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The Ultimate "F-Bomb"; As in Forgiveness

SEPTEMBER 12TH 2012 BY STAFF WRITER

The Ultimate

Sikeston, Missouri - Ted Haggard appeared to have all someone could hope for in 2006; head of the most influential Christian organization in America (30 million followers), pastor of one of America's largest churches, spiritual policy advisor to President George W. Bush, an overall seemingly great life. In November 2006, escort and masseur Mike Jones alleged that Ted Haggard had paid him for sex for three years and had also purchased and used crystal methamphetamine. A few days later Haggard resigned from all of his leadership positions.

On September 23 in Sikeston, Haggard's wife, bestselling author Gayle Haggard will share about the choices she made in her darkest hour as she decided to stay with her husband who was publicly exposed in the illicit drug and infidelity scandal. In the days and months ahead, Gayle's life was in turmoil — her beliefs, her marriage, and her relationship with the church community she had been a part of for more than 20 years.

Haggard's visit is part of First UMC Sikeston's current message series titled, "F-Bomb." The F-Bomb, as in forgiveness, is difficult for many people to drop on others. Gayle Haggard will be at Sikeston's First United Methodist Church to tell how she was able to forgive a devastating event in her life and marriage. Haggard will speak at the 9 a.m. Traditions service in the Sanctuary and the 11 a.m. Journey service in the Family Life Center.

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Geoff Posegate, First UMC pastor, said: “For the record, or F-Bomb is not the one you’ll hear in abundance in the locker room, in the streets or on the big screen. The F-Bomb is Forgiveness. It’s a bomb many of us would like to have dropped on us. It’s a bomb many of us have trouble dropping on others, Jesus doesn’t just suggest forgiveness. Jesus demands forgiveness on the part of those who claim to follow him.”

The Haggards had founded the New Life Church in Colorado Springs in 1985. From meetings in basements, it grew to have 14,000 members by 2006 with a large campus. When in 2006, Ted Haggard revealed to his wife we was engaged in extramarital homosexual activity and drug use, the couple was removed from New Life. Gayle’s life crashed.

“In a few short days,” Gayle said. “my life as I had known it, that I had so lovingly embraced, was demolished.” Gayle lost her position as Director of Women’s Ministries, but in a letter she wrote to the church, she told the congregation: “I am committed to him until death ‘do us part’.” Together they went through intense therapy and complied with the orders of their church’s overseers to move out of Colorado, leave ministry, restrict communication with the church, and not speak publicly of their situation. In January 2009 they were released from those obligations and began telling how they survived it. In her bestselling book, *Why I Stayed*, Gayle describes choices she made and how they survived his infidelity. On Sept. 23, she will share at First UMC her renewed passion for the central message of the Bible - the liberating message of forgiveness and love. The couple have appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Larry King Live*, *Good Morning America*, and other national media programs to offer public apology. “This is my story of choosing to love my husband through some of the most difficult challenges any marriage could face,” she said. Her husband wanted her to divorce him believing it was best for her and the children. Gayle Haggard said the difficult experience has given her a deeper understanding of the biblical teachings of forgiveness and grace.

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