

## Overcoming False Intimacy

I became a man through confronting my pastor for partaking of his sheep, e.g. emotionally and sexually manipulating a host of single women. My efforts were unwelcomed: the pastor duped his overseer, blamed us for being overly rigorous, and turned our colleagues on the pastoral staff against us. For the first time in our lives together, Annette and I (and Desert Stream Ministries) were homeless.

I loved this man but he refused to see the power of his position, the misuse of his body and other bodies, and its impact on the congregation. His moral blindness diminished the power of the Gospel. The community shrank for a couple years until more women came forward and the overseer served justice by replacing him.

Shepherds with sexual integrity serve justice; they give the sheep their due. No confusing messages, no lingering hugs and longing glances—an intact pastor lets his sheep be sheep and makes no sexual or inordinate emotional demands upon them. Such clear seeing and solid limits result from good moral formation before ordination. The pastor-in-training makes peace with his sexuality, is aware of its power, and learns—in the power of the Spirit—to restrain and direct desire for the good of others. For the sake of the Gospel.

But. Sometimes the runner stumbles. Good men begin the race with noble intentions. Yet under the weight of multiple pressures, dormant weaknesses may resurface and become wicked. I have known many men whose unmet need for connection finds a human outlet, which overwhelms their good judgment and goads them to break sacred bonds all the way around. Lord, have mercy. We can and must pray that such compromised shepherds come to their senses. Unlike the pastor I referenced, many do not defend their divided lives. The eyes of their heart open to the damage done and they cry out for mercy.

We recently had the privilege of standing with a pastor who, admittedly weak in areas, has fought hard and out loud for his integrity. In a dark season, he fell back into some old patterns. We as a community served justice with mercy. He was broken and vulnerable before us. Each person honestly expressed pain over his compromise. We had felt his distancing and denials; we conveyed some mistrust and asked what he would do to prevent this from happening again.

Return to his first love. This pastor was successful, much sought out; the roar of ministry had deafened his ear toward Jesus' still small voice. He committed to reordering his life around adoration of the One. '...the answer to the problems that beset so many priests, causing them to fall into patterns of sin, is the friendship I offer them.' ( )

Reveal himself constantly to a small band of brothers. We urged him to redraw his commitment to two or three trusted colleagues with whom he vowed to be utterly, prayerfully honest. None of us surrounding him were pastors, and thus, we could not wholly grasp his burdens. But his pastor

brothers could, and we insisted that he forge a community that would be mutually refining. He also promised to let his overseer know his struggle and how he was handling it; at the same time, he knew that daily 'truth-telling' would have to be homegrown, not hierarchical.

Reclaim robust chastity. He became a pastor based on his commitment to growing in chastity, a virile integration of his sexuality that would free him to confirm others with clarity and conviction. We confirmed that earthy call and called him to agree once more with Jesus' 'yes' to power from on high to live a united, pure life—body, soul, and spirit. 'We need that wholeness from you,' we said. Mercy liberates justice, then justice is served by shepherds whose ordered desires 'lead us besides still waters' where we can 'lay down in green pastures.'

Please take time to watch our video and become ['Chaste Together.'](#)