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Capitol Bible Discussion Handout

How God Responds to Sexual Harassment

In recent months, the wave of accusations of **sexual harassment** that has flooded our nation has swept over our **California State Capitol** like a tsunami.

This is a painful time for everyone in the Capitol community, where both the alleged victims and offenders are known by many. I personally have a pastoral connection to a number of those involved.

But, even in the midst of this crisis, it is apparent that God is at work in great ways.

1. God is Teaching

Sexual harassment, whether in the form of unwanted attention, speech, or touch of a sexual nature, has always existed but it has probably never been as widely discussed as it is now. It is good that this important topic is finally getting the attention it deserves.

We who follow Jesus should always be careful to avoid anything even resembling sexual harassment.

First, when it comes to anything of a *sexual* nature, we aim for purity. We understand that God created intimacy exclusively for married couples for procreation and for physical and emotional bonding. Consider the strong commands in 1 Thessalonians 4.

1 Thessalonians 4:2-8 "For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we

also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."

Second, those who really walk with God would never want to *harass* someone. As 1 Thessalonians 4:6 said, we are not to *"transgress and defraud"* one another sexually. Most sexual harassment now being discussed (though not all) involves men taking advantage of women, which is never acceptable Biblically. In Genesis 1:27 read that men and women were both created equally in the image of God - *"So God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them."* Throughout the Old Testament years, God raised up both male prophets and female prophetesses to speak for Him. Jesus had close female disciples and friends, which was highly unusual for a rabbi in his day. And, the Apostle Paul followed that lead and had many women friends and ministry partners, and even wrote that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Christ-followers today should similarly treat men and women with equal respect.

2. God is Protecting

Victims of sexual harassment are feeling more empowered to speak up, which is good. Those who are proven to be offenders should be exposed. As Ephesians 5:11 instructs us, *"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."*

It is excellent that members of the legislature have been holding hearings to find ways to protect the innocent, since ensuring safety is one of government's primary responsibilities. 1 Thessalonians 4:6, quoted above, says that *"the Lord is the avenger"* against one who takes advantage of another sexually. The Greek word translated

Capitol Bible Discussions

Legislators / Statewide Leaders: Wednesdays 8:00 am in Capitol Rm 3171

Staff / Lobbyists / Legislators/ Public: Wednesdays 12:00 Noon and Sundays at 10:00am inside the Capitol

here as *avenger (ekdikos)* means “just judge.” How does God justly judge offenders? One way is through government authorities, since Romans 13:1-7 says that government officials are called to be “*a minister of God, an avenger (ekdikos) who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*”

3. God is Healing

Victims of harassment or assault sometimes carry the resulting pain with them for the rest of their lives. They can take comfort though that God sees all they have been through, understands their pain, and wants to heal and restore them as they look to Him. *Psalm 147:3 “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”* If you have been victimized, turn to Him for help.

4. God is Purifying

A number of legislators have told me that coming to Sacramento to serve in the legislature reminded them of their college years when they left home and moved away to a university campus with frequent fraternity parties. On a few evenings each week for most of the year, the restaurants and bars that surround the Capitol are packed with legislators, staff, and lobbyists, some who have obviously had too much to drink. I remember the surprise I felt when I was new to the Capitol and came across male and female state leaders who were highly inebriated even though they were scheduled to cast important committee or floor session votes the next morning. Now I take it for granted. The sexual assault crisis is bringing about greater awareness of this unhealthy and potentially dangerous culture, and hopefully will bring about some changes.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 “Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.”

5. God is Redirecting

What about those who are falsely accused? God will help those who humbly and honestly seek Him. In Genesis 37-50, we read the dramatic life story of Joseph, a high-level government leader who was falsely accused of sexual assault. As a result of the charges against him, he lost his position and was sent to prison. Though he suffered, he

later rejoiced that God had used even this horrible situation for good (Genesis 50:20). As Romans 8:28 promises, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” One accused legislator who insists the allegations against him are untrue is already seeing God use it for good in his life. “Whatever comes of this,” he told me, “I pray that from this point on I remember to never get too comfortable again and forget to put God first in my life.” Another said, “I just want to learn the lessons God wants to teach me through this.” Wise words.

6. God is Saving

And what about those who are truly guilty of sexual harassment or abuse or assault? Their sin is very serious in God’s sight and may indicate their eternal separation from Him.

Ephesians 5:3ff “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Even if an offender does know God, they may still pay a high price for their sin. For example, when King David, who was a man of God, seduced his married neighbor Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), God made his transgression public, and the resulting fallout had a devastating impact on David’s political career and family life.

Fortunately though, the Lord can use a person’s brokenness and realization of their own sinfulness to bring them to repentance and a close relationship with Him. Our Heavenly Father extends grace and mercy to anyone who will truly open their heart and yield their life to Him.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Since we are each a sinner in our own right, this should be immensely comforting to us all.