

On November 1, 2006, Mike Jones, who lived in Denver, CO at the time, accused me of having monthly liaisons with him over the previous three years and purchasing drugs. He was given a polygraph test and the results of the test demonstrated that he was being deceptive in some of his answers. Since that time, Mr. Jones has refused to take a follow-up polygraph test. However, because I was guilty of *some* of his accusations, I immediately resigned from all of my positions of leadership.

Initially, I publicly lied about my knowledge of Mr. Jones and his accusations, but after a few days I admitted to being “sexually immoral” because I had one massage from him that had become sensual and had purchased drugs from him as well. I also confessed every detail of my internal struggle with Gayle and then later with my counselors. In order to prove the truth of my situation, in November and December of 2006, I took four polygraph tests administered by three different independent polygraphists. All four tests confirmed that I was being truthful in all of my answers. Of the many questions on those tests, all four included three common questions:

1. Did you have more than one sexual incident with Mike Jones?  
Answer: “No.”
2. Have you ever had sexual contact with anyone at New Life Church other than your wife?  
Answer: “No.”
3. Have you ever groomed anyone at New Life church for sexual contact with you other than your wife?  
Answer: “No.”

The results were reported to the Overseers and the interim leadership of New Life Church.

Gayle and I, along with our children, flew to Florida the first week of November, 2006, to escape the turmoil that surrounded our crisis. During our three weeks in Florida, I processed every detail of my internal struggle with Gayle, with no exceptions. After returning home, the church asked that we go to Scottsdale, AZ for three weeks of intensive evaluation and therapy. Since then, therapists have concluded that my unwanted compulsive thoughts and behaviors were based in an incident that happened to me when I was 7 years old, which explained the incongruity I experienced. I received a great deal of relief through EMDR, a trauma resolution therapy. An important part of my process involved recovery from the effects of trauma, which has been effective.

Upon returning home, the Overseers and Restorers presented us with a “take it or leave it” contract along with an additional “separation” contract prepared by New Life Church authorities. The most meaningful items in the Overseers and Restorers contract to Gayle and me were:

1. They entitled the contract “Restoration Agreement” even though the contract had specific provisions that did not indicate any intent or plan for restoration. It was a contract we signed in submission but without agreement.
2. We were to present a written plan for pursuing a new career no later than April 30, 2007. This communicated clearly to us that we were being permanently removed from any form of ministry and required to find a new career, in contrast to the public perception that the Restoration Team was established to restore.

3. Gayle and I, along with our dependent children, were instructed to permanently relocate outside the state of Colorado within 60 days.
4. We were to have no discussion or communication with any church employees, trustees or elders, other than discussion initiated by the church Sr. Pastoral staff. This ended up being confusing to our friends who served with us in the church because they felt rejected and ignored by us without knowing that we were obeying the requirements of a contract.
5. I was not to engage in any ministry including, without limitation, pastoral counseling or advice, preaching, presiding at or undertaking any public role in any type of worship, including wedding, funerals or baptisms.
6. Within two weeks after signing the contracts, I was to join with church leadership in signing documents requesting that those churches that ordained or licensed me revoke my ordination and any licensure or certification they had given me. This was not a request for temporary suspension of credentials, but a request to permanently remove them. The Southern Baptist pastor that licensed and ordained me refused to withdraw my credentials when asked, which communicated faith in God's work in my life and belief in His work in me, which helped my healing greatly.

The most meaningful points in the New Life Church contract with Gayle and me were:

1. It was titled "Separation Agreement" without any discussion with us. We believed temporary separation was needed, but that for healing to occur, future communication and relationship would be beneficial for all. We did not believe that a permanent separation was in order or helpful, however, we signed the contract in order to show our willingness to cooperate.
2. It was based on false assumptions and rumors about which we were never consulted or allowed due process to establish facts.
3. It said financial support would be given, not as true severance pay as was presented to the public, but in order to provide me an opportunity to transition for up to one year to another vocation as long as I complied with all of the requirements of both contracts and the church income didn't decline.
4. Both Gayle and I were prevented from writing, preparing, or authorizing the preparation of any article, book, pamphlet, movie, web site, audio tape, DVD, or other communication directly or indirectly regarding our work or ministry at New Life Church, including without limitation the events that directly or indirectly led to my removal as Sr. Pastor or regarding sexual addiction or sexual dysfunction. This requirement prevented me from ever acknowledging that I had ever worked at New Life Church, leaving a 22 year gap in my resume, and from telling others about the most significant healing process of my lifetime.
5. We were prevented from having any discussions with the press, directly or indirectly, related to the events that led to my "removal" as Sr. Pastor in perpetuity, and no discussion with the press regarding any topic for the three years after signing the contracts. This meant that anyone could say anything in the press and it would be undisputed, leaving the press without being able to speak to me or Gayle as a primary source. We learned later that virtually anything in the press that goes undisputed for 24 hours is generally believed as fact. We went two years. To this day,

many things that have no basis in fact are commonly believed by the general public to be true because of this provision.

6. I was not to engage in any ministry, including without limitation, presiding or speaking at religious services, whether through in-person appearances or by satellite or by electronic communication, within 100 miles of any New Life campus, for a period of three years from the date of the contract. We thought this was reasonable and asked that the balance of the contracts be similar to this – reasonable opportunity for me to heal and for others to see the fruit of repentance.
7. Gayle and I were obligated **not** to disclose the existence and/or terms of the contract to anyone other than any legal professionals serving our family. In other words, we were instructed to deny the existence of the contracts and to deceptively tell others that the things we were doing in compliance with the contracts were our ideas, decisions and choices.
8. The contract stated that the obligations listed in the contract were to continue in perpetuity. This was huge in our minds as we learned that people were told the opposite about the process that we were in.

After reading the contracts, I sent the Overseers a lengthy e-mail underscoring my desire to submit to spiritual authority, yet expressing my serious ethical conflicts with the contracts. I was told that we had to sign the contracts as they were, “take it or leave it”. Gayle and I were concerned that if we did not sign the contracts, the impression would be that we were being rebellious and uncooperative. So, with reservation and under great emotional duress, Gayle and I signed, holding onto the hope that the terms of the contracts would be revised.

Gayle and I, along with Alex and Elliott, our two youngest children, moved to Phoenix, Arizona where we joined Phoenix First Assembly with Pastor Tommy Barnett serving as our pastor. Pastor Tommy welcomed us warmly to First Assembly and met with us on several occasions, providing counsel and supportive encouragement. In addition, he asked one of his associates, Pastor Leo Godzich, to meet with and counsel Gayle and me as needed. Pastor Leo is the founder and president of NAME (The National Association of Marriage Enhancement) and the host of the International Marriage Conference, as well as a leader in the covenant marriage movement. Pastor Leo and I met on several occasions at his weekly Bible study and he and his wife, Molly, also met with Gayle and me from time to time for more in depth counsel. Pastor Leo has the best knowledge of my process while in Arizona.

On December 12, 2007, while driving to Flagstaff, AZ , the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. He said, “When you were 28 years old, I called you to Colorado Springs. No one on Earth has the authority to negate that call.” After a few moments, he spoke into my heart again, “When you were 28 years old, I called you to Colorado Springs. Your sin does not have the authority to negate that call.” After another pause, he spoke again saying, “When you were 28 years old, I called you to Colorado Springs. And you do not have the authority to negate that call.” By this time I had pulled my car to the side of the road and called Gayle. We agreed that we needed to call our pastor, Tommy Barnett, and tell him. A few weeks later we met with him, and he confirmed that he believed God had indeed spoken to us. He said he would speak with the Overseers and the two other Restorers and see what he could do.

In January of 2008, Tommy Barnett called us into his office and gave us the paperwork from the Overseers and Restorers releasing us from their contract, which gave us the freedom to return to Colorado Springs.

In June of 2008, we moved back to Colorado Springs.

In December of 2008, Brady Boyd, the new pastor of New Life Church met with Gayle and me and released us from the New Life Church contract.

In January 2009, one man in the church revealed that I had an inappropriate, but non-physical, relationship with him in 2006. The fact that there had never been sexual contact between the two of us had also been confirmed by the polygraph tests in November and December of 2006.

In January of 2009, I began a series of interviews to communicate my sorrow over the pain, confusion, and damage my sin had caused. Since that time I have also begun to counter some of the claims that had been made about me. I had been portrayed in the press by Mike Jones as a hateful anti-gay, right-wing, bigoted hypocrite. Thus, I was generally accepted as a hateful right-wing televangelist. To my knowledge, not one person who had ever read any of my books, heard my sermons, or attended any of my meetings said that I was hateful. But because Mike Jones' claims went uncontested, they were then taken by the public as fact. Interestingly, I was often referred to as a televangelist with 30 million followers. None of that was true. I had never had a Christian TV show, didn't have a Christian radio show, and didn't have a mailing list for fund raising purposes. I wasn't a televangelist and had never been a political activist. I was not an evangelist, I was a local church pastor. I also served The National Association of Evangelicals for a period of three years as president, yet even though there were 30 million members in the various denominations that belonged to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), this in no way meant that they were my followers, or had ever even heard my name.

We have had a great deal to overcome. The 30 years of honorable service was discounted as the scandal was highlighted with no one moderating the impressions. Jesus Camp, Richard Dawkins, songwriters, late night comedians and play-rights mocked and used what they could to take advantage of our weakened position. After two years of silence and no due process, even those in church authority didn't know what was true or false because there had been no process with us. I didn't know what I was accused of or by whom, but would hear salacious rumors and had no credible way to address them.. Since guilt about so much was assumed, we had to gingerly address one issue at a time over a period of years in order to regain credibility. Interestingly, some took it upon themselves to continue demonizing us under the banner of "if you only knew what we knew," even though they didn't know, or by assuming that their media impressions were true.

To my knowledge, no one who knew me had ever called me hateful toward any group. However, since that was the public perception of me after the scandal, I went on Oprah, Larry King, ABC, etc. to simply say, "I'm sorry" and to take responsibility for the wrongs I had committed and the pain and confusion I had caused, as well as to tell the truth of what really transpired. I intentionally did not enter into a tit-for-tat about details, knowing that would not be beneficial for anyone, but rather wanted to communicate repentance, responsibility, and redemption. I now realize that my generalizations

regarding immorality were taken as a cloaked confession that Mike Jones' claims were true. In reality, this was not at all the case! Gayle and I did several interviews on national media during 2009, and we spoke in churches around the country telling our story and sharing the grace we have experienced in our Christian walks and in our marriage. During that time new information reached the public through the release of the HBO documentary, "The Trials of Ted Haggard," which enabled people to get a clearer perspective of our difficult days following my crisis.

In January 2010, Gayle's book, "Why I Stayed" was released which was the first time the lie detector tests were mentioned in public. "Why I Stayed" became a New York Times bestseller in its second week out and opened the door for Gayle and I to appear once again on a number of national and local broadcasts, further challenging the misinformation that had been commonly accepted.

Throughout this process, I've continued to go to therapy. Though I haven't needed therapy regarding sexual issues since 2007, I have continued in therapy to deal with the rejection and hatred that has been directed toward my family and me. Another very important reason we have continued in therapy was to deal a "death blow" to the negative feelings we have felt toward some of our accusers and the many who knew us and did not speak out in public while we were being misrepresented and restricted from representing ourselves. By the grace of God, Gayle and I have found healing through the cleansing power of *forgiveness*! Consequently, we have been able to release those who wounded and disappointed us and now are able to bless them. The words of Joseph when speaking to his brothers in Genesis 50:20 have now become a source of life to us; "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*" We were released from counseling in April of 2010.

In June, 2010, Gayle and I launched our second church plant, St. James Church, in Colorado Springs, focusing on demonstrating our faith through love .