

Minor Attracted Persons – How Will the Church Respond?

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"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This saying is true, and it can be trusted. I was the worst sinner of all!"

The Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15 Contemporary English Version

Trigger Warning: This article covers a sensitive topic that some may find triggering. It is not meant to cause distress. It is meant to show that Jesus Christ can forgive, redeem, and transform anyone. Even those many people see as the worst sinners of all.



Certainly there are quite a few cultural firestorms going on right now. Each firestorm has its share of voices. Some loud. Some soft. Some biblical. Some irrational. It's easy to get our eyes off of Jesus and find our hearts pulled into the turmoil and confusion. During this time, it's important to keep our eyes and hearts focused on Jesus and trust Him to lead us through the storm.

One of the newest cultural firestorms is in the realm of pedophilia. You may have heard the phrase "minor attracted person". This firestorm triggers a wide range of emotions. It also triggers a variety of voices. The loudest voice on my personal social media feed shouts something like, "If you touch any of my kids, I'll kill you." I've heard this voice from Christians and unbelievers

alike. The unexpected voice that brought that response says something like, "Sex between adults and 'consenting' minors can be a beautiful thing". Of course, that voice is completely wrong and utterly destructive. It comes from the camp promoting pedophilia (sexual desires directed towards pre-pubescent children), hebephilia (sexual attraction towards those in early adolescence), and ebophilia (sexual attraction towards mid to late adolescents). They are working to normalize the concept of "minor attracted persons" in much the same way that homosexuality and transgenderism have been normalized over the years.

There is another voice coming from those who are acknowledging the concept of minor attracted persons. It has a different goal. That voice comes from those who admit that they are sexually attracted to minors; however, they see such attractions as problematic and believe that engaging in those attractions is to be avoided at all costs. They are the voice saying things like, "I am a minor attracted person, but I do not want to act upon my attractions. I need help". This voice tends to be very timid. This voice desperately needs help. Help that is very hard to find. It takes a lot of guts for someone to admit that he or she is struggling with attractions that understandably illicit strong negative reactions in the hearts of most people. This group often struggles in silence and isolation. This group desperately needs to hear the voice of the fourth group that says something like, "We hear that you exist and are wrestling with attractions towards something that is very devastating for those involved. Jesus Christ also hears you. He can help you. Jesus Christ can transform your heart and help you overcome attractions to minors."

That is the voice you will hear from Reconciliation Ministries of Michigan. No matter what you struggle with. No matter what you have done. No matter what has been done to you. We are here to walk with you to Jesus. There is help. There is hope. Through my past twenty years of involvement with Reconciliation Ministries, I've had the privilege of seeing Jesus work in the hearts of men and women who were brave enough to admit their sexual attractions to children and come for help. Some acted on their attractions and spent time in the legal system. Others hadn't acted on their desires, but were already imprisoned in condemnation and shame. I've

seen Jesus transform the hearts of these precious, men and women – whom many would label as the worst sinners of all – into bright lights for His glory and grace. Some of them have been brave enough to share their stories with others and help them find freedom and transformation in Christ.

I have to mention one of the biggest challenges that those who are attracted to minors face when they consider getting help; the fear of incarceration. Counselors and ministry team members are mandated reporters for suspected acts of child abuse. That means if we suspect that someone has abused a child who is currently under the age of 18, we are legally obligated to report that situation to child protective services and/or law enforcement officials. I've had to make some of these difficult calls through the years. I've gotten angry responses from a few of those people and their family members. I've been threatened. Surprisingly, I've also been thanked. One time I had to report a counseling client for violating the terms of his parole by spending time with a minor. After he was confronted by his parole officer, he called to thank me. He explained that he knew he wasn't supposed to be involved in this type of situation, but he couldn't stop. He hadn't harmed the minor at that point, but he was afraid he would have if the situation continued. He was repentant. He owned his sin. He was able to move forward without receiving a parole violation or harming an innocent person.

Although it is true that we are mandated reporters of suspected acts of child abuse, we are also legally obligated to uphold confidentiality in situations that are not reportable. If someone comes to us and tells us that they are attracted to minors but have not acted upon those attractions, we are required to uphold confidentiality and will help that participant receive the help that he or she needs. If someone comes to us and confesses that he or she abused a minor in the past, but that minor is now over the age of 18, we are not required to report that situation. I'm sharing this information so that those who have not committed a reportable situation, but may be fearful of prosecution, can receive the help they need.

The question I have for many of you reading this article is, "How will you respond to someone who admits that he or she is either attracted to children, or is a registered sex offender and is looking to the church for help?" Will you reject him or her outright as the worst type of human being alive, or will you see him as one for whom Jesus died? I'll admit I struggled with this years ago when the Lord began to call me to work with sex offenders. At this point we had already seen the pain and devastation of sexual abuse on two close family members we loved dearly. I was outraged that God would ask me to work with offenders after seeing the destructive ripple effects of abuse. The Lord replied, "You Christians say so easily, 'Without the grace of God, there go I.' Do you really believe that, or is it just something that sounds good?". I was broken. I replied, "Okay, Lord. Without Your grace, I'm capable of doing so much worse." To this day, some of the brightest lights I've seen for Jesus are sex offenders who have fully repented and have been transformed into men and women who reflect the image of God.



What voice do you hear in your heart? Is it one of fear and rejection, or is it one that calls others to repentance and offers hope for redemption? Of course, we need appropriate boundaries. Even in the church we may have to follow safety protocols and observe parole/probation restrictions. We can create a safe environment while we walk with those who are struggling. We can be ministers of God's grace and help our brothers and sisters overcome.

If you or someone you know is struggling with sexual attractions to minors, don't hide in the darkness. We at Reconciliation Ministries are here to walk with you to Jesus. He can transform your heart and equip you to walk in freedom. Call us at 586.739.5114.