

Zachery Tims' Substance Abuse Was 'Lifestyle,' Ex-Wife Says

Riva Tims, former wife of the late Florida megachurch pastor Zachery Tims, opened up to a magazine about her ex-husband 1 1/2 years after he died. She told *Ebony* that Zachery Tims did not have a struggle with substance abuse, but it was his "lifestyle."

"I thought that was stuff in the past. I didn't realize it was still current. I found out for sure about the affairs and substance abuse at the same time. When he started telling me stuff, I began to dig and other things came out," she said in the latest issue of *Ebony*, released Thursday.

"I had no idea it was so much. I'll put it this way: It's one thing to have a struggle; it's another thing to have a lifestyle," added Riva Tims, who founded New Destiny Christian Center (NDCC) in Apopka, Fla., in 1996 with her then-husband, Zachery. "When it's a struggle, there's grace. But when it's a lifestyle, there's no grace."

Zachery Tims was found on the floor of a room in New York City's W Hotel in Times Square on Aug. 12, 2011. News reports indicate Tims, who died at the age of 42, had a plastic bag filled with white powder in his pocket, leading many to believe his death was associated with a drug overdose. By Tims' own testimony, he was instantly delivered from drug addiction when he was saved as a teenager.

The *Ebony* article, titled, "What Really Happened to Pastor Zachery Tims," includes quotes from his ex-wife and friends on what could have led to the NDCC pastor's death, the cause of which is still not known publicly. His mother, Madeline Tims, has fought to keep the results of his autopsy private, and the magazine says the mystery may never be solved.

Looking back, Riva Tims said she was possibly an enabler throughout their marriage. “He probably felt like he could just do anything. I was an enabler in a sense.”

Zachery and Riva Tims have four children. After the couple divorced in 2009, Riva started her own ministry, Majestic Life Ministries. After Zachery’s death, Riva filed a lawsuit against NDCC’s board of directors after Paula White was appointed as the new senior pastor.

The board claimed Riva’s case had no legal standing given a marriage settlement agreement she signed in 2009, and less than a week later, she dropped the suit.

“My concern,” Riva has said, “as the mother of the children of the late Dr. Zachery Tims Jr., Zoelle, Zachery III, Zahria and Zion Tims, is that they will never have an opportunity to receive the inheritance their father left for them. As the co-pastor to many that were birthed into the Kingdom of God at NDCC my concern is that the legacy and vision of NDCC will be abandoned.”

In her book, *When It All Falls Apart*, released last year, Riva blends the details of her painful story with powerful teaching to point readers toward God’s process for true healing and wholeness.