

Lessons We Can All Learn From Jim Bakker's Fall and Rise

Pain is a part of life. The infilling of the Holy Spirit helps us deal with pain but is no guarantee Christians will be immune to our share of it. The question is not whether you will experience pain, but how you will respond when the pain comes.

It's been said the heat that melts the butter hardens the clay. Too many Christians, I've observed in my six decades on Earth, melt at the slightest problem. They've been led to believe following Christ means a life of joy and fulfillment. That's absolutely true, but the way that message has been preached, at least in America, has left some with an unhealthy expectation that the Lord only allows smooth sailing in our lives.

On top of this, an overemphasis on the so-called prosperity gospel based on a mistranslation of 1 John 3 that God wants you to prosper has caused many a shipwreck for Christians who bought into it without understanding being a Christian is more than living like you won the lottery.

Jim Bakker should know. He told me he got off base partly because of an overemphasis on the prosperity gospel. And he has experienced far more pain in his life than almost anyone I know. In this month's cover story of *Charisma* magazine, I tell how Jim Bakker lost everything—his ministry, his reputation and his wife, and even his home burned to the ground. In addition, he lost his freedom and was in prison for almost five years. Despite it all, he has come back—in some ways stronger than ever.

Sometimes I will write an editorial about our cover story in *Charisma*. You can [click here](#) to read the digital version of

that issue about Bakker, who I have covered since before the infamous “fall” in 1987. Here I share my own thoughts and conclusions on his life and I ask how you’ll respond when the inevitable crises in life cause you to despair.

You may never experience the depth of what Jim Bakker experienced. But all of us will experience loss, whether it’s the loss of a dream or a job or one’s health. Maybe it will be the loss of a marriage. And even if it’s not the loss of any other of these things, each of us will experience the loss of a loved one because no one can escape the inevitability of death.

We can all learn valuable life lessons from how Jim Bakker fell and how the Lord raised him up in this hour:

Humble yourself. If Jim Bakker was haughty before the fall, he is humble today. What happened to him was unjust in my opinion. Maybe he couldn’t help being humiliated as he lost everything as the world press covered every twist and turn. Read how low he was when he came out of prison. Yet I’ve known others who were humiliated by lesser “scandals,” and they tried to justify themselves and remained prideful. Whatever your pain is, embrace humility and ask God what He is trying to teach you.

Learn something new. While Jim was in prison cleaning toilets, he took time to get a doctorate degree by correspondence. But more than that, he did an in-depth study of the words of Jesus and also the book of Revelation. It was unplanned and unwanted, but it was like a five-year sabbatical, and he took advantage of every moment to study Scripture. So if you are bedridden due to your health or out of work, what creative way can you spend the time learning something new or growing spiritually?

Realize the Lord may be preparing you for something you can’t anticipate. Most of us don’t change unless we go through a

difficult time. If this is happening to you, realize God has a bigger plan and allow your trial to shape your character. In Jim Bakker's case, it was becoming an expert on end times so he could help ready the body of Christ for whatever difficulties may be ahead. If PTL had continued to go and grow, would he have learned that? No. But look at the people he has been able to help. What is the equivalent of this in your life?

Finally, never give up. As long as there's life, there's hope. Nothing will continue as it is now—either very good or very bad. So you may feel overwhelmed, but that doesn't mean the sun won't rise tomorrow. Meanwhile, remember the words of Winston Churchill: "Never give up."

One of the things I admire about Jim Bakker is that he didn't give up. Instead, he started over, built a great organization and a great legacy, and served as an example for us all.

You can read my article on Jim and the entire November issue of *Charisma* by clicking [here](#) for the digital edition.

A few months ago, I interviewed Jim while I was on a visit to Morningside. I made it into a podcast which had the most downloads up to that time. Plus, I wrote about it in my newsletter which you can read [here](#) if you missed it. Take time to listen to the podcast again and to share it with others. Take time to like my Steve Strang page on Facebook. During this election season, my audience has really grown! And as usual, share this with others you think would enjoy it.