

May 24, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters,

Last Sunday, the Southern Baptist Convention’s Sexual Abuse Task Force released a report on sexual abuse and how reports of such abuse have been handled by the SBC’s Executive Committee over the last ten years. The task force hired an outside firm, Guidepost Solutions, to conduct a thorough, independent investigation into the Executive Committee regarding, “allegations of abuse, mishandling of abuse, mistreatment of victims, patterns of intimidation of victims or advocates, and resistance to sexual abuse reform initiatives.”¹ The findings contained in the report are heartbreaking and appalling. The report details how hundreds of cases of abuse were reported to the Executive Committee over the last ten years, and how the Executive Committee—steered by a few senior leaders and their legal advisors—sought to protect the organization from potential liability instead of protecting victims. They stonewalled efforts to implement reforms, and even attacked the character and motives of victims who spoke out.² Meanwhile, some SBC senior leaders protected or supported abusers, and two senior members of the Executive Committee were even themselves credibly accused of sexual assault.³ On top of that, some even weaponized the belief in biblical authority and cooperative mission to dismiss victims and shift focus away from dealing with sexual abuse.⁴ The report itself contains the full findings, as well as the background of the investigation, the methods used, copies of source materials, and a list of recommended changes to address the problems. You can access the full report at SATaskForce.net. But be forewarned, it is an upsetting read.

It is clear from the findings of this investigation that we as Southern Baptists have failed in many ways when it comes to addressing sexual abuse in our midst. The SBC has failed to hold to account the abusers and those who enabled them, and in so doing have failed the most vulnerable among us—those who were assaulted. The Bible tells us to confront sin and put unrepentant sinners out of the church (Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5:9-13; cf. 1 Tim 3:1-13, Tit 1:6-9), but over the past ten years SBC leaders have enabled them not only to remain but to continue in positions of leadership and authority. Southern Baptists have also failed to treat with dignity those who had the courage to report their abuse and advocate for change; failed to listen to them, protect them, advocate for justice on their behalf, or heed their calls for reformation. The Bible says that disciples of Christ are to walk in the light and in the truth, exposing what is in the darkness (Eph 5:7-13). The Bible says that it is the sons of darkness, not sons and daughters of God, that hide

¹ Guidepost Solutions, “Report of the Independent Investigation: The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee’s Response to Sexual Abuse Allegations and an Audit of the Procedures and Actions of the Credentials Committee” (Washington, DC: Guidepost Solutions LLC, 2022), 3, accessed 24 May 2022, www.sataskforce.net/s/Guidepost-Solutions-Independent-Investigation-Report_.pdf.

² Guidepost, “Report of the Independent Investigation,” 3, 6.

³ Guidepost, “Report of the Independent Investigation,” 7.

⁴ Guidepost, “Report of the Independent Investigation,” 6.

from the light of the truth (Jn 3:19-21). But our leaders have sought to avoid the truth and now their sins have found them out and we all are reaping the consequences.

We are heartbroken and appalled by what has been revealed within our Southern Baptist family. And just as Daniel (Dan 9:3-19), Ezra (Ezr 9:6-15), and Nehemiah (Neh 1:4-11) identified with the people of God in confessing and repenting of the people's sins, so we acknowledge and repent of the sins of our denomination. We want to say clearly that we stand with the victims of abuse. We don't have answers for why these things were allowed to occur or why they were allowed to persist for so long. But we know that God loves those whom he created in his image and whom he sent his Son to save. We know that God is angered and offended by leaders who prey on the flock instead of protecting it (Jer 23, Eze 34, 2 Pet 2:1-3; cf. Jer 29:20-23). The Bible tells us that God is an avenger of justice to the oppressed (Ps 103:6, 146:5-9), and that includes those who have been sinned against sexually (1 Thess 4:3-6). We also acknowledge that each of us will have different feelings of grief over the sins laid bare in this report. Whether we feel anger, or sadness, or despair, or numbness—or a mixture of any number of feelings—we can know that God sees us and hears us. The psalms and prophets give us examples of people turning to God with a range of feelings in response to injustice. And we too can and we must turn to him for healing and hope. We are also committed to channelling our grief into actions that bear the fruit of repentance, beginning with our local church.

We know that we will not be perfect in our response, but we will strive to hear and to believe the victims of abuse, to weep with those who weep, and to be a shelter to those who are wounded. We also want you to know that even before this report was published, our leaders had raised the issue of needing to be better educated about abuse prevention, and begun discussing what protocols and systems we need to put into place to prevent abuse in our midst. We now see the need to act faster. The California Southern Baptist Convention recently informed us of a new State law regarding prevention of abuse among youth and children that we are now learning about and seeking to comply with. And we are looking into training and resources for our leaders to help us prevent abuse, and to prepare to care well for victims of abuse. This is an on-going process, but you're welcome to both volunteer to help us and keep us accountable to actually implementing meaningful changes in the near future. We believe in active membership—that every member is an active contributor—and so we encourage everyone to join with us in prayer and participation as we together strive to create a culture of mutual accountability and truthfulness, and a culture that dignifies every man, woman, and child as an image-bearer of God, worthy of protection from abuse of any kind.

Our hope is in the Lord and his love for his church.

Humbly in Christ,

Pastor Mickey Hsiao
Senior Pastor

Pastor Nick Hsieh
English Congregation Pastor

Alight Tsai
Council Chairman