

Following the Eddie Long story

By [Adam J. Copeland](#)

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As yet another megachurch pastor grabs national headlines for alleged sexual indiscretions, I'm tempted to skip the story entirely. I'd rather pretend that the civil lawsuits accusing Bishop Eddie Long of sexual misconduct don't concern me. I'd prefer to believe that Long's leadership at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church near Atlanta doesn't have anything to do with my rural church ministry in the Midwest. I wish I could just ignore the hubbub, but I can't.

When a preacher hits the headlines, pastors everywhere must take note. Like it or not, we should stay up on the story, because many are painting all Christian clerics with one broad stroke—and it's only a matter of time until we're asked our opinion. So here are some highlights of the coverage so far:

- Anthea Butler attended Long's church on Sunday and filed a [report](#) with *Religion Dispatches*. She describes worshipping with the hugely supportive congregation that gathered in the giant sanctuary. She also notes that as Long vowed to fight the charges, he also said no fewer than four times, "I am not a perfect man."
- Christopher Hitchens, with his usual bluster, posted "[God's Bigmouths](#)" at *Slate*. Hitchens jumps beyond the allegations and labels Long a classic charlatan. Even worse, Hitchens bemoans, Long tarnishes the legacy of the civil rights movement.
- Craig Washington at the *Root* writes a "[Sermon for Bishop Eddie Long](#)." Washington sees the recent charges as symptoms of Long's pandering to cultural anxieties and of a systemic failure of moral leadership. Whether or not the charges prove true, Washington finds Long guilty of a multitude of sins.

The Bishop Long story is dominating the bully pulpit of America's 24/7 media, and we might as well digest the sermon thoughtfully. So take some pills for indigestion and read on.