

The Wounded Unseen

✖ Last week Gayle Haggard's new book hit bookstores. While the story and aftermath of Ted Haggard's scandal involving a male escort has been adequately covered, her perspective has not been heard . . . until now.

Her book, *Why I Stayed: The Choices I Made in My Darkest Hour*, gives a gut-wrenchingly honest account of how she discovered her husband's infidelity. "My heart skipped a beat when I heard the serious tone in his voice," she writes. "I felt the life begin to drain from my body. I sat down across from Ted at the attorney's conference table, and as I looked at him, I saw that his expression had changed. This was not the confident man who had entered the building with me only a few moments before. This man's face had contorted with anguish. I sat stunned in my chair as Ted looked at me with the saddest eyes I have ever seen on his face." He responded, "It's true – not all of it, but part of it, enough of it."

I don't know how anyone can read this and not be deeply touched. As I read it, I was grieved as well as inspired by her decision to forgive. Having personally struggled with feelings of same-sex attraction, my heart is always burdened when I hear of such heartache. The truth is that while Mrs. Haggard's circumstances are unique, her situation is not. Here at Exodus, we hear daily from men and women in marriages where the spouse is struggling with their sexuality. Those calls are on the rise. In fact, more than 40 percent of those who contact us seeking help in dealing with same-sex attraction are married. While others, have already experienced the heartache of a broken marriage. Recently, one woman who contacted us told us that after nine years of marriage and work in Christian ministry, her husband announced he was gay, wanted a divorce and left her and her two children to pursue a gay life style. Her heartbreaking story is unfortunately not an anomaly.

While it may not appear to be a visible dilemma within many churches, the reality is that there are countless spouses sitting in our pews each week experiencing betrayal and a broken heart. There are just as many, both married and single, who struggle with homosexual feelings, but fear rejection and will not seek help within the church. Too many carry the burden alone and suffer in silence. This should not be so. We, as the church, have the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit that enables us to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release prisoners from darkness.

I personally know many who have struggled with homosexuality as married men and women, sought help and like Gayle Haggard, witnessed powerful, albeit hard-fought, healing in their marriage. One of them is my good friend, Mike Goeke. Mike grew up in the church, buried his struggle with homosexuality for years and eventually married his wife, Stephanie, with the hope that it would squelch rumors about his sexuality and help 'fix' him. After two years of marriage, Mike left a letter on the door of their home telling his wife that he was gay and wanted a divorce. He jumped headlong into a gay life style and left the church in bitterness and anger. Even so, Stephanie courageously told him, "God put us together and I don't know how, but I know He can repair this situation." Over time and through a book his father gave him, he heard truth and though he argued with God, he heard only one response – *I love you*.

Eventually, Mike gave in to the call of the Lord and returned to Stephanie and they began the long and arduous process of rebuilding their marriage. The church that Mike had once resented became an integral part of their healing when godly men helped him find his true identity as a man and a child of God. The Goekes now minister to couples who find themselves in similar situations and hold a marriage seminar at our ministry's conference each year.

I am convinced that we as a church must do all we can to speak to these issues – to not only reach out to the husband or wife

who struggles with their sexuality, but to also put an arm around a heartbroken spouse and walk with a family in need. If we do not, the culture will speak where we are silent. As Gayle Haggard says, the ultimate question for her became, "Will I be the woman who washes her hands of the situation and walks away from Ted or will I be the woman who loves him and shows forgiveness? The choice was mine." I believe a vital question for the church today is, "Will we be the church that gives in to fear and ignores those who need help, or will we be the church that demonstrates the love and compassion of Jesus Christ so that the truth will set captives free?" The choice is ours.

Alan Chambers is the President of Exodus International; the world's largest ministry helping those conflicted by their sexuality to live a life that reflects the Christian faith. To learn more about Exodus International's Freedom Conference: . To purchase Gayle Haggard's book Why I Stayed: The Choices I Made in My Darkest Hour, [click here](#).