

Dear Elders of House Denver,

I have written volumes since we resigned. I won't bother you with all of it. I have tried to whittle things down and be as concise as possible. I will sit and converse with anyone. Please do contact me; I am open to you and welcome conversation and correction.

We clearly had a moment when we sensed the fear of the Lord, that there should not be a tug of war, the Body of Christ is too precious for that. We laid down our end of the rope, but we will still speak, in hopes it can have some effect.

I don't want to have a wrong judgement of your motives or actions, and I ask for the same for us. It is a heavy load to carry others' wrong impressions or judgements. Having eight children, we grew in understanding that each, in our household, were worthy of truth, righteous judgement and dignity. We were not always good at this, and we saw the harmful influence in our family. However, as we grew, we also were able to see the effect of righteous judgement and how it brought safety and peace to each relationship. I don't want anyone judged wrongly.

Ezekiel 34 is the do no harm, but only do good to the sheep chapter. The sheep are to be fed, the weak are to be strengthened, the sick are to be healed, the wounds of the injured are to be bound up, the strays are to be brought back, and the ones that the shepherd has lost are to be sought after. The sheep are not to be scattered, taken advantage of or to become prey. They are to be safe, in green pastures, and able to lie down in peace. These are the responsibilities of the shepherds and elders along with instruction in Jeremiah 23, Titus 1:7,9, Timothy 3:2, 2 Tim 4:2, Acts 20:28-31 and more.

The mission is not more important than the people. If a prayer room is built, but Ezekiel 34 gets missed, all will be in vain. Incorrect order is a misapplication of power. All power given to the church is for the edification of the Body of Christ. All power used that harms the Body of Christ, corporately or individually, intended or not, is an abuse of power. Unless the Lord builds the house, they that labor, labor in vain. The Lord does not sacrifice the lambs for the mission. He does not discard, dismiss, devalue. The Lord's mission is the sheep. It is ALL about the sheep from His side of things. We can pray for hours but if we kick the sheep, lose the sheep, scatter the sheep, devalue the sheep, what was the praying even for? See Isaiah 58:1-8

House Denver has a wounded family leaving the fold in the Wield's. (Yes the Kims are hurting too) They are not just a family, they were elders and church planters that served for 9 years. They have a story that they have experienced while here. Its messy. The elders of this house have a responsibility to shepherd them, look for cause and effect and bring healing to them. Truth about their why, for leaving, is OUR responsibility. If sheep leave for preference, then let them go, make sure they are transferred to another shepherd's care. If sheep leave because they are called somewhere else, bless them and send them. If sheep leave angry and feeling slighted, find out why. If sheep are leaving here wounded, find out why and take responsibility for it. If lambs leave unconsolable, that can be found out too. Get many eyes on it. Truth and light on everything. Silencing and shutting down conversation is wrong. This is our duty before God. We are responsible for the sheep. If you want sheep leaving House Denver with a good story, help them write a good, healthy story.

We make no apologies for giving voice to the wounded. This is our second round of the same story. Leadership vs. lambs. The pastorate is difficult. We have been in ministry for 44 years and most of it in leadership. We know that the sinful behavior cuts both ways - that pastors can be harmed and sheep can be harmed when belonging to a church family. We also know that both shepherds and lambs can have blindspots and sinful/selfish motives; no one is immune. We have been in two churches where authority demanded honor, and it was nothing but evil tyranny where lambs were wholly abused. As elders in the body, our loyalty is to truth, and the dignity and well being of both the sheep and the leadership. It is not undermining to look for the truth. To not look for the truth in order to avoid conflict is wrong. A healthy church system, in Godly fear, should send elders into conflict between leadership and lambs; and require full transparency unto guidance and reconciliation. Unhealthy leadership will shame, silence and have information remain hidden. Godly authority is NOT threatened by light.

We chose unity over truth and we repent. [REDACTED]

If this was a family, it would look like a father complaining to brother number one, that brother number two is no good and never takes the trash out and never brushes his teeth; then the father complains to his daughter and tells her that son number two is lazy and fat. Then the father complains that the family just won't follow his lead. When someone talks about someone behind their back, the person listening knows that they are going to be talked about next. It is difficult to build a church family if there is no trust. It is not a spiritual gift to find everything wrong about a human and criticize; it is the flesh that does this. Being critical is like a plant under the scorching, noon day sun, day after day - It will not grow, but wither and crumble. It is not discernment to find each other's deficiencies. A healthy loving father covers his children in dignity, is truthful about the areas of character that need growth and he helps his sons and daughters develop and grow. A loving healthy father knows his own deficiencies and walks in full transparency, quickly owning his own sin toward his family and making repair for the impact of his sin. Life begets life, honor begets honor.

{REDACTED-pragraph}

This current conflict. We were in “time out” for the first two years of the Kim’s tenure. We are becoming aware through conversations with the Joyners and the Wiolds, of so much that has happened while we were in the dog house. Decisions were made, foundational premise was built, judgements were made, relationships were forged, relationships were severed, names were changed, we did not know what all was behind the scenes, but we inherited it. ... In the beginning of the conflict Jonathan was very honorable not to share details about his conflict. Scott chose no side, but wanted to facilitate conversation, *because a lamb asked for help*. Now, since resigning, we have heard both sides of the story. There is discrepancy. We know neither of these couples to be untruthful, but some things are not matching up. Elders need to be able to dig for truth without being labeled back channelers, underminers etc. otherwise you will get a narrative by yes men and this will be a fight for control and not righteousness. We are in a spiritual battle. We are mandated to walk in the light and truth, absolutely nothing hidden and full transparency. Each conversation, each decision, all finances, etc. need to be completely in the light. The minute something is hidden, a half truth is told, or a slight of hand occurs, the hidden thing needs to be protected and a fight for control ensues. Our only legitimate authority is honesty, integrity, and truth; all derived from Jesus, and it is for the furtherance of the Gospel, the equipping of the Saints and the nourishing and protection of the sheep. All authority, in the church, ill used, is illegitimate.

Abuse in the Church-for the longest time I have longed for this conversation. Even if we disagreed, I would have cherished the honor of a conversation of something so immensely important to me. Through processing with Scott over this past week, it has stirred once again a tumultuous, painful, conflict within. I have hidden in shame and terror, for years, because of the powerful fear and emotions that overwhelm me when in the presence of church authority. As much as I want church authority to be safe, I know in some places, it is not. I haven’t known how to move forward with my story of abuse. I have this disclosure to get through loaded with pain and emotion and it would be absolutely terrifying, overwhelming and unfair if the torrent would be directed at any one of you. I am so aware that you do not deserve an outburst from me, from an unknown reason in my past. But through counseling, I have come to understand and have hope that abuse can be healed and redeemed in a safe community. The only thing is, how does one know if you are in a safe community? Can I trust you with my story? Are you strong enough to handle my pain? Will you protect me? These questions haunt me. I find my answers in the conversations amongst us and the way others are talked about when they are not in the room. Do our conversations hold carefully the people we are talking about or do we employ diminishing, critical language that casts inferior shade on them and minimize their worth? In my mind, it is a type of cancel culture. The way we have talked about the Wiolds is the way I will be talked about.

I do believe all humans can abuse, but not all have the propensity to be habitual, character imbedded abusers. This is a plea for understanding. Abuse in the church-spiritual, sexual, and emotional- is one topic of highest precedence and urgency of the body of Christ in our time. If we do not get this right- If we do not wrestle with all the nuance, scenarios, implications, cause and effect, and responsibilities of stewarding abuse in the church, we will miss the heart of God and we will lose the hearts of our children. Power misapplied, in the name of Jesus, has ravaged two whole generations of the body of Christ in Scott’s and my lifetime, the number of scandals being revealed are mounting. It will ravage the next generation, if we do not get to the root of this cancer. We have first and second hand witness and experience from friends and family of the impact of abuse through Bill Gothard, Ravi Zacharias, IHPOKC, Upperrroom, Doug Phillips, Doug Wilson, Rc Sproul Jr, Michael Pearl, YWAM, the shepherding movement... along with stories of Mark Driscol, Bill Hybels, Todd Bentley, Sovereign Grace, (of course you and I know there are so many more). Epidemic!

There is SO MUCH that House Denver is doing excellently because of good leadership. Even so I have a serious question, it is not meant to cast blame or accuse but to entertain real possibility of discovery, *leading to life*. Dysfunctional fathers teach their children how to relate to the family unit and others in unhealthy ways.(we know this personally) Grown children have to learn a new way that produces life or the family dysfunction will cause harm in the next generation. Is there a chance that the leadership DNA from Bickle that is not born of the Spirit of God but of the flesh, is influencing House Denver’s leadership? Maybe you have caught and corrected some of the dysfunction but some of it still remains? If it is influencing, even a little way; a little leaven, leavens the whole lump. Bickle has been a master at secrecy, manipulation, intimidation, domination, coercion, deception, false prophecy, shame, superiority, misdirect, blame... I am not trying to be harsh about Mike Bickle, or harsh about House Denver, but we have to be truthful about what has been sown and about what we have brought from our spiritual families of origin. All orthodoxy and orthopraxy needs to be examined in light of the scriptures, prayer, and a multitude of counselors who are not in relationship to IHOPKC. What leaven is in this dough? **You must know that any discovery is not for shame but to set free and bring life to the Body of Christ.** When we recognize our failings we agree with the work of the cross that God is just and we are sinners that come up short of his Glory and we need a savior. Without His grace, mercy, truth, light and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, we will lead from the flesh.

I say truth and light here a lot because it seems as though there is influence from hidden storylines that need uncovering by the light of scripture and the counsel of the Holy Spirit in order to *not make this a fight about power and protection of the hidden, but to make it about His Kingdom come.*

I lost trust when my pastor, in front of my elders, weaponized Jonathan’s words about Scott (“unsanctified mercy”), to persuade Scott’s position. “Jonathan said this about you”...This is manipulation. This is sowing discord. How is this OK?

I know I have said a lot. I will quit here. Most of this is written by me, Lauri but Scott has contributed and is in full agreement.

We love you.

In tears and prayer for the Body of Christ. He will have His Church and He will have His Bride.