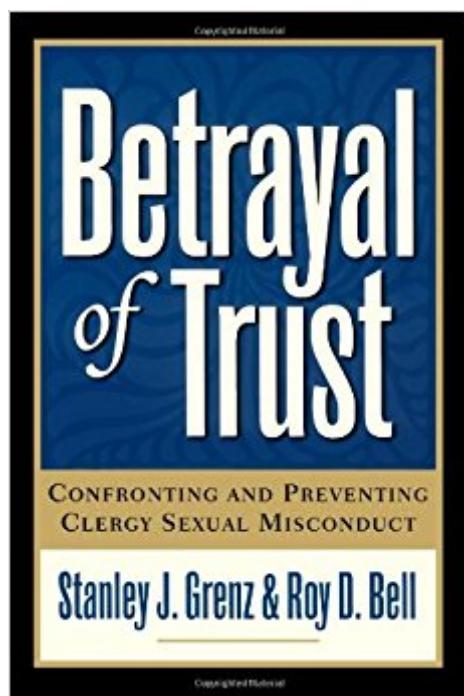


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# Betrayal Of Trust: Confronting And Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct



## **Synopsis**

Sexual misconduct by clergy is a devastating issue that reaches across all denominations, damaging the credibility of the church in its wake. The media regularly reports on the moral failure of leaders and abuse at the hands of those who are supposed to be trustworthy. Betrayal of Trust focuses on a common scenario of abuse--sexual involvement between a male pastor and a female congregant--and offers practical solutions on how to respond to and prevent this betrayal of trust. This book presents methods that will help churches respond sensitively to victims and implement policies and procedures to prevent abuse from taking place. For clergy who may be at risk for this behavior, it offers help in establishing appropriate boundaries. This second edition includes a new chapter that offers help for the wandering pastor and a risk-determination questionnaire for pastors who may become abusers.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Clergy sexual misconduct has become a crisis of nearly epidemic proportions. Without exception, these incidents inflict terrible pain on victims and tarnish the credibility of the Church in society. A comprehensive look at the problem, Betrayal of Trust offers practical, Scripture-based ideas on how to prevent abuse, minister to victims, and respond appropriately to cases of misconduct. "Having spent the last thirty years researching and writing about clergy sexual misconduct, I was most pleased to see how right on target Betrayal of Trust was. It is a sensitive, nonjudgmental examination of the risks facing clergy in this arena." --Archibald D. Hart, Ph.D., FPPR, Dean

Emeritus, Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary" The authors skillfully tackle the demands of compassion, justice, the restoration of integrity, and spiritual healing. This book should be read carefully and its suggested prescriptions applied thoughtfully in churches and Christian agencies everywhere."--Morris H. Chapman, president and CEO, Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention"Good news for victims of clergy sexual abuse, for churches harmed, and for professionals working to help heal the deep mental, emotional, and spiritual wounds."--Christie Smith Stephens, cofounder, Women's Alternatives, Inc., Anderson, Indiana"When Texas Baptists were charged to do a two-year comprehensive study of clergy sexual abuse, the text we turned to again and again was *Betrayal of Trust*." --Joe E. Trull, editor, Christian Ethics Today

Stanley J. Grenz, professor of theology and ethics at Carey/Regent College, is the author of more than twenty books.Roy D. Bell recently retired from his pos

Clergy sexual misconduct is a complex topic. Attempting to identify, prevent and even confront it is even more arduous. In their book, "Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct", Stanley Grenz and Roy Bell attempt to tackle the gambit of definition, identification, prevention and confrontation of this topic, and they succeed. Grenz and Bell take a decidedly clinical approach to the book, rather than primarily a theological or pastoral vantage point (they do deal with the issue as it relates to pastors and their church communities, but most insight, sources, support and direction comes from the clinical arena). This gives the text credence to the professional therapeutic community, as well as the clergy world. While the book clearly articulates ethical implications of clergy sexual misconduct, it also investigates the far reaching effects on all parties involved- the victims, the pastor-offender, the pastor family, the local church congregation and even the broader representation of the pastoral offender as they stand as a representative Christ to the world/broader community. For me, the most profound contribution of the book was to show (through numerous examples) that the definition of sexual misconduct is centered in the power granted (and used) by the offender via their position, status or trust in the local church community. It is, then, from this position of power that misconduct is carried out, both because of its ability for the man in power to compel an opportunity for the woman to receive his advances and for the further use of that power to enforce an atmosphere of silence. Quoting psychologist Peter Rutter, the entire book is hinged on this specifically defined understand of sexual misconduct: "any behavior by a man in power within what I define as the forbidden zone is inherently exploitive[sp] of

a woman's trust."<sup>[1]</sup> and "sexual conduct between men in power and women under their care."<sup>[2]</sup>This definition of sexual misconduct as being rooted in a man's position of power is crucial to identifying, preventing and challenging the behavior, as the author's demonstrate by numerous examples. The first chapter of the book begins with explaining the extent to which misconduct has spread through all denominations and spheres of the Christian church. After that, the chapter identifies the scope of the problem across a range of spheres which such misconduct will impact-the pastor, the family, the church, the victim, and the gospel itself.The second chapter explores the categorizations and situations in which a pastor can be "at risk" for sexual misconduct. Chapters three and four explore the definitions and implications to which sexual misconduct is a betrayal of the trust and a misuse of power on the part of the offender. In this section, the authors essentially place all responsibility for sexual misconduct between a minister and a congregant firmly on the shoulders of the minister. They quote Marie Fortune (which concurs with several other cited sources) by saying succinctly:"it is the man's responsibility, no matter what the level of provocation or apparent consent by the woman, to assure that sexual behavior does not take place."<sup>[3]</sup>Through a series of layered, logical arguments about power, authority and trust, the authors establish that the above is not only true, but is almost exclusively a male problem.<sup>[4]</sup> While not stating that it is inherently a male causation at work in the issue, the problem is due to the inequities of positions of power (both clergy and otherwise) being so dominated by men. Since power is at the base of the problem, people in power are the source of the misconduct.The book goes on to make several helpful observations about how to minister to various groups of victims, recommendations and methodologies for prevention of misconduct, and even church response and possible guidelines for (church) governmental policies that may be helpful. All these items seem helpful.One other very helpful point made by the book comes in the form of a listing of three proto-typical offenders of sexual misconduct: the predator, the wanderer, and the lover. While the stereotypes aren't perfect, they articulate well the kind of people who may offend and what options we can consider in dealing with them. Most poignantly, the wanderer seems to be potentially the most effective area to focus our efforts at prevention and restoration. This is a helpful way to think about the issue, since it seems a fairly even-handed and thoughtful evaluation of what kinds of people may offend the privilege of the clergy position, for what reasons they might do so and how they might be equipped to avoid such offence.That said, there were parts of the book that didn't seem complete or evenhanded. While understanding that clergy power certainly holds sway over congregants, what was not addressed was the authority of a spouse of a clergy member. Specifically, the wife of a minister holds similar power over a local congregation to her husband. Through the relationship, and

depending on her personality, this power can be exploited in equally covert or intentional ways over congregants. This, or even examples of any female ministers involved in sexual misconduct, were not dealt with. More than just female ministers, the area of female spouses of ministers was an area that was ignored and needed inclusion in the book. Similarly, the book did not deal with inverse relationships in local congregations where congregants may actually hold power over the pastoral/ministerial persons. Because the local church community is an enduring symbol of both Christ and his earthly family, any distinction and position of people within the community provides power, and thus, opportunity for misconduct. There are two examples where this holds concern. The first type of person/position of concern are board members of local churches. In many church governments, the board members actually hold ultimate power over the local church ministers. Such positions, again rooted in power, leave room for misconduct both sexual or otherwise. We all know examples of possible abuse of power over pastors by begrudging and self-interested boards and board members. As much as this kind of power influences the pastor, it also likewise influences the congregants who understand this power relationship. In some churches, this position is esteemed even higher than the current pastor (whose ultimate fate often lies with the board and its members). Abuse of this power center, by controlling ministers or congregants must assume to be equally apt to delve into misconduct as would the minister itself. Again, men would comprise the largest portion of most church boards and their power over pastors, staff and congregant women seems an obvious area to include in the concerns of this book. The second area that is akin to a board member of a church are influential and powerful member/contributors to local churches. Many churches, especially small ones, are often beholden to contributions from particularly powerful members with vastly disproportionate financial means. Again, this leaves a defacto position of power in the hands of those members, who often covertly exert this power over the pastor or the ministerial staff (including volunteers). These kinds of positions of power give rise to exploitation, where unhealthy people are involved. Dealing with these in relationship to clergy misconduct seems particularly pertinent in my opinion, but again were left out from the purview of the book. That said, the majority of the book is insightful, compelling and helpful for churches and ministers. The oversights I have mentioned would have improved the book, but ultimately didn't deter from the book's effectiveness in the areas it attended to. For people with roles as pastoral leaders in church team, the most helpful thing to be learned from this book was the relationship of position/power to the potentiality of misconduct- that the minister is inherently endued with control in relationship to a congregant vis-Ã -vis the locus of power attendant to their position. Along with this control comes the corresponding responsibility for any and all actions of sexual misconduct between pastor to

congregant.[1] Stanley J. Grenz & Roy D. Bell, "Betrayal of Trust: confronting and preventing clergy sexual misconduct", (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2001), Pg 17[2] Ibid., Pg 17[3] Ibid., Pg 94[4] Ibid., Pg 17,19

This book is very enlightening to those dealing with trust and betrayal issues.

Since class does not start for another seven weeks, I have not even scanned the book. I should be interesting.

Stanley Grenz and Roy Bell have written a comprehensive book on how to confront and prevent clergy sexual abuse. I found the book to be both disturbing and comforting at the same time. When I first began to read the book I was shocked at the statistics the authors gave regarding both the prevalence and the types of clergy sexual abuse. Perhaps because of all the stories of Catholic priests abusing altar boys, I tend to think of clergy sexual abuse as being a male pastor acting inappropriately toward a younger male parishioner. As grievous as such actions are, Grenz and Bell make it vividly clear that the bigger problem is male pastors having inappropriate sexual encounters with female parishioners. The authors clearly explained that there are other types of sexual misconduct out there, but research shows that the male pastor on female parishioner is the most prominent. I did not realize this was such a huge issue and the book helped me grasp the enormity of the situation in a new way. So from that perspective, the book was disturbing. As one begins to think about sexual misconduct, it is obvious that such behavior is a betrayal of trust between the pastor and the church member. Grenz and Bell state that "effective ministry can occur only within a climate of trust" (page 7). Therefore, once an issue of sexual misconduct has occurred, it becomes very difficult to rebuild that level of trust. I appreciated the authors' definition of misconduct, which was "misconduct includes any sexual contact between men in power and women under their care." They further define sexual contact as "any physical contact or bodily movement intended to express or arouse erotic interest" (page 17). While it may seem juvenile to have to define such simple things, the human capacity to rationalize and deny is so great that such clear definitions become necessary in the world in which we live. Having such clear and concise definitions is actually comforting to me as a mission administrator because it helps me know exactly what I am trying to deal with. Clear definitions keep me free from verbal games that offending pastor may want to play. I very much appreciated their clear description of the type of pastor most prone to sexual failure. This description included pastors with a fear of intimacy, unrealistic expectations of marriage, learned attitudes and

addictions, low self esteem and the need for approval, codependency and the desire to rescue (page 48-52). Though I agreed with almost the entire book, I did strongly disagree with their assertion that "all young men are socialized to some degree to see women as prey, seductresses who will say no and mean yes. Violence, in turn, becomes eroticized, as violent and abusive acts, especially against women; themselves trigger sexual arousal in men" (page 66). I disagree with the word "all." I think that is a gross overgeneralization. Overgeneralizations are seldom helpful or correct. I thought that the best quote in the book was: "The possession of power can lead to the abuse of power" (page 92). This is true in the area of sexuality, but also in any other area of life. It has often been said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Another great quote from the book was, "No one - not even a dedicated servant of God - is automatically exempt from the pull of the thought of an illicit sexual encounter. Therefore, the pastor who would guard his moral integrity must come to grips with his susceptibility, both as a male pastor and as an individual" (page 133). The section of the book that brought the most comfort to me was the section that included clear ideas of how to handle abuse. To know that there is a plan is a comfort. To know that a church can work through it and survive and that both the pastor and his victim can indeed overcome this terrible ordeal is in itself a great relief.

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