



WAYS  
TO  
HELP  
A  
CHURCH  
AT  
RISK

A practical approach to make a real difference on behalf of a church who may find themselves in harm's way.

# OVERVIEW



## THE BIG PICTURE

Whether you know of a church that is showing signs of unhealth, are a responsible overseer of such a church, or are sensing the warning signs for your own church, the longing to *do something* to interrupt the potential damage can be strong.

Your desire to take action is laudable; it is much easier to “let someone else handle it” when the topic is as painful as spiritual abuse. But the fallout is too great to turn a blind eye.

**Wise, humble, courageous action is both warranted and necessary.**

We recommend a three-pronged approach to intercept this situation and reduce the potential fallout for the church and the individuals standing in harm’s way.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

- Ephesians 1:17-19 (niv)

# PRAYER

THE FIRST WORK

## PRAYER

When the enemy has gotten a foothold in a church – or is prowling – the battle is dark, and the resulting impact can be devastating. Not only are people harmed, but their faith in God, pastors, and the church can be damaged, cutting them off from the very source of the healing they need most.

The potency of this kind of attack will only be broken through the power of God – shining light, breaking down strongholds, and opening the eyes of those in harm’s way – and through the power of earnest prayer.

We recommend a prayer initiative of 5-7 seasoned believers who know both the power of God to rescue AND who’ve seen the wreckage the enemy can bring. Prayer is a vital, first work.

When the disciples were confused about why they weren’t seeing deliverance happening, Jesus said, “but this type won’t leave except by prayer and fasting.”

- Matthew 17:21 (nlt)

*Note: The work of prayer begins with humility – and humility is a key component against the pride which is so often at play in the cultures of churches at risk.*



## RESOURCES

- Prayer Guide (to intercede on behalf of a church at risk)
- Assistance Recruiting Prayer Team

# LIGHT

EVERY BIT OF LIGHT HELPS

## LIGHT

In a church culture that is unhealthy or in trouble, defenses may be up. Turning on the lights must be done gently, providing a safe place for people to begin to see what has been previously hidden to them. That process requires **gentleness, care**, and shrewd **wisdom**.

When it comes to speaking up, It can be tempting to hesitate, thinking that It won't do any good—that our words won't change anything. But that's not our job; it's GOD'S. HE is the One who shines light into darkness and can change a human heart. OUR job is to simply follow His promptings. Sometimes light makes things worse before they get better, but even so, the reality is this: **every bit of light helps**.

We recommend raising awareness of the topic of church health gently and wisely:

- Be willing to validate the good you see in the church mission and programs.
- Ask non-threatening, specific questions about what you see that concerns you (i.e., How many hours did you work on that project? What Is your day off? When was the last time you said no?)
- Speak up when you see something that feels “off” to you. Don't dismiss red flags (or even yellow ones).
- Offer a Church Health Survey to the church staff & volunteers.

And Elisha prayed, 'O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes...

- 2 Kings 6:17 (nlt)

## RESOURCES

- Church Staff and Volunteer Survey
- Confidential Analysis, Aggregated Results, and Action Points to Consider
- District Conference Sessions & Breakout Presentations



# BRIDGES

SPEAK SO YOU MAY BE HEARD



## BRIDGES

Coming to the realization that something's not right takes immense courage – and is almost impossible without the support of those who are willing to see along with you.

We recommend meeting with individuals in the church in stand-alone conversations. Even a brief personal connection will give a church member someone they can call or approach when/if they want to cross the bridge toward help & health.

More members than you know may be trapped, afraid, and feeling alone. While these conversations may or may not bear immediate visible fruit, the seeds planted have great potential for help, hope, and healing – either now or down the road.

Building connections where you talk about the culture, listen to their needs, and offer your phone number can serve as a reminder that you (&/or the denominational team) care for them, not just the pastor or the bottom line.

I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one.

- Ezekiel 22:30 (nlt)

## RESOURCES

- Bridge-Building Conversations: Five Questions to Ask
- Bridge-Building Conversations: Video Training

# TAKING ACTION QUICK SHEET

## PRAYER

- Recruit 5-7 people to pray together for this church
- Only God can do this—so prayer must be our first work
- Pray for those in the community by name
- Be specific in your requests
- Listen as you pray, remembering that Jesus is also interceding for this community
- Pray for light to break through
- Remember the miracles you've seen in your own life and those in scripture as you pray
- Use scriptures to fuel your prayers
- Consider using an "On Our Knees" Prayer Guide to inform your prayers

## BRIDGES

- Build connections, showing care for the whole person
- Practice gentleness & curiosity
- Ask honest, caring questions and leave room for answers
- Pray for light for those with whom you build bridges
- Take them to lunch or coffee
- Follow up to let them know you're thinking of them

## LIGHT

- Speak up when you see something that feels "off" to you. Don't dismiss red flags (or even yellow ones)
- Don't wait for the "right" time
- It is caring and loving to shine light (truth is what sets us free)
- Shining light isn't about being right—practice humility (but not undue deference)
- Ask non-threatening, specific questions about what you see that concerns you (i.e., How many hours did you work on that project? What is your day off? When was the last time you said no to a church leader/request?)
- Be willing to validate the good you see in the church mission and programs
- Offer a Church Health Survey to church staff & volunteers
- Model healthy practices, being curious, and showing real care & compassion
- Take courage and step forward with kindness
- Listen for ways you may be prompted to speak or take action
- Remember that you are uniquely positioned to shine light to people within your reach





# THE WAY HOME MINISTRIES

Recovering a life of thriving faith  
in the aftermath of spiritual abuse

[theway-home.org](http://theway-home.org)