

David and Good Men Gone Astray

Good men can and do go astray. Some stray for a season, some for the remainder of their lives. Dr. Kevin Ezell, President of NAMB and Dr. Bill Warren, President of MD/DE Convention not only went astray from God's commands in their actions with the MD/DE Convention and me, they led others to do so also. James 3:13-18 is real and was displayed.

What happened to the MD/DE Convention (Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network) and to me personally has multiple parallels in Scripture, one of which is the story of David's life found in 2 Sam. 11 and 12. David was a man after God's heart, but strayed far away because of his desire for something that was not rightfully his and belonged to another man. He had all a leader could want or ask, but he wanted what he wanted. He used his power, position, staff, his general Joab and others to do wrong in the eyes of God and man to (1) get what he wanted and (2) coverup his actions.

Cover-up

David plotted the coverup, but Uriah's integrity prevented that part of David's scheme from working. Uriah's integrity should have moved David, yet it did not because David was too far from God. While Joab was involved as well, ultimately David was responsible for the death of Uriah. David sent a messenger to comfort Joab in the matter because both men knew what they did was wrong.

God uses Nathan to bring Repentance

Nothing escapes the eye of God. God used Nathan to reveal in the light what David did in secret. Nathan communicated with David in keeping with 2 Tim. 2:24-26. Even though David had multiple opportunities to turn from his sin and repent before God, the prophet Nathan was the one to get his attention. David was responsive to Nathan to see his sin, which he acknowledged and repented. God had mercy on him, but David and his family suffered the consequences of his sin.

If it could happen to David a man after God's heart, it could and did happen in our case. The Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network was a sister organization, NOT one financially dependent upon or even more importantly under the authority of Dr. Ezell, his staff or NAMB. Yet, Dr. Ezell wrongfully took bullying and ungodly actions against me and the Network for own his purposes.

Dr. Ezell's actions, gone astray

The Bible reminds us that we are all known by our actions, even small children [Prov. 20:11](#). We are not known by our intentions.

By all appearances, Ezell acted in keeping with the desire for NAMB to get out of the Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA) with State Conventions or at least to write new ones that better fit his plans. NAMB's current strategy is to be more directive in their

leadership in the smaller and mid-size state conventions with the use of the resources entrusted to them. Could it be that in working to act in keeping with the Great Commission Resurgence, Dr. Ezell was propelled to overstep his boundaries of authority and ignore some biblical teachings and good partnership in pursuit of what he believed to be a mandate for his leadership? The evidence appears to be clear that he was willing to hurt me and my leadership and the MD/DE Convention to get what he wanted.

Sadly, the written record clearly demonstrates that Dr. Ezell lied about matters related to me. He made false accusations against me. He pressured or bullied the MD/DE Convention. He worked around me as the Executive Director not with me as per the SPA. And when he did not get what he wanted, he gave us written notice to withhold \$1 million dollars of SBC mission money from the MD/DE Convention. His words and actions threatened the MD/DE staff and elected leadership, and the entire ministry and mission of the MD/DE Convention. He gave notice of canceling a written and HISTORIC agreement with the churches of the Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network. Then, unknown to anyone but Dr. Warren, Dr. Ezell made a financial threat to the MD/DE Convention related to my leadership when faced with a Feb. 6, 2015 unanimous vote of the Board of the MD/DE Convention to ...

- (1) unanimously support my leadership in handling the matters with NAMB
- (2) unanimously vote to NOT take NAMB's new 100% offer on church planting which would have canceled the existing Partnership Agreement

Dr. Ezell's threat to withhold SBC resources from MD/DE

According to Dr. Warren, Dr. Ezell made a threat to withhold NAMB support of the Convention as long as I remained in the position of Exec. Director which put ministry, church planters, and jointly funded state missionaries in jeopardy. This threat was not revealed until later in June 2015, when Dr. Warren told multiple pastors of Dr. Ezell's remarks.

In an August 20, 2015 email Dr. Warren attempted to change prior statements about Dr. Ezell's threat against me and the MD/DE Convention, noting a nuance that Dr. Ezell had not promised to withhold "ALL" funding from the MD/DE. Warren copied VP Steve Davis and Dr. Ezell in a chain of exchanges in what looks like Dr. Warren's attempt to provide Dr. Ezell an "out" in his defense of actions against me. However, in a meeting on Thursday night, Sept. 7, 2015 at North Arundel Baptist Church with 6 pastors as witnesses, Pastors Clint Scott and Steve Wolverton confronted Dr. Warren about his statements to them. Dr. Warren with apparent reluctance acknowledged that he had made those statements or ones similar.

In May 2015, I was leading a Vision Team through an exploration of how to advance the mission entrusted to us in the Mid-Atlantic Region. One of the discussion topics was how to replace the \$500,000+ Dr. Ezell was pulling from NAMB's partnership with our budget for 2016 in his reneging on the signed and in force Strategic Partnership Agreement. Among multiple options of raising additional financial support, was the option to designate money to the SBC to cover some of the money that Dr. Ezell had given notice to withdraw from MD/DE. This option certainly would have been a concern to NAMB. Now looking back, I

am reminded that in 2012 some southern states leaders considered similar options to fund work in North America after they observed Dr. Ezell's actions.

Dr. Ezell's Influence in my termination

While Dr. Ezell did not carry out my termination, his lies, false accusations, pressure tactics, and threats to the Convention and to the staff led to my termination and damaged the MD/DE Convention. Interesting to note, Ezell befriended and worked around me with Pres. Warren who led my termination, who the day after my termination tells a Board member that he believes God is leading him to be the next Executive Director. Finally, when I was removed, Ezell reportedly was able to get new agreement with all or virtually all the full funding to the Convention. Related to my termination?

However, this new agreement has NAMB taking control of church planting at 100% and not funding previously jointly funded staff missionaries (ie Evangelism) in opposition to the Feb. 2015 unanimous vote of the MD/DE General Mission Board.

Dr. Warren with similar tactics went astray...

Dr. Warren took similar tactics to Dr. Ezell's. He operated outside of the light without cross examination of facts. He kept me in the dark about his actions, his alleged findings of concerns, or his desire to see me removed. He did not reveal that he would be seeking the Exec. Director position that God had called me to lead.

Warren communicated multiple times across the Network to have my back, but he actually worked behind my back. He also worked around the Admin. Committee Chairman Dr. Harold Phillips who had oversight responsibilities for the staff. Warren's actions created division, shock and has further damaged the MD/DE Convention. Several of the strongest churches in the Convention withdrew financial support from the SBC because of the ungodly methods employed in my termination. They are tired of SBC leadership looking more like American politics than the family of God and under God.

Warren's actions set off shockwaves causing mistrust, darkness, confusion in the staff and pastors, withdrawal of some pastors and churches from support of the Network and the Cooperative Program. Warren and several staff members he manipulated applied for the opening left with my termination.

Good Men, they went Astray...

Firestorm Set Off..

Dr. Ezell set off a firestorm with his actions and ultimately he is responsible for it all as he was entrusted with the leadership of NAMB and its partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network. Ezell, like David, used his power, his position, his staff and the financial resources of Southern Baptists to take what he wanted and used tactics in direct opposition

to Scripture to get what he wanted, eventually removing me to accomplish his larger mission. Now, the cover-up and denial are taking place.

The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Dr. Ezell's actions have not been and will not be limited to me and the MD/DE Convention. Left unexamined and unchecked, this type of behavior on the part of Dr. Ezell will continue to damage relationships, the SBC and the future of cooperative missions in the SBC. His tactics are dangerous to our historic autonomy, but most importantly they do not honor Christ who holds the future of the SBC in His hands.

For the Kingdom, to honor Christ, and the future of cooperative missions in the SBC, this must change. It starts with an independent investigation and then a commitment to follow the Biblical commands when there is sin.

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Related study... Beth Moore's Portraits of Devotion days 55 through day 60 pp. 78-86.