

Time to Get Serious

By Jordan Riak
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Pastor Craig Luke's arrest, conviction and jail sentence for handcuffing, flogging and injuring his child were entirely appropriate. If anything, the pastor should be grateful for having received gentler treatment from the court than the treatment he meted out to his victim. Deputy District Attorney Marc Guillory put matters in proper perspective when he said, "The case would have been a felony assault if it had not been between a father and a son... No kind of person or animal should be treated like that."

Craig Luke's profession points to another issue to be considered. I had always assumed that the role of Christian clergy was to model and promote the values of their religion's founder, Jesus Christ, also known as the Prince of Peace. Craig Luke is hardly my idea of an agent for peace, and his behavior isn't remotely Christlike. One has to wonder why anybody — especially a Christian clergyman — owns handcuffs. Are cuffs standard equipment in the Luke household? Are they used often, or just kept for special occasions? As for the 12 local clergymen who came to the courthouse as a demonstration of support for their colleague, they should have come for better reasons. They should have set their friend straight. They should have told him, in no uncertain terms, to get rid of the cuffs and the belt, and to mend his ways, not given him sympathy which he neither needs nor deserves. They should have admonished him for conducting himself in a way that gives their profession a bad name. Hopefully Luke will get some serious counseling during his incarceration, with special emphasis on anger management, impulse control and nonviolent parenting.

It was particularly troubling to me to read in the *Press-Enterprise* story (12-18-04) that Pastor Luke was part of a program at the San Bernardino school district called "Pastors on the Premises," the purpose of which is to reduce fighting and tension between students. Craig Luke is clearly not the man for that job. It seems the district exercised the worst judgment imaginable concerning whom they've been allowing to prowl the schoolyard in close proximity to students.

If the San Bernardino district is serious about curbing violence and tension between students, the first and obvious rule should be that only adults who are good role models and have excellent problem-solving skills be invited to the school to perform a supervisory or mentoring

role with students. For the long term, the district should develop a program that addresses aggressive behavior at its source. They should teach parenting skills and child development to students exactly as they teach drivers' education. Because these students are soon-to-be parents, there's no time to waste. For many of them, their model for problem solving has been the Pastor Luke model. No one should be surprised by the fact that how young people are treated determines how they tend to treat others. Their early experience sets the stage, for better or worse, for all that follows. The results are clear. We see it on the playgrounds and in the classrooms, in the neighborhoods, in families, in police precincts, in courtrooms, in our nation's shameful infant and child fatality statistics. I see it in the eyes of the men who are inmates at the prison where I teach.

There is an issue here that involves much more than one man's atrocious behavior toward his son and his problems with the law. It reaches to all state capitols and to the nation's capitol. At least it should. It's time for responsible lawmakers of all political persuasions to come together for the purpose of establishing a rational legal standard that applies to assault and battery so that all citizens are protected, not just those over the age of emancipation. Currently, assault and battery of children is a legal no-man's-land. Until a beaten child is in a coma, there's no clear consensus as to what law, if any, has been violated. It's time to get serious.

See "*Clergy rallies behind pastor — CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: Craig Luke is appealing his conviction of injuring his son, 17, with a belt,*" by John F. Berry, *Press-Enterprise*, December 18, 2004" online at <http://nospank.net/n-n75r.htm>

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