

## INTRODUCTION

This just in...recently released secret documents indicate that spiritual terrorists have infiltrated the church. These secret agents have joined our churches to disrupt our fellowship. But don't worry, these agents have been identified and photographed. See if you recognize any of them. First, there's an agent called Ima Bin Sleepin', I think I've seen him here several times. Then there's Ima Bin Angry; and his younger brother Ima Bin Arguin'. They have some female agents as well including Ima Bin complain'. There's also Ima Bin fightin' and the double agent, Ima Bin gossipin'. One of the most dangerous couples is Mr. and Mrs. Ima Bin Missin'. These agents all work for their mastermind, Lucifer Ima Bin Workin'. And Satan is at work all the time. Now, if you see any of these enemy agents, please report them immediately to the H.S., that's not Homeland Security, that's the Holy Spirit.

This sinister team wants disrupt the church, but never fear, because we have some special forces deployed to resist them. They belong to the special group called We Bin Prayin'. The Bible says we've been "sealed" by the Holy Spirit, so these are our frontline sealed teams. Praying in the Spirit is a mighty weapon against the enemy. Of course, I'm kidding about the terrorists, but I'm not kidding about the fact that Lucifer is doing everything he can to divide and destroy churches. But remember, "Satan trembles when he sees; the weakest saint upon his knees." We need more of you to join the platoon of prayer warriors. The devil is powerful, but the Holy Spirit lives in us, and the Bible says in 1 John 4:4, "Greater is he that is in you; than he that is in the world."

This summer we've been talking about what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of Jesus is controlling your life, then these nine flavors of the Fruit of the Spirit will be seen. As we move into the sixth and final chapter of Galatians we'll see practical ways in which the Holy Spirit changes us.

Our topic today is: How should you treat a Christian who has fallen into sin and been publicly disgraced? This isn't a theoretical question, because all of us have known fellow believers who have slipped up and their sin became public. Many of these have dropped out of church because they found themselves the target of anger and animosity from fellow church members. Someone said the Christian army is the only army that shoots its wounded. But as we're going to learn today, a Spirit-filled Christian shows grace for the disgraced.

Galatians 5:25-6:1. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

If you've been watching the news this week, you saw country music star Randy Travis arrested after he was found drunk and naked in the middle of the road. I'm not a huge fan of Randy Travis, but he has publicly confessed his faith in Jesus. He has recorded a gospel album with a great song called "The Wooden Crosses." I understand he's a member of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio. So how should the Body of Christ respond to this brother who has been publicly disgraced? Some of you are probably thinking, "He's just a sorry drunk, there's no way I would want him sitting next to me in church." When some of his fans heard about his arrest, they took

some clothes to the jail for him to wear. That's the first time I can recall someone literally fulfilling the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 when He said, "I was naked and you clothed me."

If Randy were a member of this church, it would be up to us to confront him and attempt to lovingly restore him. We wouldn't just excuse his sin, we would consider it to be a serious problem, but this process is all about hating the sin, but loving the sinner. Let's learn three facets of this process of restoration.

### **I. THE SAD REALITY: Even deeply committed people stumble into sin and disgrace**

Our passage talks about someone who is "caught" in a sin. It doesn't mean if someone catches them red-handed. It carries the idea of someone being caught in trap. A trap springs suddenly; it doesn't happen in slow motion. This verse describes a believer who has been suddenly overcome by temptation, and stumbling into the trap of sin.

The Bible is full of stories about committed people who stumbled into sin and disgrace. After the flood, Noah got drunk and was found naked—sounds like Randy Travis, huh? Abraham lied about his wife. Jacob deceived his father and stole the inheritance meant for his brother. Moses lost his temper and whacked a rock too many times. King David, a man after God's own heart, committed adultery and plotted a murder against Bathsheba's husband.

There are those who believe you can lose your salvation. And they might suggest these men disgraced themselves and forfeited their salvation. But all five of these men are mentioned in the Roll Call of Faith in Hebrews 11.

Simon Peter is another example of this truth. Hours after boasting that he would never deny Jesus, he stood in a courtyard around a fire and denied Jesus three times; even cursing in his denial. Jesus knew Peter would stumble into the trap that night. At the Last Supper He said, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31) Peter failed, but his faith didn't fail. Because after he sinned, He repented and turned back to the disciples and was restored. Some of you who bake know what a flour sifter is. It's a device with a handle which turns the flour over and over so that all the imperfections, the lumps, can be seen. That's what Satan wants to do with you: He wants to bring all your perfections to the surface.

If these spiritual superstars of the Bible fell into sin and disgrace, we know that it happens today. So what should be our response when this happens?

### **II. THE SINFUL REACTION: Immature Christians delight in the failure of others and love to spread the juicy details**

Physical fitness is a great goal, but someone said the only exercise some Christians get is jumping to conclusions and running people down. Let's imagine that this next week you learn about a member of GABC who is arrested for possession of cocaine. What would be your first response? To pray for that person, or to call your closest friends and say, "Have you heard...?"

One reason we secretly delight in the failures of others is because we think it makes us look better. You may be thinking, "I may fudge on my expense report, but I'd never so drugs...at least illegal drugs."

There was a small town weekly newspaper in Georgia that had an interesting misprint. Front-page news usually consisted of who caught the biggest bass or shot the biggest deer. There was a lady in the town called Mrs. Smith who was known as a busybody and the biggest gossip in town. If there was a rumor going around, she was usually the source of it.

After Mrs. Smith went to Atlanta for throat surgery, the newspaper reported, "Mrs. Smith is in Atlanta having a rumor removed from their throat." When some of her friends approached the editor about correcting the misprint he said, "Nope. I think I'll let it stand." If you are someone who passes on gossip, I suggest you allow the Great Physician to remove that rumor from your throat.

Stephen Olford tells the story about a man who didn't like his elderly pastor. When the man heard a vicious rumor about the pastor, he confronted him and accused him of misconduct. The pastor denied it, but the man continued to spread the rumor to everyone who would listen. Gradually, it destroyed the pastor's reputation, and he was forced to resign from the church. However, it was later proved without a doubt that the accusations were false. The accuser went to the old pastor, who was now retired, to apologize for spreading the lie about him. He asked the pastor for forgiveness. The pastor, "I forgave you a long time ago, but there is one thing you can do for me." "What is it?" replied the penitent man. The pastor said, "Take this feather pillow to the hill that overlooks our community. Rip open the pillow and let the wind spread the feathers. Then the next day go back and put all the feathers back into the pillow." The man said, "But it would be impossible to retrieve all those feathers." The pastor said, "You're right. And neither can you retrieve hurtful words once they're spoken. I've forgiven you, but your words can never be retracted."

A.B. Simpson was a great pastor and the Founder of The Christian Missionary Alliance. He wrote: "You had better bite your tongue before you say anything unkind, hateful or harmful against another brother or sister in Christ."

The Bible says, "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down." (Proverbs 26:20) Someone who spreads gossip is wrong, but if you listen to gossip, you're just as guilty. You wouldn't tolerate it if someone came and dumped a load of garbage in your living room. In the same way, don't allow someone to dump a load of gossip in your mind.

Not long ago I watched a documentary about Pat Tillman. He was an NFL star for the Phoenix Cardinals. After the 9/11 attacks he left the NFL to enlist in the Armed Forces as an Army Ranger. He served his country on several tours and duty. In spring 2004 he was killed in the mountains of Afghanistan. Although there was an initial cover-up, the Pentagon ruled his death was due to "friendly fire." Although that sounds like an oxymoron, it is a tragic reality that sometimes in the heat of battle, allies are sometimes mistaken as the enemy.

There is also the tragic reality of friendly fire within the church. More churches have been destroyed and divided by gossip from within than by attacks from the outside. Vance Havner used to say more churches are destroyed by termites than by tornados. Spreading malicious gossip is like termites eating away at the stability of a church.

My friend Ron Dunn wrote a book entitled, *Surviving Friendly Fire: How to Respond When You’re Hurt by Someone You Trust*. He claims thousands of Christians who used to attend our churches are now AWOL because instead of helping them up when they fell into sin, we tended to kick them when they were down. If you know of someone like that, you may be the person God is calling to launch the process of restoration. Let’s consider:

### **III. THE SCRIPTURAL RESPONSE: We should restore the fallen believer, not reject him or her**

Restoration is a beautiful thing. There are people who can take the shell of an old car and restore it to pristine condition. Through the years I’ve been amazed at the work of Wayne Shay as he patiently works for years to restore a single car. When he does that, the car is worth a lot more than it was when it was brand new. Restoration adds value to a car.

You’ve probably seen a house that was broken down and almost uninhabitable until someone decides to restore it. They transform something virtually worthless into something of great value.

Restoration of cars and houses takes a lot of time and energy, but the value that is added is worth it. The restoration of a brother or sister in Christ isn’t easy either. But it is worth the effort. There are times when we should be involved in Operation Restoration. Let’s break down this truth by answering four questions:

#### **A. Who confronts? A Spirit-filled believer**

When you learn of a Christian who has stumbled into a place of disgrace, don’t gossip about them. But neither should you ignore them. If that person is sinking deeper into sin and despair, the worst thing you can do is NOTHING. And don’t wait for them to come asking for help. Sometimes people are so deep in the pit of sin they can’t even climb out to ask for help. It is up to you to lovingly confront them.

Paul writes, “You who are spiritual” should initiate the process of restoration. This designation isn’t for an elite group of super-saint status. Every Christian should be filled with the Holy Spirit. How do spot someone full of the Spirit? “For the fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

By the way, through the years I’ve never heard a Spirit-filled Christian who claimed to be spiritual. Instead, the presence of the Holy Spirit produces a spirit of humility, and they become even more aware of their unworthiness.

Here’s a simple test for you to determine whether you are “spiritual” or not. One of the members of your Sunday Morning Bible Study class is arrested for embezzling money from their business.

Is this your attitude? “That’s too bad, if he did the crime, he’ll do the time. It’s no business of mine.” That’s a sure sign you aren’t full of the Holy Spirit. But, if when you hear about it, your heart is broken and you immediately begin to think about how you and the other members of your class can minister to him and his family—that’s Spirit filled living.

And if God lays someone on your heart, you’re the best person to confront them. Don’t come to me and says, “Pastor David, I know of a man who used to come to Green Acres, but he had some trouble and he’s dropped out. Will you go see him?” I don’t mind seeing anyone, but if the Lord has burdened your heart for that person, YOU should go to them.

### **B. How is the sinner confronted? In a spirit of gentleness**

When we spoke about the fruit of gentleness I told you gentleness is strength under control. It is a soft touch with a strong hand. The word “restore” is the same word that was used to mend a broken bone. We should confront a disgraced believer the same way a physician mends a broken bone.

Cindy’s dad is a famous high school football coach in Alabama. When I was in college I was working as the minister of music and youth in her church. I showed up to play on the church softball team. I was playing shortstop when a rising line drive came my way. I was distracted and I didn’t raise my glove up fast enough. “Wham!” that softball slammed into my nose (I don’t know why they call it softball). My nose was broken and bleeding and I dropped down to one knee I was in so much pain. Cindy later said when she saw me on my knee; she thought I was a religious fanatic for praying on the softball field.

Cindy loaded me up in my car and drove me to her house for her dad to check out my nose. I was still in the car with my head back with a towel over my face. Coach Chafin came out and grabbed my nose and twisted it back and forth—not gently, mind you. I could hear cartilage and bones rubbing and crackling. Tears were streaming down my face. Like the rough and tough football coach he was he said, “Yep. It’s broken. Let’s go the ER.” I was thinking, “Well, if it wasn’t broken before you twisted it; it is now!”

When we got the ER there was a great doctor there who helped Coach Chafin with his team. When the doctor started to examine my nose I winced because I was ready for another rough twist. But instead, he firmly grabbed my nose, but then he gently moved it a tiny bit in each direction. Then he put some gauze in my nostrils and taped a metal brace over my nose. I looked like the masked marvel, but I was still able to lead the music the next Sunday. Of course, I sounded pretty nasal when I said, “Let’s turn to hymn number 333.”

I appreciated the fact that the doctor used a gentle touch to examine and set my broken nose. That’s the approach we should use when we confront someone who has slipped into disgrace. We should be a combination of firmness and gentleness. The sin that has been committed is serious, it can’t be ignored; it must be firmly addressed. But then we should be gentle in the way we deal with the person who is in a place of disgrace.

### **C. The temptation to avoid? Thinking that you’re better than that person**

Paul warns us of the danger involved in restoration. He wrote that we “should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” The temptation you must resist is thinking you are superior to this person because you haven’t done what they’ve done. It’s the danger of pride. If you’re not careful and humble, you may confront that person with the Mighty Mouse syndrome: “Here I come to save the day!”

There are three people sitting in your seat right now. First, there’s the person who you are right now. Then, there’s also the person that you could be for good, full of the Holy Spirit, living for the glory of God. But there’s also a third person there—the person you could become if you fall into the trap of sin. And if you ever start thinking, “This won’t ever happen to me,” then you’re setting yourself up with a huge bulls-eye for the devil to hit. The Bible says, “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

You should restore someone gently and humbly, because you may be in his or her shoes sometimes in the future. I like the way Eugene Peterson translates this verse: “If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day’s out.” (Galatians 6:1 *The Message*)

#### **D. The goal of the confrontation? Restoration to fellowship and service**

So, if you know of a fellow believer who has dropped out because of sin and shame, will you go to them? The goal of your confrontation isn’t to condemn them or demean them. Your goal is to help them deal with their sin, repent, and come clean before the Lord.

The best example of this in the Bible was the prophet Nathan who confronted King David after he had sinned. Nathan’s goal wasn’t to impeach or dethrone the King. He went to him out of love for his King. He gently but firmly pointed out David’s sin. David accepted his gentle rebuke and repented. His prayer of repentance is found in Psalm 51. He prayed, “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.” (Psalm 51:3-4; 10, 12-13)

David hadn’t lost his salvation, but he had lost the JOY of his salvation. And before he was restored, he was in no position to teach others how to turn to God. He was returned to fellowship and service. That’s what restoration looks like.

When you think about it, James was the half-brother of Jesus. They had the same mom, Mary, but different dads. James’ dad was Joseph, and Jesus had God for His Father. James writes about the value of restoration: “My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20)

## **CONCLUSION**

I love the track and field events at the Olympics. We saw once again the Jamaican runner, Usain Bolt, is still the fastest man in the world. He won both the Men's 100 and 200 meter race. The Olympic athletes are fierce competitors.

According to Hebrews 12:1 we're all in a race as well. But we aren't competing against each other, we're here to help each other. I like the London Olympic races, but my favorite race was one that took place in the 1976 Olympics. These were the Special Olympics held in Spokane, Washington. Nine contestants were lined up at the starting line and when the gun sounded they all started running down the track toward the finish line. But after a few steps into the race, one of the young men stumbled and fell onto the asphalt. He cried out in pain. Two of the other runners stopped their race and turned around to help him up. A girl with Down's syndrome kissed his knee and said, "There. That will make it better." And then the two runners helped the fallen runner up and all three of them jogged across the finish line with their arms linked together. The crowd stood to their feet and cheered for minutes. They didn't win the race, but they won something more valuable. They learned the lesson that life isn't a competition. We're all running the same race and when one person falls, the rest of us need to be there to help get back up and back in the race.

Can you think of someone who has tripped and fallen? Will you be an expression of God's grace by going to them and helping to restore them? That's how you show grace for the disgraced.

## OUTLINE

I. THE SAD REALITY: Even deeply committed people stumble into sin and disgrace

II. THE SINFUL REACTION: Immature Christians delight in the failure of others and love to spread the juicy details

III. THE SCRIPTURAL RESPONSE: We should restore the fallen believer, not reject him or her

A. Who confronts? A Spirit-filled believer

B. How is the sinner confronted? In a spirit of gentleness

C. The temptation to avoid? Thinking that you’re better than that person

D. The goal of the confrontation? Restoration to fellowship and service

“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.” *James 5:19-20*

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.



David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas

---

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes