

Vision Forum shuts down after patriarchy proponent's 'serious sins'

by [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#)

November 15, 2013

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(RNS) Citing the “serious sins” of its leader, a Texas-based ministry that promotes home schooling and “male patriarchy” has been shut down by its board.

Doug Phillips wrote on Oct. 30 that he would step down as president of Vision Forum Ministries and stop his speaking engagements after acknowledging an extramarital relationship.

His public admission proved to be a fatal blow for the ministry he headed. Vision Forum was geared for a segment of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians who profess a traditionalist understanding of Scripture, sexuality and gender roles.

“In light of the serious sins which have resulted in Doug Phillips’s resignation from Vision Forum Ministries, the Board of Directors has determined that it is in the best interests of all involved to discontinue operations,” according to a statement on the Vision Forum website.

“We have stopped receiving donations, and are working through the logistical matters associated with the closing of the ministry.”

The board of three families wrote that it was “the best option for the healing of all involved.” Board members Scott Brown, Don Hart and Jim Zes did not return calls for comment.

Phillips is a leader among conservative Christians who shun birth control, believing that large families are a sign of God’s blessings, as seen in his friends Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar’s family on TLC’s “19 Kids and Counting.” He preaches a message of “biblical patriarchy,” in which a man is called to “rule over his

household” and “the God-ordained and proper sphere of dominion for a wife is the household.”

On Nov. 6, Phillips said he still planned to operate the for-profit Vision Forum Inc., and it is unclear whether those plans continue. Phone messages left at the ministry were not returned.

“I engaged in a lengthy, inappropriate relationship with a woman,” Phillips wrote, saying, “while we did not ‘know’ each other in a Biblical sense, it was nevertheless inappropriately romantic and affectionate.”

In 2011, the San Antonio-based ministry reported about \$3.3 million in revenue, according to the most recent available financial records. Phillips received \$44,000 in salary from the ministry for a 30-hour workweek, according to the ministry’s financial documents.

In shutting itself down, the nonprofit could shift assets to the for-profit company. The related for-profit company was paid \$193,176 in 2011 by the nonprofit for “labor and services,” according to records. The nonprofit bought J Park Program, a radio program, from the for-profit company for \$670,000.