

September 13, 2013

To the Elders of Harvest Bible Chapel,

We are former elders of Harvest. Although most of us have moved on to other ministries, we still care for the people of Harvest, in whom we invested so much during our respective tenures. It is largely out of concern for them that we are writing today.

Each of us had his own reasons for leaving Harvest. Some of us left on our own initiative; others resigned under duress; still others were terminated. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that Senior Pastor James MacDonald played a role in all of our departures—in many cases a significant role.

While a few of us have spoken up regarding our experiences at Harvest, most have remained silent. We have done so because we did not want to displease the Lord nor hurt the church. Now we sense that our silence might actually be hurting the church and displeasing the Lord. So we have decided to make this joint statement to you, the current elders, in order to bring clarity where there might be confusion—to testify about our experiences working with James.

This is not simply a matter of unresolved conflict or personal offenses, but rather a matter of Christian discipline. We have serious reservations about James' *character*. Scripture is clear that pastors and elders are to be "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7). The character qualifications are spelled out clearly in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-5. It is our opinion that James does not meet a number of these qualifications. There are also nearly twenty disqualifying traits listed in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. It is our opinion that these apply substantially to James.

We have witnessed the following attitudes and behaviors in James:

- *Pride and arrogance.* An elder should not be "puffed up with conceit" (1 Timothy 3:6), and "He must not be arrogant" (Titus 1:7). We are to avoid those who are "proud, arrogant" (2 Timothy 3:2) and "swollen with conceit" (2 Timothy 3:4).
- *Lack of respect for authority; acting as if the rules do not apply to him.* We are to avoid those who are "disobedient" to authority figures (2 Timothy 3:2) and refuse to acknowledge the authority of others (3 John 1:9).
- *Excessive risk-taking; recklessness.* An elder should be "sober-minded, self-controlled" (1 Timothy 3:2) and "disciplined" (Titus 1:8). We are to avoid those who are "without self-control" (2 Timothy 3:3) and "reckless" (2 Timothy 3:4).

- *Self-promotion; wanting to be the center of attention; a high need for affirmation.* We are to avoid those who are “lovers of self” (2 Timothy 3:2).
- *The love of money; an entitlement mentality.* An elder should not be “a lover of money” (1 Timothy 3:3) nor “greedy for gain” (Titus 1:7). He should not exercise oversight “for shameful gain” (1 Peter 5:2). We are to avoid those who are “lovers of money” (2 Timothy 3:2).
- *Domineering and bullying; the need for preeminence and control; driving out those who disagree with him.* An elder should not be “domineering over” those in his charge (1 Peter 5:3). He should not like to “put himself first” (3 John 1:9), nor readily put out of the church those who disagree with him (3 John 1:10).
- *A critical spirit; abusive speech; brutality in dealing with others.* An elder should not be “violent but gentle” (1 Timothy 3:3; cp. Titus 1:7). We are to avoid those who are “abusive” and “ungrateful” (2 Timothy 3:2), as well as “heartless” and “brutal” (2 Timothy 3:3).
- *Outbursts of anger; quarrels; slander.* An elder should not be “quarrelsome” (1 Timothy 3:3) nor “quick-tempered” (Titus 1:7). We are to avoid those who are “slanderous” (2 Timothy 3:3).
- *Vindictiveness; an unwillingness to forgive or to seek forgiveness for wrongs committed.* We are to avoid those who are “unappeasable” (2 Timothy 3:3).
- *Disloyalty and divisiveness.* We are to avoid those who are “treacherous” (2 Timothy 3:4), as well as “a person who stirs up division” (Titus 3:10).
- *Making misleading statements; manipulating history in order to divert responsibility away from himself.* The Apostle Paul “renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways” and refused “to practice cunning” (2 Corinthians 4:2).
- *Using flattery to gain advantage; playing the “pity card” to gain sympathy.* The Apostle Paul eschewed “flattery” (1 Thessalonians 2:5).
- *A bad reputation with people outside the church.* An elder should be “well thought of by outsiders” (1 Timothy 3:7).

We have not detailed specific incidents here, because we are not talking about isolated incidents but rather repeated patterns of behavior over many years involving many people. If such specifics are required, we are prepared to bring forth a host of specific examples with witnesses for each of the behaviors listed above.

Such attitudes and behaviors are unbecoming of a believer and clearly disqualify a person from ministry—at least until there is genuine repentance and restoration to ministry. Thus, we are convinced that James is not, at this time, biblically qualified to be an elder at a church, let alone a senior pastor. Those of us who left on our own accord did so because we could no longer follow his spiritual leadership in good conscience. To date the elders appear not to be aware of these behaviors that we have witnessed, or you are aware and have simply failed to act.

These are serious allegations. We are aware that Scripture contains stern warnings against false witness (Exodus 20:16; 23.1; Deuteronomy 19:15-20). Yet it is also replete with people being called out for their sinful behavior, especially those in positions of leadership. Consider what the Apostle John said about Diotrefes, who was both usurping and abusing authority within the church: “Diotrefes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church” (3 John 1:9-10). So we pray that you will receive our testimony with the utmost seriousness.

1 Timothy 5:19-20 says, “Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” By adding our names to this statement, the biblical stipulation for evidence has been met, even exceeded. Many of us over the years have approached James privately about these matters, but to no avail, and at times with harmful and slanderous consequences.

You, the elders, have a responsibility to address these disqualifying character traits. The Lord has called you to shepherd the sheep (Acts 20:28), not to provide cover for the senior pastor’s egregious behavior, nor to hide information about his income. If Harvest is going to get back to its original God-honoring purpose, the problem of James’ character must be confronted.

We have raised these concerns with you because we believe that we have a Christian obligation to do so. We have prayed at length over these issues and feel that our descriptions are accurate, and that our Christian duty is clear. We are writing in our individual capacity as Christians, not as part of any other organization or church. We do so respectfully in the hope of advancing Christ’s kingdom and preventing further damage to His church, which will continue unabated if this matter is not addressed.

Notwithstanding our assessment of James’ character, we continue to pray for him. We pray that the Lord will bring him to a point of deep, unquestionably genuine repentance and evident change of heart. We also pray that you will have the wisdom and the courage to do what honors the Lord and promotes the health of His church.

Having said these things, we have fulfilled our duty to warn (Ezekiel 3:17-21). How you respond is between you and the Lord. May He grant you wisdom and discernment to that end.

Sincerely,

Ron Allichin  
Dave Corning  
Sam Jindoyan  
Jim Jodrey  
Dan Marquardt  
Scott Phelps  
Daryl Rice  
Barry Slabaugh