Kansas is found with Tom, she defends him and says, "it was consensual." Sure, she thinks she is his one and only, she doesn't know about Miss Oklahoma or Miss Nebraska. So, is it really consensual? Or is Tom a dirty rotten sexual predator that has no business holding his position? He will never be convicted in court, but he absolutely deserves to be fired and sent away in a transparent manner.

The type of sexual assault we are talking about hardly ever involves a man dragging a vulnerable woman or child into a dark alley at knifepoint and raping them. What we are talking about is very sophisticated and deliberate grooming or courting, so that by the time the actual sexual assault happens, the carefully chosen victim feels helpless to do anything about it or even might feel like they are somehow special that this wise and powerful "servant of god" has chosen them to be his special one.

To deal with this problem, we must understand what we are dealing with. We must understand the level of evil that we are dealing with. We must understand that these types of predators don't just stop doing what they do because they got caught. We must stop thinking of them as someone who is good that just fell into weakness and start thinking of them as evil people who are very good at appearing to be good. We need to stop being wishy washy about how we deal with these predators and cut them out like the evil cancer that they are.

Aside from the moral right and wrong aspect of this issue and the fight between good and evil, there are also very serious potential legal accountabilities that many of us could be faced with. Those who have meetings and conventions, or just host a get-together or have an open home. Have you thought about your legal liability if a known predator assaulted someone on your property? Or forget the legal aspect, how would you feel knowing that someone's child was assaulted at your home? This is serious business and must not continue to be swept under the rug.

Every one of us has much more power to address this than we think we do. All we have to do is speak up. It might be uncomfortable, speaking up to those who are above us in that very strict hierarchical organization, but it is possible, and it is effective. The hierarchical organization only exists in the minds of those who accept it, after all, that country head worker or state overseer has no closer connection to God than you do, and is certainly no more intelligent or business savvy. It's time we realize that and hold them accountable