

FELIX NGOLE

BEHIND THE SCENES

THE STORY OF ONE SOCIAL WORKER'S BATTLE WITH HIS UNIVERSITY

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Mail

Daily Mail Reporter

A DEVOUT Christian thrown off his university course after he said that homosexuality was a sin has lost his High Court battle to reverse the decision.

Felix Ngole said he was lawfully expressing a traditional Christian view and complained that bosses at Sheffield University had unfairly sought to curtail his posts on social work degrees.

He argued that by throwing him out over the comments – including a quote – made on Facebook, the university had breached his human right to freedom of speech and thought.

But lawyers for the university said that in making the 'derogatory' comments he had shown 'no insight' and the decision to remove him from course was fair and proportionate.

They said that Ngole had 'intentionally' and 'deliberately' used his position as a social worker to cause harm to the university's reputation.

Campaigners said the 'disappointing' decision showed society is 'becoming increasingly intolerant of different values'.

Baroness Hale of Barnsley, had written in her judgment that the university's decision to remove him from course was 'unfair and disproportionate' and that the university had breached his human right to freedom of speech and thought.

who refused to register same-sex marriages. Mr Ngole, who was in the second year of his social work masters, shared a Facebook post saying 'I stand with Kim Davis'. Commenting on the same post, he quoted a Bible verse from Leviticus calling homosexuality an 'abomination'.

After a fellow student complained the university launched 'fitness to practise' proceedings against him.

The decision was made to expel him from the university.

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The Growth

AS TOLD BY FELIX'S WIFE
PEPSY NGOLE

About the Christian Legal Centre

This booklet tells the story of Felix Ngole, a mature student expelled from his Social Work course at Sheffield University for expressing a biblical view of marriage on his personal Facebook account.

The Christian Legal Centre exists to help people like Felix. Changes in legislation have made it harder for Christians to live out their faith in public life, particularly in the workplace. There is now increasing pressure for Christians to “leave their faith at the door.” We provide Christians, like Felix, with free legal support and expertise that they need, but which they otherwise wouldn’t be able to access or afford themselves. Since 2006, we’ve helped hundreds of Christians and Christian organisations who have been challenged for living out their faith and Biblical convictions.

Christian Concern, runs alongside and complements, the work of the Christian Legal Centre. It campaigns to protect Christian freedoms in the public sphere and promote the Christian faith as the best foundation for a free and flourishing society.

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About the author

This rest of this booklet is written from the perspective of Pepsy, loving wife of Felix Ngole.

I am a woman of God who is passionate about sharing the word of God. Having seen the hand of God move in most difficult and challenging areas in my life I have grown to know and acknowledge without a shadow of doubt that, indeed, all things work out for the good of those who love the Lord. I am a teacher by profession and am passionate about working with children in different schools. Having worked in numerous areas in the church my passion and thrill is working with the youth. I believe they should be fully equipped with the word of God for their future. I am married to a loving and wonderful man of God, whom I am writing about, and together we have four children and one grandchild. In our home, I enjoy cooking for my husband, especially his traditional food, and love to spend quality time with him studying the word of God. I am a doting mother who is very supportive and committed to seeing my children succeed in life. As a grandmother, I believe in connecting with my grandchild by getting down and doing everything she loves. I am a mentor to many girls and ladies from diverse walks of life and my home is open 24 hours a day as a place of refuge for any of them who might need help. I am an intercessor and will stop to pray with anyone anytime of the day.

Pepsy Ngole

M.A. in Education, PGDip in Lifelong Learning, BSc (Hons) Health and Community Studies



Preface

This book has been written to inspire and to motivate others going through different struggles and challenging times in their lives. We hope you will be encouraged to know you are not alone. The strength and courage that God gave us is what he can give to you too. Our story is not just a newspaper article or a court case, it is real and has affected our lives in ways that we could have never imagined. Sometimes it feels as if God walked into our family and interrupted our lives and plans for his namesake. We have had to bow down in obedience to Him, even in difficult times, because he gave us the strength to do so. When we say, “victory belongs to Jesus” it is because of the experience we have had, walking daily with him and having the assurance that there is nothing impossible or difficult for him to do. We pray that through our story you will be motivated to stand strong and tall knowing that whatever your challenge the Lord will make a way for you. If you do not know God now, we hope after reading you will be eager to know him and let him shower you with his love. If you have fallen away from him may you through this story find a new reason to put your trust in God and see what he will do for you.

This book would have not been possible without the help and strength of God. My greatest thanks go to my husband who lovingly allowed me to share his story with the world. Words cannot express my gratitude to Andrea Williams and the team at Christian Concern and the Christian Legal Centre for their professional advice and assistance in publishing this manuscript. Thank you to everyone who has encouraged Felix and our family through social media, letters, and prayers. To those who have supported us financially may the Lord reward you for your kind hearts. Lastly thank you to my granddaughter Hannah who endured without our play times as I was writing this book!

God speaks to us everyday

It was just like any other day in our home when we awoke, Felix and I had our usual devotional time with God. When we got married we agreed that every morning before we start our day we would spend time with God in prayer, worship and the word. We always ask the holy spirit for insight and share what the Lord is saying to us. After which we pray and declare God's blessing and truth over each other. At times, it's challenging to hear the truth from your spouse, especially when you are wrong about something and adamant about it, but our motto has always been "the truth of God will set us free". We pray with our children every evening and at times it gets interesting when we hear what the Lord is saying to them as they share the word. There are times when it turns into heated arguments because of the conflicting ideas from them. Sometimes it becomes a sermon for us as they use the word to correct us, I am sure you get my drift... We love each other, and we believe that a family that prays together stays together. The Lord has used such times to speak powerfully to us and we are truly grateful for it. We try and live out Deuteronomy 11:8-19 which teaches us to share the word of God with our children whenever we are seated together. This is not always easy to do but we do our best to set out a good example for all our children.

There are times, however, when we are apart, and this is the time when we are truly thankful to God for technology because we can still have our treasured devotional time on the phone. Let me add though that it's not always easy to do this because of the challenges of life and marriage, but we have known that it is especially during difficult times that we need to come together

in prayer and seek the Lord. We believe that we are still together today because of God's grace and the times we have spent together in prayer. The Bible encourages us in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 that when we let God be the centre of marriage even in difficult times the bond is stronger. We are glad that God gave us each other so that we can confess our faults one to another, encourage and pray for each other. It's even greater when you do this with the person you love.

I was bathing and meditating on the word as I normally do, being a staunch believer that to be changed by the word of God, you should understand what he is saying directly to you. In the middle of my meditation I heard the Holy Spirit say that Felix would be used by God to change policies in this country. I laughed as I uttered loudly to God saying, "Lord, I know this is not me making this up because I know my husband is not interested in politics, neither does he plan on getting into politics in his life". I heard it two more times, then I knew that this was from the Holy Spirit and I wondered what it meant. When I got out of the bath I called Felix and shared this word with him. We both laughed and started thinking how this could happen.

At that time, we had no idea this was going to become real, someday very soon. We could not comprehend how this could ever happen, so we prayed and asked for God's plans to be fulfilled, if this was really from Him, and we continued with our lives until four years later when Felix started the social work course.

The debate

In 2014 Felix applied for a social work course and was accepted. He left his job as a Personal Progress Mentor at a local college the same year to commence with his studies. When he started the course, it was challenging but he loved the whole experience and a few weeks later he was nominated as a course representative. He enjoyed being the voice that could bring change to the challenges that students faced in the course. As a course representative, he also got the opportunity to meet some of the top officials in the university who later took part in the decision to expel him from the course.

In his spare time, Felix loves to share the word of God on Facebook. He is regularly active on social media, as he believes it's a tool to share the gospel. Getting into social media was also a way of relaxing and getting in touch with the youth in our local church. It was after a long day at university when he got home and started scrolling through his Facebook feed. Felix usually did this, especially because he had to get updates from the youth about the fund raising that they were doing. The discussion about Kim Davies, a US county clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, caught his eye and he decided to join in as he felt she did not deserve to be called names such as 'bigot', especially as she was exercising her first amendment rights in declining to approve same-sex marriage. He also felt most of the participants in the debate were misguided in their belief that the Bible approves of same-sex marriage. He wanted to express his view and highlight that Kim Davies' beliefs as a Christian were important to her and she had the right to act as she did. It was at this point that one

participant challenged him to show him where it is written in the bible that homosexuality is a sin. He decided to quote scripture from the book of Leviticus 18:22, “Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (KJV), and Matthew 19:5, “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and the two shall be one flesh” (KJV). He also highlighted that God loves man, but that sin separates man from God.

The discussion became overheated and unfortunately some of the participants resorted to name calling so Felix decided to leave the debate. In his view, he believed he had been respectful whilst at the same time trying to reason with other participants. That same evening, we held our normal weekly bible study in our home with other members of our church and we decided to pray for Kim Davies and the person who enquired about the bible’s stand on homosexuality. As a group of believers, we shared John 8:32 which talks about the truth found in the word of God. This word is able set people free and we believed that as Felix had shared God’s stand on homosexuality it would help those who were not clear on the issue. We continued daily to pray for God to bring understanding and clarity to this person who had enquired and many others who would read or come across that discussion. About two months later Felix received an email from the course leader inviting him for a disciplinary meeting. His first reaction at this point was, “What have I done?”

First hearing

The summons for a disciplinary meeting came as a surprise especially as they were withholding the information as to what he was accused of. Felix is a man of integrity who believes in following procedure especially when it comes to matters of disciplinary action against anyone. How could a big institution like Sheffield University summon him for an investigatory meeting yet withhold the reasons why he was being summoned to the meeting? When he received the initial email, we thought it was a prank. It was sad to later discover, as it all began to unfold, that this was real. All they said was that it was regarding a Facebook posting made online. His immediate reaction and reply was that he could not attend the hearing because he did not have sufficient information. We felt the University of Sheffield was not being honest as to why they were inviting him to the meeting. He decided to check the procedure for disciplinary hearing according to the institution, and to our amazement the accused had to be supplied with information prior to the hearing. He quickly wrote another email requesting the evidence held against him. It was the following day that the director of social work studies at the university of Sheffield intervened and ordered the course leader to furnish him with all the evidence. Within three hours he received an email from the course leader with an attachment of the comments he made in the debate concerning Kim Davies. We couldn't believe it was about that discussion which happened more than two months ago. He started perusing the evidence.

As Felix went through the evidence he noticed the picture of a fellow student attached to the Facebook posting. This lead him

to believe it was this fellow student who had reported him to the university as they had forgot to remove the student's picture from the evidence sent to him. Felix was very disappointed but then decided to do the right thing and not challenge the student directly. For this person to see the comments he made during the discussion they must have gone through so many pages on his Facebook thread, there were hundreds of participants on that forum. What struck my husband most was why she'd taken so much time to do that. Felix had sat with the same student, shared a meal with them and taken pictures with them during the Christmas night out. He felt betrayed and wondered why this person had not approached him if they had an issue about any comments made during the debate of Kim Davies. Felix will never have the opportunity to get any of these questions answered as this person's identity was protected by the university.

The fact that this evidence was initially withheld from him made us sceptical and concerned. We gradually resolved within ourselves that this was going to be a spiritual battle and we started praying as we set the next day for fasting and prayer. We handed the matter to God and even though we had no idea what was going to happen at the hearing we chose to trust God in everything. We were reminded of the scripture in Isaiah 54:17 that says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (KJV).

We believed those words would come true in this battle because we are servants of the Lord. Felix decided he would take his

King James version Bible with him to the meeting so that he could show them the quotation from the scripture posted on Facebook. He was supported by one of his closest friends and brother in the Lord when he went to the meeting. His comments made on Facebook had surely made some people angry.

He felt uncomfortable during the meeting as it was made obvious by the university officials from the start that his comments may have offended some people. He went through some of the scriptures quoted during the debate to assure them that what he quoted was from the Bible and he did not make up those verses. He also took the opportunity to share John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (KJV). He assured them again that the central message here is God's love for mankind but that sin separates man from God. It was during this exchange that the course leader retorted by saying ‘Sex is just sex, it does not matter whether it’s between a man and man or woman and a woman’. She also made references to his ethnic background using it to justify same sex relationships. Of course, this added another dynamic to the meeting. He felt horrible to be in a room full of people who were scrutinising every word he uttered.

It dawned on Felix at that point that the university had taken an ideological stand and he felt cornered. The unspoken word from the whole discussion as far as the university officials were concerned was the question of how he could see homosexuality as wrong. He expressly told them that he believed in what the bible says on the subject and if someone were to ask

him the same question again, his response would still be the same. He was adamant to say he did not do anything wrong as he had merely answered someone's question who wanted to know the biblical perspective on sexual ethics. This had nothing to do with condemning anyone. However, because he refused to change his stance and admit to any wrong doing he was referred to a Fitness to Practice committee. Although disappointed with the meeting, he nonetheless rejoiced because he felt it was important to reiterate the biblical position on marriage and God's love for mankind. This was a cause to rejoice as God had given him another opportunity to share his word during the meeting. We took comfort in the fact that whenever the word of God is spoken it's like a seed which is planted and one day it will germinate and bear fruit to the glory of our Lord. Nonetheless, the meeting ended without a clear consensus, so he was referred for Fitness to Practice.

After this initial meeting Felix decided to seek assistance from an organisation that could help him go through the disciplinary process, since he was now concerned about the Fitness to Practice meeting. Miraculously, he came across the Christian Concern website and he decided to write to them as they indicated that they are passionate about being "the strong Christian voice in the public sphere, arguing passionately for the truth of the gospel and defending the historic freedoms that we have enjoyed in this nation for so long". At the same time, the friend who went with him to the first hearing sent him a link to the same website. What a miracle! From that moment on he had the assurance that seeking assistance from them was the way forward. When he wrote to them, they agreed to take

on his case and assist him. We were jubilant! Felix was not clear what do next, but once again God had answered our prayers for direction on how to proceed. He was scheduled to go to the Fitness to Practice meeting with Pastor Ade Omooba, one of the co-founders of Christian Concern (the sister organisation of the Christian Legal Centre), who was an experienced mediator. His approach was going to be that the university and Felix should find mutual ground in which he wouldn't have to feel he had to renounce his faith. We were hopeful as we believed in the word of Jeremiah 32:27 which assures us that there is nothing too difficult for God to do for us. As we prayed for that day we were expectant and excited to see what the Lord would do as we were also on our forty days of prayer and fasting at the same time.

Forty days of prayer and fasting

This was the year I felt lead by the Lord to encourage a corporate time of prayer and fasting at church for forty days. This was also born from the burden I felt about the university case against my husband, as well as other turmoil in the world and our local community. I questioned God many times and felt the answer remained the same, that I should do it. After asking the Holy Spirit to give me the prayer topics we produced a booklet that everyone at church could use anywhere to follow and observe the fast and prayer at the comfort of their home. This commenced on 1st January to the 9th February 2016. Our prayer meetings were held during the evening and all who gathered at church experienced the powerful presence of God night after night. Other people prayed from home as

they could not make it because of their different commitments. As we interceded for Felix's case I had the sense that the prophecy I received four years ago, about God planning to use him to challenge policies in this country, was now unfolding before our eyes. The word of God from 2 Chronicle 7:14 was an encouragement to all of us as we cried out corporately for God to intervene in Felix's case and bring healing and deliverance in different areas in our community. After the 40 days, we had the assurance that the Lord had answered all our intercessions for all his people. We felt more prepared for the Fitness to Practice meeting.

The day of the Fitness to Practice meeting was fast approaching, there was buzzing and joy in our house as we were eagerly waiting to see what the Lord would do after this great time of prayer and fasting. A letter came advising Felix of the date and time of the meeting. He initially objected to the membership of one of the committee members who was his dissertation teacher and that objection was upheld. However, he later found out just before his full court hearing that Professor Jacqueline Marsh, the lady who chaired the Fitness to Practice committee, was a lesbian and veteran campaigner for LGBT rights.

Fitness to practice meeting

Our hope was that this time things would be different. Pastor Ade Omooba, who accompanied Felix, had vast experience of representing Christians in such cases. He is a well-known and respected negotiator. At the meeting Felix was asked many questions. However, the question that stood out was the one

posed by the Professor of Social Work, Kate Morris, who asked him whether he believed in what he wrote on Facebook! This to Felix was a direct attempt by the university to entice him to renounce his faith. It was most shocking for him because this was coming from a social work professor, the same profession that purport to uphold social justice. His representative challenged the committee member by suggesting that it would not be fair to force Felix to renounce his faith. He also implored the committee to proceed with caution and diplomacy, but this was completely ignored. To make matters worse, Jacqueline Marsh referred to the comments made during the debate as 'homophobic', which meant referring to the word of God as 'homophobic', and this Felix felt was a direct challenge on the authoritative word of God. How could the precious word of God be referred to in this way? This was problematic to Felix as he knew that the main reason he was in that meeting was because he openly supported traditional marriage. His passion to study social work was threatened to be stripped from him because of his beliefs. If he had supported same-sex marriage during that debate he would have never had found himself in that position. He was angry and annoyed as he had come across other social work students at the same university who had expressed their political opinion openly on social media and no action was taken against them. In his view, this was a clear attempt by the university of Sheffield to censor a view they didn't like. After all the university aggressively supports and promotes LGBT issues and to them it doesn't really matter if they offend students with traditional marriage values. It seems there is zero tolerance for Christians who want to stand by the biblical perspective on marriage.

Felix is someone who believes in tolerance, and this to him means accepting all views even if he doesn't agree with them, so he was shocked that he was being treated this way, especially by those who always talk about equality and diversity. He began to understand at that moment that as far as the committee was concerned, equality only means adhering to the liberal agenda and if you don't then social work is not the right profession for you. He knew from that point on that he had to fight this agenda and ideology, as it is outright wrong and should not be accepted in a country such as ours which holds such high standards of tolerance. Felix knew he was doing the right thing by standing and defending traditional marriage. He felt strongly that a university should be a place where there is robust debate, especially on such issues that affect a whole society and that it was particularly important for God's voice to be heard in the debate. He believed not pointing the way of the truth to someone who wants to know what the bible says about something is ludicrous. He knew this fight was going to go far as he was not prepared to accept what the university were saying. As the meeting ended he knew that his fight was not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and rulers in high places. We knew as a family that we had to also fight on our knees in prayer as Felix had realised during the meeting that the ideology of man was corrupt and wanted to do away with Godly values and beliefs.

A few weeks after the Fitness to Practice meeting Felix received a letter from the university advising him that he had been withdrawn from his social work course because his comments might have offended other people. They immediately requested that he return his university badge as soon as possible, and

advised that his university account would be terminated shortly. This was very upsetting for Felix who felt he was being treated like a criminal, yet all he had done during the debate was lawful. Later during the same week, he telephoned the university to ask for minutes of the meeting but was advised by the university of Sheffield that the notes had been destroyed. This was particularly worrying, and he couldn't understand why the notes of the meeting would be destroyed only a few days after the hearing. Why was the university so quick to get rid of the notes? Were they trying to hide something? These questions will never be answered by them. It was concerning that although the university produced minutes of the first meeting, they were not forthcoming in producing minutes from this meeting in which a professional referred to the Bible as 'homophobic'. He was sure that the minutes of the meeting had to be kept for a period of time before being destroyed, in case these were needed as a reference to what was said during the meeting. It was clear that the university had already decided to use this case as an example to deter other Christians who might be tempted to take part in such debates. Everything was done to tick boxes as the university was eager to prove that Felix had breached the HCPC (Health and Care Professional Council) guidelines. It was perplexing to hear the university later during the court case blame the HCPC guidelines for not being clear enough. This didn't seem to matter because once the HCPC was aware of this issue they couldn't bear to watch the university go down on such a matter as this; a student openly defending traditional marriage is like a sacrilege. They had to do all within their power to defend the university in court. When I heard of their decision to expel my husband from the

university I knew the Lord would take care of us. He said He would do it and His word will not go void, he has never let us down. We thanked God and cried out to him as our hearts were filled with grief. As we continued to reach out to God in our times of prayer we began to sense a shift in the spirit and we knew we had to stay close to God and seek Him in everything we did as a family. We began to ask Him to search and reveal any wickedness in us as individuals and as a couple as we felt that we had to be honest with God in everything. The Lord led us in prayers of forgiveness and removed anger in us against the university and other people. This experience brought us close as husband and wife and we rededicated afresh our lives and marriage to God. Matthew 18:19 talks about the power of agreement within two people and how this unity commands God's blessing in answered prayers. We held on to this promise for ourselves. We knew that from thenceforth we had to be in one accord in every decision we made. As Felix appealed the decision to withdraw him from his studies we knew that whatever happened the Lord would provide and protect us. He appealed the decision of the Fitness to Practice committee and once again another meeting was arranged. Another letter was sent to him advising him about members of the appeal committee. Once again, he attended the meeting with Pastor Ade Omooba. This time he didn't say much but instead relied on a statement which he presented to the appeal committee. Pastor Omooba again appealed for caution and the need to reach a common-sense solution. This was once again completely rebuffed by the appeals committee. It was, however, interesting that this time around the university kept a well-crafted minute of the meeting. Felix's advice to any student

attending such a meeting in the future is to ensure that a full record of all proceedings is taken. Felix questioned why the university had to leave out pertinent issues, such as the chair of the committee referring to his comments on Facebook as ‘homophobic’, only for this to be denied in court as none of them could recall this statement and other issues raised by my husband’s barrister. It was, however, paradoxical that they applauded him for being honest throughout the hearing in court!

Once all internal channels of appeal had been exhausted he decided to take his case to court, but was advised by the university of Sheffield that he had to take his case to the University Ombudsman before going to court. Christian Concern was very helpful throughout this process and without their unwavering support we may have given up. It is understandable why so many people who find themselves in similar cases end up withdrawing quietly for fear of losing one’s career and financial livelihood. On top of this there is intimidation and the cost of pursuing a claim all acting as a deterrent. But, God has been good and gracious, and His ways are greater and higher than our ways. No-one can fathom or comprehend what He does. Because of this Felix was boldly prepared to challenge the university’s decision in court.

The Lord will take care of us

The Christian Legal Centre filed the application for judiciary review and Felix started looking for a job. I was on the verge of submitting my research paper for my master’s degree and

it was hard to make ends meet but the Lord was faithful. Felix sent an email to his former employer asking them to reference him on his job search. A few days later the same college where he had previously worked called him to ask if he would like to work with them. God is good! This job was close to home. It was too good to be true and perfectly timed for us as we were in dire need of finances. A huge burden was lifted from us and the Lord strengthened our faith in Him through this provision. Felix was doing a job that the Lord had provided at our time of need and the college students kept him on his toes. His love for critical thinking kept the students motivated as they got to discuss various contemporary issues such as the United Kingdom leaving the EU, the death of Nelson Mandela and the impact of apartheid etc. Felix started in the middle of term-time and taking over from another teacher was daunting, but gradually he connected and established relationships with most of the students. It had been more than a year since he had left that job and he had to learn quickly on his feet.

When the details of his expulsion from the university of Sheffield came out in the press, he was subsequently told by his manager that unfortunately his position was no longer required. This did not come as a surprise and Felix expected it was because of the publicity of his case. He also felt the environment in which he enjoyed working in suddenly changed. For the first time since I met Felix, he was happy to leave a job! The Lord encouraged us during this time and we had a very supportive vicar who prayed fervently for us and always wanted to know how we were coping. God provided for us in ways we never anticipated. For example, one day we received a letter with a number for Felix to call. When

he telephoned the person advised him that the Lord laid in his heart to bless us financially and he had to search for our address. We also had our wedding anniversary around the same time and a lady in Leeds sent my husband a message through Facebook saying the Lord had laid it in her heart to bless us financially for our anniversary. This all came as a surprise especially because we had never explained to anyone about the financial challenges we were facing. Through it all the Lord fed, clothed and took care of all our bills. I am still amazed how we survived! After his application to the office of the independent adjudicator (University Ombudsman) was turned down, the Christian Legal Centre supported him in making an application for judicial review. We both got jobs and God has been sustaining us ever since.

Application for permission for judiciary review

When the day came to go to court we were all excited to start this journey with everyone from Christian Concern and felt we were part of this big and loving family that God had miraculously given to us. The staff at Christian Concern had worked so hard and we were grateful for all they were doing. We constantly prayed for God to bless Christian Concern and all who give generously to them. We felt that we were part of this great big family who loved us so much that they were willing to do everything within their power to seek justice for my husband.

Felix's barrister from the Christian Legal Centre, Paul

Diamond, made a very strong case for freedom of speech and the need for the courts to safeguard religious freedoms in the United Kingdom. After listening to arguments from both barristers, the judge granted the permission for a full hearing. Our world changed in an instant, we had no idea where the Lord was taking us next. We knew without a shadow of doubt that the Lord was going to use this situation to start a discussion all over the world on one of the greatest pillars of our society, which is marriage and the family. What the Lord had said to me four years ago, about using my husband to change policies in this country, finally made sense. This was a step in the right direction and we were jubilant in the truth that the Lord is indeed faithful.

The full hearing

The full hearing for this case commenced on 3-4 October 2017. It was exciting to have the opportunity at last to put Felix's case to a judge. However, it was no longer just Sheffield University that Felix was against, they had formed an allegiance with the HCPC to bring Felix down. This was especially interesting as his legal challenge was directly against the University of Sheffield and not against the HCPC. Nonetheless, the HCPC did everything within their power to get involved and they hired a barrister to represent them. The University also had a couple of solicitors and a barrister representing them. It was an intimidating atmosphere, especially as we had never been inside a court room. We were blessed to have friends from Canada, Barnsley and London come along to support

us. We also had many supporters on social media praying and encouraging Felix to stand strong in this fight. We constantly shared everything happening on social media so that everyone was up to date with the events.

It was very interesting to hear the university state their position. However, a few things caught my attention. Firstly, there were significant differences in account of what was said during the Fitness to Practice hearing. It was intriguing to hear the University solicitor argue that members of the FTP committee didn't hear the chair of the committee refer to Felix's Bible quotation during the debate as 'homophobic'. Felix felt cheated as this was clearly mentioned by the chair who we now know was a veteran LGBT campaigner. Whether this was significant or not, it was the denial that was troubling. The university also argued that if he had made the comments during a discussion in a church setting then they wouldn't have had a problem. This would suggest that if he made the comment in church and a member of his congregation reported him to the university they would have found no problem with this. I will leave this to the reader to digest and consider what this implies! I was also intrigued when the university solicitor tried to defend the chair of the FTP committee by arguing that she was just a passionate gay woman who has fought for gay rights, and Felix was determined to ruin her career. There was a lack of appreciation from the university as to how Jacqueline Marsh's appointment as a committee member could have impacted the impartiality or perceived bias of the university's decision. Not to mention how the university had decided to cut short Felix's dream to be a social worker.

After day two of the hearing, it was very interesting talking

with Felix's legal team, especially Andrea Williams, the CEO of Christian Concern and the Christian Legal Centre. She said the team had been in this position several times, feeling hopeful, only to be turned down by the courts. This felt like a blow to my chest. I wondered where they got the courage to carry on despite being persistently turned down by the courts time and time again.

But Christian Concern are passionate about effecting change. I sighed as it dawned on me how much our society has shifted towards the left, how freedom of speech only applies if one espouses liberal, and not biblical values. It wasn't a good feeling at all, yet the encouragement from different people around the world was like a cushion to lean on.

We have been greatly encouraged by public reaction on Felix's case. Most messages received were supportive and positive. It was great to read from practicing social workers, veteran social workers, solicitors and barristers, church leaders, and even many positive messages from people who struggle with same-sex attraction. These messages reminded us why it was right to stand for the truth and that no matter how much our public institutions attempt to suppress the truth, the truth will always prevail. Being on the media was a challenge for Felix initially and he felt agitated before an interview. His confidence and passion quickly shone through as he got used to being in the public eye.

The interviews

Felix had numerous interviews. Amongst these were the

Russian Television, Sheffield BBC, Barnsley Chronicle, The Sunday Times, Premier Christian Radio etc. Of course, nobody wants to expose his or her family to the public with their picture on every newspaper. I have always known my husband to be brave, but I had never known that he could be so resilient, especially knowing that he could be risking his life by standing up for biblical marriage. This seems to the liberals to be an old-fashioned way of living which needs to be done away with. I was delighted as I watched Felix grow and defend the word of God. I was reminded once again that I had married a true man of God who will not stoop down to anyone to gain anything in this world and lose eternity with his creator. There were times I wished I could ease the load from him as I could see the strain in his eyes. But my husband is a determined person and I thank God for that. I am persuaded that the Lord gave him the strength through the prayers of many faithful believers all over the world.

Results of the full hearing

It was a big blow to us when we heard his application for judicial review was refused. I began to recall the warning from Andrea Williams that this happens all the time. An appeal has been lodged and if there is no consensus both the Christian Legal Centre and Felix are prepared and willing to take this battle further.

Reflections

The whole system is flawed. This fight seemed to be only against Christians and not any other religion who also support traditional marriage. It is ludicrous that people are losing their careers and their livelihood stripped from them because of the LGBT agenda to muzzle Christians. Where is the sense in calling ourselves a Christian country and using the Bible in isolation to what it preaches? How long is Christophobia going to go unchallenged in a country that calls on the name of God only during troubled times? Why are the Archbishops and Bishops silently agreeing to this steady move towards liberalism? Are Christian professionals to reconsider their passion for their jobs in order to save their lives? How long shall Christians have to pretend to be something they are not just to get by? Where is freedom of speech and what has happened to equality, or is it just freedom and equality for those who agree with the liberal agenda? Organisations such as Stonewall offer awards to institutions, universities and employers who promote gay rights. Should Christian organisations also award institutions that promote and affect policies that encourage Christian values? These are questions I repeatedly ask, as I am sure you do also. But we are continuously encouraged by the truth that as children of God all things work out for our good, even those things we do not agree with or understand, because eventually victory belongs to Jesus.

Encouragements

We have had an overwhelming response to Felix's case and the encouragement from different people all over the world has been uplifting. Here is a glimpse of just a few of these messages. Thank you to all who wrote. May God bless you all.

“Hi Felix.

I've just read about the outcome of your court case. You are very courageous...If you have honoured God in your stance, then he will honour you. You may not get your Masters, but God will use this testing time to take you deeper and further. This has cost you, but God will lavish upon you even greater than what you have 'lost'. Stand firm, in these next days... Jeremiah 29v11.”

“Hey Felix.

I just wanted to say that as a university student here in Australia, who deals with LGBT propaganda on a daily basis, especially since we are voting on same-sex marriage, and have to hide my honest opinions on it in fear of reprisal, I want to say that you are a true hero and an inspiration to all of us Christians here, who hold firmly to our Biblical beliefs on sexuality. I know how sinister the LGBT lobby can be to anyone who opposes them. I used to be involved in the gay community as I struggled with same-sex feelings, but I was persecuted a lot for my Christian faith, which by the grace of God, opened my eyes and convinced me to leave and take my Christian faith more seriously. Know that you have supporters from all walks of life, who are completely opposed with the way you were treated and hope for a reversal of the anti-Christian sentiment

in the West. God bless you and take care.”

‘Hi Felix,

Your case with Sheffield Uni is making waves over here in the USA. I just wanted to congratulate you and encourage you. The University might want to silence you and most of the western world might want to do the same, but the more they resist the truth, the further the truth will spread around the world, just as your situation is proving. God bless you for standing up for TRUE marriage when so many will not.”

“Congratulations, Brother in Christ, for your stand, and for the privilege of being persecuted for your faith...We are entering a period of persecution for our faith, and our children are going to see the Remnant stand up stronger than ever before. May God grant it.

A Brother in Texas”

“Hey Felix,

I'm also a student in Sheffield. It's appalling how you've been treated. Sheffield is probably one of the most anti-Christian cities. They let people aggressively promote Marxism, Islam and LGBT, but call Christians bigots. My friend was sacked from work for expressing his Christian beliefs. I'll pray for you.”

“We pray for you brethren that the Lord be with you and fight for you...I support you and thousands in Zimbabwe whose voices cannot be heard on this matter. Keep up the good fight to this change.”

“Hi Felix,

I am from Bulgaria and wanted to say that I praise the Lord for brave and firm Christians like you! You are a great example to this generation how to fight the good fight of faith! Keep up the good work for the Lord! You are an inspiration to multitudes!”

“Hi Felix

Keep up the good fight my friend and brother. May God bless you and give you the strength to continue. You energize all of your Orthodox Christian Brothers & Sisters in America for your perseverance and determination to support the truth!”

Closing

The Christian Legal Centre continue to stand with Felix and Pepsy Ngole, to defend the right to live according to Christian teaching, and to speak the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in public life.

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