

‘I’m Heartbroken’: Ex-Pastor at Gateway Church Responds to Robert Morris Scandal

A former pastor at Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas, is speaking out in the wake of the Robert Morris scandal to share what he believes are helpful steps to address and prevent abuse in Christian circles.

Bob Hamp served as executive pastor of pastoral care at Gateway Church from 2005 to 2014, developing the house of worship’s Freedom Ministry, a component of the church’s outreach that helps individuals “find freedom from bondage in their life,” according to Gateway’s website.

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Hamp told CBN News the allegations that Morris molested a 12-year-old girl in the 1980s were not known to him before hearing accuser Cindy Clemishire’s harrowing account. Hamp said he joined the church well after these purported events took place and had no involvement. He now runs Think Differently Academy, helping people heal and find spiritual fulfillment in Christ.

“I’m heartbroken,” Hamp told CBN News. “And first and foremost, of course, the first thing I read was the post that described that [Clemishire] was a 12-year-old girl in pink pajamas, and the very first thing is—my heart just broke for a little 12-year-old girl in pink pajamas.”

Hamp helps people who have been sexually abused. He spoke compassionately about the tragedy of Clemishire being forced to deal with what unfolded as a child and then carry it throughout her life.

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He also said something else noteworthy about the Morris saga: the specific allegations surrounding the pastor were not in line with what he had been told in the past.

“The first thing: my heart just went out to her,” he said. “And I think, secondly, I felt a sense of, ‘This is not the story that I was told.’ So ... a sense of betrayal, and anger about that, and sadness.”

Hamp said church leadership at his level at Gateway and the public were seemingly both given the “same information” about Morris’ past sin issue.

“That information is that there was an inappropriate relationship with a young woman,” Hamp said. “And, in that, I think there’s a language there that leads to a certain conclusion.”

He spoke about how language can sometimes be used in these circumstances to “fog the actual truth.”

“So, I, along with, I think, the general public, had heard the same story, which is, at some point in his life, there was a period of, or an experience of, immorality,” Hamp said. “Or an inappropriate relationship with... ‘a young woman.’ I had no idea that it was a 12-year-old little girl.”

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