

Ex-BYU professor sentenced on abuse charges

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A former BYU microbiology professor has been ordered to prison on charges of sexual abuse and incest.

Sheril Burton, 55, of Orem, was before Judge Cullen Y. Christensen in 4th District Court Friday afternoon for sentencing. After listening to testimony from victims and others, Christensen went over the aggravating and mitigating circumstances, finally determining that Burton should go to prison.

He ordered Burton to report to the county jail Aug. 19 at 9 a.m. for transportation to the prison, but told him he could appeal the sentence if he wanted.

Burton was ordered to prison for one to 15 years on each of two second-degree sexual abuse charges and up to five years on each of two incest charges. He was ordered to pay \$7,500 in fines and fees plus restitution for counseling and treatment of the victims.

Christensen denied a motion for sentencing Burton under the next lower category.

According to Paul Richards of BYU communications, Burton has retired from the university where he taught since 1967.

Five people asked Christensen to ignore the recommendation of probation and work release jail time that came from Adult Probation and Parole. One said she

was scared of Burton and what he might do to her but came forward anyway. "I would put myself in peril to save others at this point," she said, noting the abuse occurred for more than 20 years.

Another said she was also afraid he could contact her. "I just want him to go to jail and be away from me for the rest of my life." "He's hurt all of us," said another. "I don't want him to be able to hurt us again."

"I'm not angry," said one victim. "I'm just hurt."

His wife said Burton violated her children while she was at church meetings or otherwise away from home. "There's a lot of good in Sheril Burton; that's

hard for me to say," she said. "There's also a lot of evil and the amount of evil has murdered my children. Mentally their souls have been murdered."

She said she too feared he would contact the family and try to regain control.

Two spoke up for Burton. One said he was told one of the victims would kill Burton and then herself if he did not go to jail. Another said one of the children said the abuse had not gone on for the last 12 years.

Burton, in his own defense, said he had several people tell him the victims had said they would lie if that's what it took to put him away.