

Why Governor Sanford Should Resign

needed to put all my cards on the table. I am a huge supporter of Governor Mark Sanford. For six and a half years he has tried to hold the line on the growth of government in South Carolina. You have to love a guy who brings pigs into the legislature to make a point about pork. His methods of communication may seem eccentric but his unyielding commitment to fiscal responsibility has won him a broad majority of support in South Carolina.

He has said “no” to government spending in every way imaginable. He has vetoed the entire state budget and he has vetoed the budget one line at a time. Regardless of the method, the legislature always had the votes to override the vetoes or otherwise defeat Sanford’s attempts at fiscal restraint.

Not only has Governor Sanford labored to bring true fiscal responsibility to the state, he has also been a strong, consistent voice for biblical, moral standards. I realize the irony in that comment considering his current plight but his lapse of character of late does not erase the integrity he has shown in the past in defending marriage, the unborn, and opposing the spread of gambling in the state.

Perhaps the most courageous move by the Governor was his fight against taking \$700 million in so-called stimulus money from the federal government. Sanford rightly reasoned that taking the money would merely allow the government to “kick the can” of debt two years further down the road. The large and temporary infusion of cash will only feed the pig of government spending. It will do nothing to promote a return to a reasonable restraint of government. At best, taking the stimulus money will give the appearance of health to a very sick economy. It is like putting a tourniquet on a deep cut to a major artery. It will stop the bleeding for a time but it will ignore the atrophy that will eventually kill the patient.

My admiration for Governor Sanford’s sometimes unorthodox but principled leadership is, unfortunately, not the point. When Sanford made the decision to allow a casual friendship to “spark” into an adulterous relationship, he betrayed his wife, his sons, his staff, and the people of South Carolina who placed their trust in him as the chief executive of the state. As a Christian, I have one responsibility now that Governor Sanford has confessed and asked for forgiveness for his sin. I must forgive him and restore him as a brother in Christ.

But restoration as a brother does not mean the consequences of betrayal can or should be ignored. While it is unlikely the Republican dominated House or Senate will ultimately be in the mood for impeachment, it shouldn’t have to come to that. Governor Sanford should resign from public office until his private life can be repaired. The road to restoration with his wife and children may have begun but it is a road that is filled with many possible detours. When Jenny Sanford was asked if her husband should resign, she immediately put emphasis back where it belongs. She said she wasn’t concerned about her husband’s career but with the health of her family. I wish her husband felt the same way. Right now, Governor Sanford should leave public service and serve his wife and boys. He should practice the family values that he has championed in the past and put the family first. Rebuilding a marriage and restoring trust as the leader of a family cannot be done

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How can Mark and Jenny Sanford put the affair in the past and work on restoring their relationship when every public appearance will have the Governor's emails to his Argentine mistress as a background? The questions about the abuse of state money and the peering of the press into every nook and cranny of their private life will not stop until their public lives are left behind. People don't go to super speedways to see NASCAR's best make four hundred successful laps around the track. They go to see the wrecks. As much as the people of South Carolina may appreciate the race that Governor Sanford has run, they will not be able to resist the desire to see the details of the wreck he has made of his life. The very nature of a public betrayal requires a private, isolated place for restoration. There is no possibility for isolated reflection in the fish bowl of public life.

Over the past few days, I heard several people invoke the biblical example of David as a defense for Governor Sanford's decision to soldier on in public office. That defense ignores several important points. While it is true David committed adultery and then murder, arguably a much more severe transgression than the transgression of King Saul, God allowed David to stay in office while rejecting Saul. Why? The answer is trust. God no longer trusted Saul because Saul's heart was not in his repentance. Saul was sorry...sorry he got caught and very sorry he was about to lose his position. His plea to Samuel in I Samuel 15:24-26 for forgiveness came from grave desperation, not genuine repentance.

On the other hand, David was a man after God's own heart. David's heart had not changed toward God...he merely lost his way for a time. Because God trusted David He allowed him to remain as king while he suffered the consequences of his sin.

The only ones who know for sure the state of Governor Sanford's heart are Governor Sanford and God. The trust of the people is in question and therefore his effectiveness as a leader is in limbo. Restoring the broken trust of the people can only take place where the trust of God is present.

It pains me to say it but I believe restoring the trust of the people can only be achieved if Governor Sanford seeks to be restored to God and to his wife before asking to be restored to the trust of the people. He should resign and turn his heart toward home.

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