

Scandals in the Church

By Dan Jensen (2023)

(In order to fully benefit from this essay, I recommend reading through my “works for beginners” first. They can be found on my website.)

Scandal in the church is one of the ugliest parts of the Christian life. I know that they have often really gotten me down. The Ravi Zacharias scandal rocked me terribly. I know how vogue it has become in certain parts of the church to say that he was not all that great in the first place, but I’m not going to do that. As a strong Reformed believer, I did not agree with him on many points, but he said and wrote a lot of great stuff over the years. And his personality came off as so Christlike. I know he helped countless believers all over the world. Therefore, any scandal from him would have been bad enough, but the depth of wickedness of the scandal was almost too much to bear. I had trouble sleeping after it came out for months. I have such a passion for Christ’s sheep. That is part of why I get so feisty sometimes towards those who attack our faith. I apologize if I get carried away sometimes. Because of this passion though, I really struggle with scandals in the church.

Not only do scandals in the church wound God’s people, which is the worst part by far, but they also have other horrendous consequences as well. They repel seekers and they give the enemies of the faith more excuse to mock us and speak out against the beautiful bride of Christ. Hence, I want to be clear that I am in no way, shape, or form making light of scandals in the church. It is honestly hard for me to fully express how much I hate them and how much they get to me. With all of that made very clear, I want to take the opportunity in this essay to put them in context.

It cannot be more emphasized from the outset, that despite the very real warts of the church, she has been an enormous force for good in the world over the past 2K years.

For a defense of this point, please see part 2 of my *A False Kind of Christianity*, especially the subsection in chapter 6 titled “Church History Discredits Christianity.” It can be found within the broader subsection in that chapter titled “Answering Objections,” on pages 172-173. Then I also recommend reading my book on church history found within my “works for beginners” section of my website. It also needs to be reiterated that despite how positive the church has been overall throughout her history, we must not forget how messy and ugly the institutional church can be at times. For a better understanding of this doctrine, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper* (part 1). The church as a whole cannot always be completely blamed for what goes on behind the scenes in certain segments of the institutional church. That does not make the scandals any less awful, but again, it does help put them in context.

And to those who are seeking more to life and to those who wish to use the scandals to their own advantage, I want to offer some personal testimony even though I know that it won't sway certain people one bit. But, it is still something I feel I should do. I was not raised in a Christian home or general Christian environment. My family, both immediate and extended, is made up of positively amazing people. I have also had the privilege of living, working, and ministering all over the world: CA; HI; Scotland; UT; and NV. I have known and been close with people from all sorts of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. I have known people from most of the major religions. My childhood was pretty cake, but my adult life has been very, very challenging in many respects. However, I can say that in spite of those challenges, God has blessed me mightily through all of these relationships and encounters.

With all that in mind, I can say that true believers are some of the most loving, kind, warm, and generous people on the planet. I don't care what the stereotypes are about us, I have consistently found this to be the case all over the world. You can call that self-serving all you want, but I am being completely honest. This is not to say that the body of Christ is perfect. It has hurt my family and I pretty badly at certain points over the past 25 years. You may have been hurt by the church as well. I am so, so sorry if that is the case. Overall though, the church has been there for me and blessed me and

taken care of me in countless ways that I cannot ever fully describe. I understand that there are a lot of false churches out there. And if you have been entirely abused, burnt, or ripped off by one (not just hurt due to imperfections), then you were not in a true church. It is that simple. Please find a good and godly one. Please email me if you need help with that goal.

You may say, "Well duh! You're a white dude, so the church is of course going to love you!" I'm sorry, but this woke nonsense is just that, it's ridiculous. I was deeply involved in two churches in Hawaii, and in both of them we were the minority family as a white family. And no one cared, and neither did we. We were all just Christians. I literally lived with one Asian family for a while due to some transition issues, and then another one down the line for the same reasons. They didn't care that I was white, and I didn't care that they were Asian. And in every single church I have ever been a part of there have been people who struggled with same-sex attraction. No one cared. They were just Christians. We were just Christians to them.

With all of this made clear, I want to say to anyone reading this essay, whether believer, seeker, or firm unbeliever, for every scandalous individual in the church, there are legions of faithful leaders beyond them that the enemies of the faith do not want to highlight. Yes, Zacharias, Falwell, Hillsong (I do not consider this movement to be part of the true church, but I know many do), and a number of others have brought deep shame to the church through their apostasy. But for every one of these leaders or worship bands/leaders, there is still Gerstner; Sproul; White; Geisler; Grudem; MacArthur; Johnson; Peters; Childers; Mohler; Washer; Lawson; Nichols; Parr; Winger; Stuckey; Mefferd; Dougherty; Baucham; Pearcey; Smith; Laurie; Ramos; Ham; Hodge; Hays; Wickham; Camp; Gail; Cooper; Sovereign Grace; and so many others (if you want to know the first names of any of these, just email me). And those are all just fairly recent examples.

The scandalous people in the church, both recently and throughout her past, can never ever extinguish the witness of the martyrs; the devout medieval monks and nuns; the

Reformers; the Puritans; the missionaries; and so many other bright lights. I encourage you to read all of my book on church history, where I briefly detail many of them. Then, if you have time, I encourage you to read some biographies on them. I promise you, they will firmly put the scandals in their right perspective. For every Judas, there are 11 faithful (albeit very flawed and imperfect) apostles. The world will always fixate on Judas; the true church will always focus on the 11.