

Battles Christians Face

Vaughan Roberts

Authentic 2007 (reprinted with new preface, 2012) £6.99 RRP

The Christian life is victorious, full of joy and triumph. Well, usually. Sometimes. Ever?

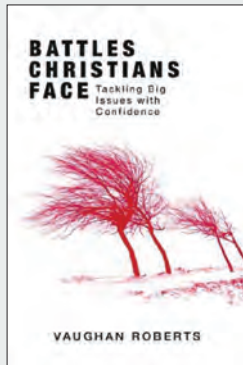
Battles Christians Face equips us to deal wisely with our daily struggles as we follow Jesus. Eight chapters cover some of the most common battles that we have to face: image, lust, guilt, doubt, depression, pride, homosexuality, and keeping spiritually fresh.

Vaughan Roberts offers solidly biblical and thoroughly practical advice on each topic. Chapters begin with a Bible passage which he then expertly and pastorally applies for those wrestling with that particular area of life.

there are hard truths that need to be learned, difficult decisions made

Tackling the world's obsession with image, he shows from Colossians 3 how our new identity in Christ must change our view of ourselves and others; Psalms 42 and 43 help us understand and deal with depression. David's adultery with Bathsheba is the background to the chapters on both lust and guilt - the former from the narrative in 2 Samuel 11-12, and the latter from David's heartfelt reflection in Psalm 32.

And he writes well; clearly and attractively. Examples and illustrations



are often humorous, and always helpful; contemporary and relevant to any student. There are hard truths that need to be learned, difficult decisions to be made - and he challenges us in these without compromise but with great gentleness. Vaughan was the student pastor and now rector at St Ebbe's Church in Oxford. But you wouldn't need to

be told that to recognise this as a book written by a Bible teacher, and a pastor of real people facing real life problems.

If there's anything lacking, it's perhaps that it doesn't cover everything. There are no chapters on greed, anger, laziness, perfectionism... and I'm sure we could all think of things that trouble us personally that we wish he'd included. But of course, he can't cover everything. And there's a reason why he's chosen his eight topics. The 2012, fifth anniversary reprint included a new preface, in which Vaughan explained that all these battles faced him personally. This is not some abstract ivory tower 'how to' manual; it's born out of his own experiences and failings. But also out of his own experience of God's Word and Spirit helping him grow more to be like Jesus.

In an interview about this in *Evangelicals Now*¹ Vaughan discussed one of those personal battles, same sex attraction, and made several really helpful points. Firstly, our identity is in

Christ, not in our sexuality. Like Vaughan, I am also a sinner saved by grace: it's not about being labelled by the world as 'straight' or 'gay'; it's our status before God that matters. Secondly, the Bible is clear that God loves everyone and all are welcome into his family whatever their background or orientation. Thirdly, the Bible is also clear that any sex outside heterosexual marriage is wrong;

we all need to help each other deal with the issues we face; to be open with each other and faithful to God's Word

homosexual sex is out of bounds for the Christian. Therefore, the church needs to respond helpfully and faithfully to those who do experience same sex attraction. Christians can be tempted to take one of two wrong approaches: condemning the person, or condoning the behaviour. We've often done the former - homosexuality is wrongly and destructively seen as a uniquely evil sin, or as purely a matter of sinful choice. We cause hurt, shame and loneliness rather than helping people honestly deal with their temptations. Ostracism will make people afraid to admit their failings, and with no-one to help they can spiral into sin and despair. On the other hand, some church leaders are saying that it's fine to live a gay lifestyle. And Christians attracted to

Recommendations

Vaughan also recommends the following resources for those who are dealing with same sexual attraction themselves, or who want to support their friends:

- *Washed and waiting* by Wesley Hill²
- *Walking with gay friends* by Alex Tylee³
- The True Freedom Trust⁴

others of the same sex will be confused and led astray. How damaging it can be to a Christian who's battling each day with their temptation in the power of God's Spirit... to be told there's no point bothering.

We all need to help each other deal with the issues we face; to be open with each other and faithful to God's Word. Talk with wiser, older Christians; meet one-to-one or in triplets to support each other as you read the Bible and pray together. We need to grasp it's just by grace we've been saved: none of us is 'better' than anyone else, though some of us at times have tougher challenges. We need to love one another, recognising the pain that others might be suffering, and bearing each other's burdens. This book will help us do this. ■

Giles Cattermole is CMF Head of Student Ministries

REFERENCES

1. Hardyman J, Roberts V. A battle I face. *Evangelicals Now* 2012 Oct. <http://bit.ly/S8kZtI>
2. Hill W. *Washed and waiting*. Zondervan, 2010.
3. Tylee A. *Walking with gay friends*. IVP, 2007.
4. www.truefreedomtrust.co.uk