



## *A tale of two women . . .*

. . . two prominent men, two tragedies, and two different outcomes. The two women are Elizabeth Edwards and Gayle Haggard . The two prominent men: their husbands, John Edwards (former North Carolina senator and candidate for President of the United States) and Ted Haggard (former pastor at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, and president of the National Association of Evangelicals). The tragedies: both men having been sexually involved outside of their marriages, Edwards fathering a child and Haggard involved in a homosexual relationship. The outcomes: Elizabeth Edwards choosing to leave her husband and Gayle Haggard choosing to stay with hers.

Both women have had books come out in the last few weeks chronicling their experiences. And I will admit at the outset that I have NOT read either book, only interviews with the women. And I have no intention of taking sides -- that is: one woman acted more courageously or correctly than the other. I, personally, cannot imagine the pain that these women, these families, have been through . . . in addition to going through it on such a public stage. It is my prayer that both will find the peace they desire.

What has struck me has been the coincidence of both books coming out at about the same time and the issues of faithfulness and forgiveness that are raised by their both appearing in the bookstores at the same time. It has made me wonder if there is a breaking point for me beyond which I couldn't go in the 'forgiveness realm'? (And, again, I don't know the status of "forgiveness" in either of these two prominent relationships: one can choose to live in an unforgiving relationship as well as NOT staying in a relationship where forgiveness has taken place).

But how do I deal with forgiveness? I read somewhere a few months back that "unwillingness-to-forgive" is a poison that I take hoping the offender will die. How much 'poison' do have in my system that is keeping me from being truly alive? And why do I choose to keep taking it? Why do I choose . . . ?

If holding on to a grudge or resentment is a choice, then so is letting go of that resentment. It doesn't change the act, or the act's consequences, but it does change the relationship with the other. More importantly it allows ME the opportunity to move out of the past and into a more healthy future. Attachment to past events (positive or negative) is much like attachment to any other, more material, thing. Buddhism would say that it causes suffering. Other religious traditions might relate the attachment to idolatry, putting something else in the place of God and the hope that God offers.

Forgiveness certainly isn't easy. Probably few things that we sense are attributes of God ARE easy. Doing that hard work, however, yields great benefits.

Blessings,

Gary