



Scripture in Action



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Vol. 4 No. 4 – Who Will Blow the Whistle? – Introduction

This regular feature presents a contemporary scenario and asks you to consider what your response would be – or should be – if you wished to follow a Christ-like life. I shall offer my own response. Will we share the same view?

Feedback is always welcome. Email any feedback to alan.branford@live.com by the due date for following issue of the *Sharing the Love* magazine, and please indicate if you wish your comment to be attributed to you or to be anonymous.

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The factual details in the following story were sourced from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's website abc.net.au on 18 June 2024.

One of South Australia's most notorious child sexual abusers is the former magistrate, Peter Liddy. "Liddy became a lawyer in 1967 and a magistrate in 1974." "Liddy was South Australia's longest-serving magistrate, sitting on the bench for 25 years." But behind the façade of respectability, there was a monstrous sexual predator. "Liddy was jailed in 2001 for 25 years with an 18-year non-parole period for the sexual abuse of children between 1983 and 1986." "Liddy was found guilty of unlawful sexual intercourse, indecent assault and attempting to bribe a witness."

"With his sexual abuse of young boys at Brighton Surf Life Saving Club putting him on the other side of the dock, he gained the record for the longest jail sentence to be handed down in South Australia at the time." "The Chief Justice of South Australia has ordered the name of disgraced magistrate Peter Liddy be struck off the roll of legal practitioners. The Chief Justice and the Full Court refused to allow Liddy to withdraw his name voluntarily."

"In 2010, a push to prosecute Liddy on an additional 10 child sex charges allegedly committed between 1969 and 1983 was thrown out of court because of concerns Liddy would not get a fair trial as a result of the widespread publicity his case had attracted and the decades that had passed since the alleged sex acts. Medical evidence on Liddy's health also hindered the likelihood of a successful prosecution."

How could such evil be perpetrated for so long to so many young boys? And by a senior magistrate!

Shortly after Peter Liddy's conviction, I was talking with one of my students at the university where I lectured. The Peter Liddy case came up in the conversation. The student remarked

something along the lines, “Thank goodness they have finally locked up that man. How he used to behave in the showers with the young boys at the Surf Life Saving Club was disgraceful.” It turns out that this student was a more senior member of the Surf Life Saving Club and had witnessed Liddy behaving in ways that were highly inappropriate while showering with the ‘Nippers’, the name given to the club for young boys within the wider Surf Life Saving Club.

What do you think I did at this point in our conversation?

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I looked straight at the student and said something like, “And so to whom at the Surf Life Saving Club did you report your observations?” The student shuffled uncomfortably, as clearly the answer was, “No-one.” It seems that there were many members of the Surf Life Saving Club who had witnessed, if not the more repugnant abuses, at least enough of Liddy’s behaviour to have warranted reporting to the Club. But it seems for many years, no-one did, because everyone thought that someone else would or should act.

Matthew 21:12-13, “¹² Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³ “It is written,” he said to them, ““My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”” (*New International Version*) What did Jesus do when he saw wrongdoing? **He acted!**

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