

# The Pattern of Failure - Lessons from 246 Pastors Fell Within a Two Year Period

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*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: Although the subjects of this study were all pastors, its lessons are just as applicable to all men and women as well. May the Lord Jesus help all of us to be faithful to Him and our spouses (current or future) until He takes us home.*

During my time in seminary I took a leadership course taught by the late, great Howard Hendricks. As we studied the life of David, Hendricks shared a study he conducted with a group of men in full-time ministry who had fallen into a morally disqualifying sin.

At the time, I had only been a Christian for a few years, but unfortunately the subject was all too relevant. During my early days I had witnessed several men whom I loved and respected fall into serious sinful compromise. At one point in those days, the falls came so frequently I felt as if I was on the spiritual beach of Normandy watching buddies' lives get blown apart all around me.

**Fallen Soldiers of Christ.** The study examined 246 men in full-time ministry who experienced moral failure within a two-year period. As far as Hendricks could discern, these full-time clergy were born-again followers of Jesus. Though they shared a common salvation, these men also shared a common feat of devastation; they had all, within 24 months of each other, been involved in an adulterous relationship.

After interviewing each man, Hendricks compiled four common characteristics of their lives:

1. None of the men was involved in any kind of real personal accountability.
2. Each of the men had all but ceased having a daily time of personal prayer, Bible reading, and worship.
3. More than 80 percent of the men became sexually involved with the other woman after spending significant time with her, often in counseling situations.
4. Without exception, each of the 246 had been convinced that sort of fall "would never happen to me."

As I reflect on this study, four lessons come to mind. These are applicable for pastors, plumbers, stay-at-home moms, and anyone else who seeks to follow Christ.

**1. Sin thrives in isolation.** Satan lives in the darkness and longs to keep us there. Lies live best in the darkness. That's why when God calls us to himself, he calls us into the church.

God has created the church to be many things, including a community of people who help each other fight sin and love him. He calls us into relationships where we speak truth to one another (Eph. 4:15, 25), confess sins to one another (James 5:16), and love each other enough to chase after each other if we stray (Matt. 18:10-20; Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20).

Who knows you? I mean, who really knows you? Who not only has permission, but is currently acting upon that permission to ask you penetrating questions? Are you answering those questions honestly, or are you hiding details and painting over your sin to guard your image? Do not hide from God's gracious aid of loving relationships.

2. If you flirt with sin, you will ...

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