Why Talk About Them, and Why Now?

So why talk about certain people? And if I'm fulfilled, why me? Well, first of all, I'm not mentioning all the bad, nor all the bad people. Just the ones that continue to affect people I know and care about over 20 years after the initial events.

Dembrosky and Longaker after completing their sentences, and Chameleon in general, have served in churches after all this that I've discussed and more, and I'm not the only one who has expressed concern. Ray has continued to use his credentials as he is known as a former "preacher" even over a decade later, to discredit the Bible. It is important to know that he was just as much out of touch with God, and possibly reality, as I was during high school. Not many people in high school are in touch with reality, to be fair to us both, but that doesn't negate the point. He isn't an authority, and even around his 20s sometimes made things up about Hebrew or Greek when he was a Bible study leader, such as when I asked him about the meaning of "wait" in Isaiah 40:31 and at least one other time. It was clear he wanted to be the person with the answers. That can be beneficial or not, depending on whether it is a matter of seeking to become an worthy of a calling or merely an end in itself, and whether authority is shared with others where appropriate. Seeking to be "the" person with the answers vs "a" person with answers, and having a need to be needed vs a reasonable scope of authority are also important distinctions.

The ability of someone to be forgiven is not the only thing to consider. There is also the potential for ongoing harm. That can be prevented by recognizing it, but also by confronting matters of public concern publicly. That can include the legal system where applicable, or by speaking out (such as before or after a sentence is served, or if the harm to churches isn't illegal). Ongoing harm is likely in with these cases, having signs of false repentance such as denying facts that are a matter of record or of my own witness. If someone cannot admit their wrongdoing in a specific way, or can deny it outright, that is not a sign of repentance.

I have seen a problem from my childhood continue to today. Often churches view perpetrators as people to be given endless chances, and to be placed in roles without fact-checking. On the other hand, churches may view survivors of abuse as permanently biased. If you give hope to the perpetrator, why not the victim? If victims have ongoing concerns about a perpetrator, they are told to "just forgive." Let me tell you, I have been able to forgive a lot, but it doesn't mean I want the same thing to happen to other people. On the other hand, do you think someone who would harm a child, especially in felonious ways, just may have permanent issues? I do generally believe anyone can change, but if someone can do that, there are sometimes signs that they are not willing--despite wanting to be seen as willing, humble, and good, like most people do.

So what about that "Biblical confrontation" thing I talked about at the beginning? Matthew 18 talks about forgiveness and confronting. I don't think that is a mistake, nor random placement. If the forgiveness and grace aren't balanced out by rigorous confrontation, with a desire to mend but a path forward barring that, there is a serious threat. Confrontation is the immune system of the church. Sometimes I have seen just a hint of confrontation make someone throw themselves right out. But you don't always get off that easy. Sometimes you have to hold someone to their word, and to the facts. If they don't match, or there is stated or demonstrated unwillingness to change, you may have to ban them, we might say in modern terms.

Then there are matters of public concern. Even the Bible deals with these problems in a more drastic way than banning. For one, Jesus definitely had a different approach toward the Pharisees than toward the woman at the well. The apostle Paul wrote letters to several churches, including ones who weren't willing to deal with issues, even though some of the issues weren't illegal. Such a church's immune system has failed. In some cases Paul named the wrong that was being done right in the letter. In some cases, he even named names--and that isn't just a community discussion, and not just a public record, but in this case "it is written" for eternity. I'm not saying that when I speak "it is written," I'm in fact saying that I've been less extreme. In the cases of the people I'm discussing, instead of due diligence and due process in the ways I've discussed, leaders where enamored with the charisma and storytelling that a self-promoting person, or even someone merely suddenly accepted but not mature, provides. Either way, in many cases novices are put in leadership despite the Bible's warnings of destructive pride in such a scenario.

One thing that makes this pertinent is that last I checked, Longaker was a pastor. They knew what he did and still believed his minimized story that didn't match the public record (and still wouldn't be ok at all in his version). I don't know whether the survivor approves of this site, or of naming her. However, I've so far done my best to stand with her: She tried to warn his church but they reprimanded her instead in a letter, and then she went to a local newspaper. In that case she is publicly named and on record of her own accord. The article pointed out that there were telltale signs that Longaker himself was this "Mike Adams" who wrote the letter.

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