

When You're Forced to Start All Over Again—Again

When I broke my leg at age 7 and wound up in a full body cast, I had to learn how to walk all over again. It was a painful process and took what seemed like an eternity for a kid who wanted to go out and play. When I broke my leg again a year later—and ended up in a body cast again—I had to repeat the entire process.

When I left home at 18, I had to make a fresh start in life away from all my family. When my husband ran out on my baby and me 12 years later, I had to start all over again.

When I got born again some months later, I made another completely fresh start in life. And after I went to jail on a false accusation, **was vindicated** and ultimately set free, I started all over again with just a few dollars in my pocket and no job. When I obeyed the **Holy Spirit** and moved to Alabama, I had to start over again in a whole new state without knowing a single soul.

Some years later, when I left a spiritually abusive church, I lost almost every friend I had and all my ministry positions to follow the **Holy Spirit** into the new thing He ordained for me. And when I took on this assignment at *Charisma* magazine, I started all over again.

I could go on and on, but I'll stop there. The point is, I've had to start over again time and time again—sometimes by force and sometimes by choice. Either way, it's tough.

Maybe you can relate. In fact, I'm sure you can because setbacks and start-overs are the story of most people's lives. Maybe you are in a place right now where you have to start all over again. Maybe you were abused or cheated. Maybe someone you love passed away or ran away. Maybe the enemy has set out

to destroy everything you build. Maybe you laid it all down to obey God. Or maybe you just blew it—maybe it's your own fault. Let me assure you that even though you may have lost everything, God is still with you and has a new beginning for you that's greater than anything the enemy stole—or that you walked away from in obedience to Him.

You're in Good Company

The Bible is full of stories about people who were forced to start all over again. Think about Rahab the harlot. Rahab graciously hid the Israelites who were sent into the **Promised Land** to spy it out. When destruction came upon Jericho, Joshua spared her entire household for blessing the Hebrews (Josh. 6:25). But she and her family were suddenly in an entirely new place with entirely new people. God gave her a second chance—but in the process she lost everything she had. She had to start all over.

Then there's Ruth. Her husband died. She walked through pain, grief and financial struggles. She was forced to start all over again in a new land (Ruth 1:6) and eventually married a new husband.

Don't forget Nehemiah. He had the daunting task of rebuilding the decimated walls of Jerusalem all over again. He faced plenty of **spiritual warfare** but with God's grace completed the task.

And how about Jacob? He served his uncle Laban for seven years for the right to marry his heart's love, Rachel, only to be tricked into marrying her sister Leah instead. He was cheated and mistreated. He had to start all over again and work another seven years for Rachel's hand (Gen. 29).

Moving on to the New Testament, we find plenty of other examples. There's Saul, the persecutor of the church who had climbed to high-ranking status as a Pharisee. When he came to Christ, he lost all his titles and recognition—and became a

hunted man. He had to start all over again. Even his name changed. But Saul-turned-Paul counted it all loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8). He later wrote two-thirds of the New Testament.

And what about John Mark, who abandoned his first mission with Barnabas and Saul (Acts 15:37-38)? John Mark had to resolve his personal issues and start all over, but he climbed back into the grace of God, and Paul later called him profitable for ministry (2 Tim. 4:11).

God's Prophetic Words to You

Whether you've faced death or loss, whether you've sinned or pulled back from an assignment—no matter what has happened or what you've done, you can start all over again. If you've sinned, **repent**. If you find yourself in a new place in life, believe God has a blessing for you there and rejoice. If you're facing opposition, press into God's will and let Him battle for you. If you've been cheated and mistreated, **pray** for your enemies. If you've made mistakes, work with God to correct them.

You can start over. You can find significance. You can be an inspiration to others. Just do like Nehemiah did and refuse to give up. Do what Paul did and count it all loss for the sake of Christ. Do what John Mark did and work through your issues so you can be profitable to the kingdom. Just don't give up.

God would say to you, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). God would say to you, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you ... thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

God would say to you, "Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?

I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Is. 43:18-19). Amen.

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