



# **Hillsong: A Train Wreck**

‘*Diakrisis*’ continues to warn of the dangers of Hillsong - the heretical doctrines, the immoral leadership and worldly music. The first of several articles regarding Hillsong was written back in the 1990’s, titled ‘*A Decade of Decline*’. A subsequent summarisation in ‘*Hillsong Revisited*’ appeared in the May/June edition of ‘*Diakrisis*’ in 2007.

Even before the year 2000, when Hillsong music leader and songwriter Geoff Bullock fell to adultery, there were reports of moral failures within Hillsong (‘*Diakrisis*’ March/April 2004). We cited a link between the music and the immorality of youth leaders. Yet a vast array of churches today persist in using Hillsong music. Secular media reporters themselves have often viewed the Hillsong services as that of a ‘nightclub’ atmosphere (‘*Diakrisis*’ May/June 2003).

In 2002 Pat Mesiti, national director of the *Australian Christian Churches* was sacked for sexual misconduct (‘*Diakrisis*’ May/June 2002). Then Brian Houston, the recent Global Hillsong leader, saw his father, Frank Houston, exposed as a serial paedophile (Sept/Oct, 2005) and recently charges were laid against Brian for concealing from authorities what he knew about Frank.

The wreck continued with leader Guglielmucci being exposed for fabricating an extensive hoax about his ‘cancer’ and then being ‘healed’ (Nov/Dec 2008).

Celebrities (Justin Bieber, Chris Pratt, Kylie Jenner...) have come and gone at Hillsong venues around the world, with many claiming to be Christians yet with largely unchanged lifestyles. There have also been several ‘de-conversions’ as musicians and leaders outright deny the faith they once claimed.

Recently the New York Hillsong leader Carl Lentz was exposed for adultery and the lies he told to cover it up. Reed Bogard resigned as lead pastor of Hillsong Dallas in January 2021. An investigation showed that the married father of three was accused of the rape of a junior female staffer with whom he had an affair while serving at Hillsong NYC years earlier. The rape allegation occurred after meeting at a bar between 2-3am. Bogard was also reported as drinking heavily, using marijuana and being aggressive and bullying staff while serving at Hillsong NYC prior to being

promoted as lead pastor of Hillsong Dallas...Hillsong Pastor Barrett in New Jersey was exposed for sending explicit photos to a woman...Many more Hillsong leaders could similarly be named and in several cases Brian Houston is said to have known of the problems but did not expose or deal with them.

Recent charges of bullying and damning e-mails from Brian Houston have also occurred concerning pastors who led churches in Kyiv and Moscow. They were threatened when they tried to break away from the Hillsong network in 2014. Later when they applied to emigrate to the U.S., Houston threatened to make it difficult and to block the migration.

Now Brian himself, the founder of Hillsong in 1983 and global leader for the last two decades, was recently stood down for charges of '*moral transgressions*' dating back ten years. In one incident Houston exchanged 'inappropriate texts' with a female staff member. Then in 2019 he met a woman in a hotel foyer and spent 40 minutes with her alone in her room. Houston supposedly has '*little recollection*' of what happened. Senior Hillsong pastor, Phil Dooley, cited '*alcohol and prescription drugs for anxiety*' as partly to blame. Houston was to take 3 months off, yet continued in ministry and apparently drinking alcohol. Yet some years ago Houston tweeted '*failure is never wasted if you are teachable, humble and transparent enough to grow and change*'.

Behind all these failures is a facade of health, prosperity and fake role modelling which hundreds of thousands of faithful adherents have followed, admired and paid for.

We take no pleasure in listing just some of the many failures and immorality entrenched in Hillsong. Our concern always is to urge people to discern the rot and 'come out of her' and come back to the 'faith once delivered' (Jude 3). We are to separate from and '*mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*' (Rom.16:17,18). We are to '*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [expose] them*' (Eph.5:11).

The above failures in Hillsong bare the fruit of what concerns this ministry the most - the Hillsong doctrinal heresies of the Word Faith movement, the healing, prosperity and success/human potential gospels, as well as the feel good psychology that infiltrates the Hillsong gospel and teaching. It is surely these unbiblical doctrines that are linked to the moral failures of the leaders?

What does it take before one realises that a system is unholy, unbiblical to the core and needs to be separated from? In 2Thessalonians 3:6-15 we are commanded to *‘withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us’*. Nor are we to keep company with *‘any man that is called a brother if he be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one do not even eat’* (1Cor.5:11).

The stark difference between *‘righteousness and unrighteousness’* or *‘light and darkness’* is the reason to *‘come out from among them and be you separate’* (2Cor.6:14-18).

There is a blessing to those who will practise separation from the likes of Hillsong or any other corrupt, immoral and unbiblical system. *‘Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper...’* (Ps.1:1-6)

Hillsong has for decades been an unholy haven for the world’s leading false teachers, false prophets and those who *‘make merchandise of God’s people’* (2Pet.2:3). They speak and sing *‘another gospel’* and *‘another jesus’* (2Cor.11:4; Gal.1:6-9). How much warning and how many moral failures are needed to convince people to exit the unholy system that is Hillsong?

**Terry Arnold & Mike Claydon**