

More Personal Insights on Healing After Faith Leaders Fail and Fall

Editor's Note: In view of the recent scandals involving high-profile ministries, Charisma News shares this two-part series by bestselling author Eric Wilson about his own experiences as the son of a pastor who fell into sexual sin. We present this for your prayerful consideration. Read the first part at [this link](#).

In the aftermath of our church scandal, my sister stayed put after graduation and served on staff at our parents' church. My brother and I moved a thousand miles south with our mom. I paid the bills while my brother finished high school. Eventually, our parents divorced. Though Mom was never the same, she did missions, spoke at churches and shared Jesus with any who would listen.

Feeling exiled far from home, I took many long walks, crying, yelling, pleading with God. I held nothing back. If He couldn't handle my darkest moments when I needed Him most, then I would have walked away for good. Instead, He spoke to me through song and Scriptures. He assured me He would never leave me nor forsake me. I was made in His image, even if others saw only my father in my angular features.

I read in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (NLT) that we should "test everything that is said" and "hold on to what is good." There was no reason to toss everything Dad had taught me growing up. When I examined his instructions through the lens of God's Word, I realized the amount of wisdom and truth which permeated Dad's words.

Yes, serving others is the key to true leadership.

Yes, people of all ethnic and economic backgrounds are equal in God's sight.

Yes, laughter does us good, and the joy of the Lord is our strength.

After facing the past, my siblings and I started patching up our relationship with our father. He had hurt us, yes, but we'd also hurt him with some of our early reactions. Over time, we got together for meals, then holidays. Years later, we attended his wedding to a wonderful woman none of us had ever met, but to whom he's now been married nearly three decades. Whether Dad ever changed or ever repented—thankfully, he has done both!—it was up to us first to forgive. I knew bitterness would poison my own relationships if I did not.

As all of us wrestle with the recent scandals, knowing more will inevitably come, I urge you, my brothers and sisters, to face sin and call it what it is. Don't turn it into idle gossip. With a humble heart, follow the guidelines of Matthew 18:15-17, and take your concerns to the person involved. If they will not listen, try again with two or three witnesses. From there, take it to the appropriate church leadership so that it doesn't fester. Once the darkness is exposed, address any anger and lack of forgiveness in your own heart. This allows you to move on and grow, while also allowing a fallen leader the opportunity to be restored.

No one, no matter how perfect, has a corner on truth. I've had homeless people speak amazing insights into my life. And I've heard pastors preach opinions that didn't line up with God's Word. It is time we stopped drinking milk as small children and mature into spiritual adults, chewing on the meals given us, separating meat from fat.

I, for one, will still read Ravi Zacharias' books. I respect his gift and his insights.

I will also remember he was human, same as me.

Thirty-five years later, though life hasn't played out the way my siblings and I expected, we have seen the Lord redeem many of those early disappointments. I don't believe He caused the bad things to happen, but as Romans 8:28 (NLT) says, "we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." He is a redeemer. It's in His nature. It's what He does.

For a few good examples, I need only look at my family.

My brother, despite his abandonment issues—or because of them—has opened his home to dozens of kids over the years, some through marriage, some through his Japanese exchange-student program and others through acts of hospitality.

My sister, a licensed pastor and psychologist, is involved in local politics and in denominational leadership. She has been married over 30 years. Per her wishes, our dad and mom did walk her down the aisle at her wedding.

I earned a bachelor's degree in biblical studies, but after getting married, I decided to minister through writing instead of through preaching. I've now published fiction and nonfiction, with more books on the way.

Our mother spent the rest of her life living out of a suitcase, spreading the gospel around the world. She died in Germany at age 59 due to thyroid and heart issues. Her final words to the paramedics were: "I just want to be with Jesus."

Nowadays when people tell me I look like my father, I am proud of that fact. I love Dad now more than ever. Sure, he's a sinner. Just like me. Though that doesn't excuse anything, it does remind me to keep testing everything and holding on to that which is good and true.

There's good in me, and there's lots of good in my dad.

But there is only one heavenly Father.

And only He is wholly good! {eoa}

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