

Todd Bentley and 11 Reasons Why Fallen Leaders Reject Restoration

Dr. Michael Brown and other extremely reputable Christian leaders released a report on Todd Bentley and his reported indiscretions. They took quite some time and carefully stepped through the process to ensure the final report would be accurate and written from a heart of love. I believe they accomplished this.

I've had the unfortunate opportunity to have a closer than normal view of public failure of three world-famous ministers over the last few decades.

This most recent situation caused me to ask a simple question: Why is it so hard for fallen ministers to properly step through a restoration process? Would it not look much better for them and wouldn't the public be much more accepting of a return to ministry if they handled it rightly?

Jimmy Swaggart was warned to take a year off ministry by David Wilkerson just before his infamous failure was made known. This was a striking prophetic word as nobody had any inclination that Swaggart was in sin and it was about to be announced to the world. As I sat in the pastoral ministry class at Jimmy Swaggart Bible College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Jim Rentz—the pastor of Family Worship Center on the campus of Jimmy Swaggart Ministries—told us that they all truly loved Brother David. However, the ministry would collapse if Swaggart stepped away for a year. They rejected the prophetic instruction and the rest is history.

After the failure, he was instructed to take a year off ministry by the Assemblies of God, but he rejected that instruction by his authorities. He was back behind the pulpit

in three months. In fact, he did everything but preach in the weeks leading up to his extremely rapid return.

From the *Los Angeles Times* on April 9, 1988:

Jimmy Swaggart was defrocked Friday by the Assemblies of God after he refused a one-year suspension, asserting that a prolonged absence from the pulpit would doom his television ministry and jeopardize his Bible college.

The decision to defrock Swaggart for unspecified "moral failures" was made in a telephone conference of a dozen elders of the Assemblies of God church. It commenced upon receipt of a letter from Swaggart declaring that he could not submit to the terms of his penance and rehabilitation.

"We believe," Swaggart told reporters later at his Baton Rouge, La., headquarters, "that to stay out of the public for a year would totally destroy the television ministry and greatly adversely impact the college."

Assemblies of God leaders said Swaggart gave them no choice but to defrock him.

He's not the only one who rushes back into ministry after falling into immorality.

I believe there are many reasons for this. In fact, it would do all of us well to ask God if any of these reasons I'll be addressing below might be issues or potential issues in our own lives. It's hard, but still much easier to deal with character issues before failure hits than after.

Here's a handful of extremely deadly mindsets and problems that all of us, on either side of failure, should go to prayer about.

Fear of Loss

When failure becomes public, suddenly everything the minister has worked for, sometimes for decades, is at risk of being removed in the matter of a moment. We see this clearly admitted to by Swaggart as revealed in the *Los Angeles Times* article above. Their immediate reaction may not be to deal with the sin, but rather with the impending consequences. They can't imagine their entire lives being turned upside down, so they do whatever possible to mitigate damages and keep their ministry machine moving forward just as it always has been. They don't understand that losing the ministry is OK if it means saving their soul and guarding the name of Jesus.

Denial

Some will fully deny wrongdoing whatsoever, but even those who have been undeniably caught in indiscretion may minimize just how serious the sin is. I believe oftentimes they have convinced themselves that it's not really that big of a deal. They deny the severity of the failure and can be quite irritated that others can't see it that way. In fact, they will often presume that a simple confession eradicates the past sin. Well, if a confession is genuine, and if repentance is true, then the sin is forgiven. What is yet to be resolved, however, is their own heart, weaknesses and the state of their ministry. They may correctly deny that they are still in sin, but that denial doesn't end the restoration process—it starts it, and it very well may take years.

Control

Many of today's most successful public ministers are alpha leaders. They are dominant. They are used to being in charge and the thought of answering to another is an irritant to them, if not totally foreign. They claim to do exactly what God is telling them to do, and they won't relinquish that role to any other. The problem is that God has placed human authorities in our lives and we don't have the option to cast them aside so we can do what we please.

When failure has come, the leader is no longer in charge. They would do well to humble themselves and trust the process that loving kingdom authorities will lay out for them. The authorities didn't ask to be in this situation. They wish they weren't, but the leader's sin put them there. Honor them in their selfless service by submitting to them.

Shame

You can imagine how embarrassing a public scandal would be. Those caught in sin can be humiliated as it crushes any reputation they have built for themselves over the previous years or decades. It's easy to fight back against the charges in hopes of eliminating the shame.

Instead, we should be like Joseph who chose both shame and prison over sin when he ran out of a setup in the bedroom naked. Personal image protection can't be our motive. Holiness, purity and God's reputation must be drive our reactions to accusation.

Damage Control

A full confession and full surrender to a lengthy restoration process is counter-intuitive to someone who is attempting to salvage what he spent so long building, and what is currently being threatened and torn apart.

A better move would be to waive the white flag, to fully repent and to go through whatever process necessary to move through the restoration. They need to understand they have no leverage or bargaining power. They are now in the hands of God, of the public and of leaders who want to initiate a careful, thoughtful pathway of success for them.

Wrong Motives

While many people enter ministry with a pure heart, over time their motives can change significantly. Anyone in ministry

knows it's possible to be seduced by the promise of influence, power, finances or other temptations.

It's sad how rare it is to see preachers who have fallen into sin be truly, visibly and deeply sorrowful for their sin. Where are the tears? Where is the brokenness? Where are those who admit they have nothing left and who are willing to spend the time necessary, as mandated by their overseers, to rediscover God, to get healed and to become qualified for ministry again?

Retaliation

Some will boldly, without any concern for the people they hurt, strike back at their accusers by rejecting any accountability. They continue to build their ministry in the face of the entire world in hopes of smothering the accusations and silencing the accusers.

There is an arrogance that has overcome this type of leader. They have successfully driven through people their entire "ministry" and they won't let anyone stand in their way now. If they do, look out.

Financial Loss

The threat of losing money and of having a lifestyle altered is a serious motivating factor for ministers caught in sin. They kick into damage control and do whatever they can to keep the dollars rolling in.

The thought of actually getting a job is a joke to them. Working a 9 to 5 is laughable. It would be a smart move for many of these fallen ministers to give up on the monument they have built and start working for another.

How powerful would it be to see someone like Todd Bentley humbly and honorably working at a pizza place or driving a bus instead of announcing yet another ministry endeavor in the

face of scandal? Can you imagine how much more quickly people would be endeared to them? Their restoration would be fast-tracked.

Pride

Of course, pride is sure to rear its ugly head if it hasn't been fully dealt with prior to failure. It's easy to react mindlessly if a spirit of pride is leading the charge. A collapse of a ministry very well may be an act of love by God who is doing all He can to alert them to their haughtiness and save their soul from hell.

No Desire to Repent

Some enjoy their sin so much, and have minimized its severity so completely, that they don't see themselves leaving that lifestyle behind. Some are addicted to behaviors and they can't imagine life without feeding that beast. Of course, people like this have no business being in any type of ministry. Instead, they should be checking themselves in to counseling sessions, going through deliverance and seeking inner healing.

Ministry Is an Idol

This may hit home to many pastors and ministers. How easy is it to get addicted to the rush of ministry? Very. Every single one of us should immediately ask God to search our hearts and see if we are addicted to it. Do we love ministry more than God? Nobody would want to say yes, but we should yearn for the freedom that can come if it's true and we repent.

Conclusion

Those who have fallen into sin need to understand their restoration most often will take years, not months. Just step away and discover the lover of your souls again!

God is your provider, so financial loss shouldn't be an issue.

God's name is to be made famous, not ours, so a lack of influence shouldn't concern us.

We are called to die daily, so loss shouldn't be troubling to us.

This message is for all of us, public failure or no public failure. Do all you can to address the above issues and any other the Lord highlights to you. The enemy is working very hard to destroy ministries, ministers, their families and all who are under their influence. Any weakness such as pride or idolatry is an open door for attack. Close that door fast!

I learned a long time ago that the world doesn't need my ministry as much as I might think it might. God doesn't need me as much as I'd like to think either. I'm not minimizing the need for people to step out into their callings and ministries, but we must understand that being responsive to God, being repentant, growing in intimacy, embracing humility and dying to self is all much, much more important. {eoa}

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