

Restoration Process

Todd Bentley was used to spark the Lakeland Outpouring, which raised the faith level of much of the body of Christ. Testimonies of healings and miracles from it are now virtually all over the world. When Todd's marriage failed, he abruptly stopped all ministry and virtually disappeared for almost nine months. In the meantime, his divorce was finalized and he has recently remarried.

Todd has taken full responsibility for the failure of his marriage. He and Jessa also admit that their relationship was premature and should not have happened the way it did. Both are adamant that it was not the cause for the failure of his first marriage, nor did they begin their relationship until Todd was convinced that his marriage was over. They have both expressed that it was wrong and premature. They do not want to try and cover this up even though they know many will never accept them for it. Even so, they are married now and are resolved to make the most of their marriage, their lives, and to continue to serve the Lord in the best way that they can.

My position all along has been that I will do my best to comply with Galatians 6:1, "If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (NKJV). To obey this Word, I have always felt that it did not matter what one had done, and that it was my responsibility to help them find the grace of God to return to the place from which they had fallen. I confess that with Todd, I am not just doing this as a duty. From the time I first met him nearly ten years ago, I knew that he had an extraordinary purpose and a gift of faith for the miraculous that would be desperately needed in these times. I consider helping any of God's children an honor, and helping Todd is a privilege.

I also confess to some selfish ambition in wanting to do this.

I had a dream two decades ago in which one of my children had fallen into a sewage ditch and could not get up. My child was being scorned and no one would help him. A man came along who helped my child get up and then cleaned up. In that dream, I felt as if I would give everything that I owned to this man who helped my child. Then I heard the voice of the Lord say, "Jim Bakker is My child. Will you help him?" Since that time, I have been devoted to helping any of God's children that I could who have committed any trespass, because I knew there were few other things that would bring the Father's favor. I consider this willingness to at least try to help others this way a major reason for the extraordinary favor that our ministry, my family, and I have received. I love Todd and am glad to help him, but I also know by doing this, I will be doing something that means a great deal to our Father.

When we release someone to minister in the body of Christ, we are releasing him or her to minister to God's own children, and I personally do not do that with anyone who I would not allow to minister to my own family. For all that was done through Todd, and especially at Lakeland, which touched and helped countless thousands, many were also left confused and hurt by the way it ended. I think Todd is even more sensitive to this than I am. Although in some ways he greatly misses being in ministry and praying for people, he wants to be sure that when he comes back that his life and his ministry are on the most solid ground possible so that he does not cause these kinds of problems again.

Jack Deere and Bill Johnson have agreed to be a part of Todd's restoration process. I asked them to be a part because I know they will probably see things I don't, but also because both Todd and I trust them and know they would not sign off on something they did not really believe in. However, both of them are going to be involved in this at a distance, and therefore, I will be the main person responsible.

Being a believer in body ministry, I expect our whole

leadership team, and to some degree, our whole local church, to be involved in helping Todd and Jessa. Our staff and all from the church that I have discussed this with are very happy about them being here and want to help them in any way that they can.

In future *Bulletins*, we will go into more detail about what we're doing and why, as well as what we think was a cause of some of the failures Todd experienced. We will only do this for the sake of helping others avoid the same traps. We know that trust has to be earned and that Todd will have to earn the trust of the body of Christ for future ministry, which will not be easy, nor should it be. Todd, more than most, does not want to jump back into ministry prematurely, even as much as he misses it in some ways.

I for one have been very encouraged by the expressions of grace and genuine concern so many have expressed toward Todd in this situation. It gives me great hope. As we have been constantly reminded, the Lord had great patience with sinners, but He had none for the self-righteous. We're all here because He had mercy on us, and we know we still need it. However, we also know that true repentance and restoration can only come if we refuse to compromise the clear biblical standards for morality and integrity.

Todd wanted to personally say the following:

It has been a long while since I have spoken publicly and openly. I am sorry for the hurt and confusion that my decisions have caused the body of Christ. It has been a true season of brokenness, hiddenness, and a long process of grieving.

As many of you now know, my previous marriage has endured years of unresolved conflicts. I apologize that it has ended in divorce, and I take full responsibility for my part for the ending of the marriage. I realize that my silence and

decisions have caused many of you to feel hurt, confused, and offended. The reason for the silence was for my need of healing, creating a restoration process under a team of qualified leaders, much needed rest after the Lakeland Outpouring, repentance, and the divorce process.

I have now relocated to Fort Mill, South Carolina and have entered into my restoration and healing process under Rick Joyner, Jack Deere, and Bill Johnson. I am confident of this one thing-that God is faithful to His promise and my hope is to be fully restored, strengthened, healed, and to learn from all the mistakes I have made along the way.

Thank you friends and partners for your continued prayers, encouragement, and love. I am committed to the work of the Holy Spirit and confident that the good men around me will help me be restored first as a man, as a husband, and ultimately to fulfill God's call on my life.

Those of you who were touched by the Lakeland Outpouring do not lose your encouragement. What happened there was from God, and Todd is a true servant of God. He has made some mistakes, and he is trying to get his life back in order, and you can be confident that he will. Throughout the Bible, many of the greatest heroes in it also made some of the worst mistakes. King David, possibly the greatest hero in the Bible after Jesus, made one of the most horrible mistakes, not only committing adultery, but murdering the husband of the woman he committed it with. God knew that was going to happen with David when He called him, and He loved David before, during, and afterward.

One of the remarkable events in the Bible is that the Lord then used Bathsheba to bring forth the heir to the throne, Solomon, and she is part of the genealogy of Jesus. It still stretches me, but we need stretching in the grace of God. At the same time, we must balance it with how God hates divorce, and it is one of the scourges of our times that is tragically

hurting many, many people. Marriage is under such an assault now because it is so important. However, legalism will not overcome lawlessness. This situation and similar ones that almost every church and family are now being faced with is one that we need answers for. We cannot run from Him, but must run to Him with our need.

Many of Todd's friends and former partners have asked if and how they might help. Donations can now be made to Fresh Fire USA at the following address:

Fresh Fire USA
C/O MorningStar Fellowship Church
375 Star Light Dr.
Fort Mill, SC. 29715

Make checks out to Fresh Fire USA or if you would like to donate by credit card, call 1-800-542-0278, and tell the operator that you want to make a donation to Fresh Fire USA.