

"A remarkable, grace-filled invitation to move past regrets."

—ANDY STANLEY

STARTING OVER

YOUR LIFE BEYOND REGRETS



DAVE FERGUSON
& JON FERGUSON

Praise for
Starting Over

“*Starting Over* is a remarkable, grace-filled invitation to move past regrets. Dave and Jon Ferguson take us on a journey filled with story and Scripture that guides the reader from a pain-filled past into a positive and redemptive future. This is a life-changing book you need to read and will want to give to others!”

—ANDY STANLEY, senior pastor, North Point Ministries

“Dave and Jon give us the tools we need to find a fresh start! I’m thankful for their wisdom and easy-to-follow steps to freedom.”

—MARK BATTERSON, *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Circle Maker*; lead pastor of National Community Church

“Dave and Jon Ferguson’s book *Starting Over* will guide you through a healthy, God-inspired process of recognizing, releasing, and redeeming your regrets. Rather than staying in the trenches of the past, it’s time to start over and allow God to do a new work in you.”

—CRAIG GROESCHEL, pastor of Life.Church; author of *#Struggles—Following Jesus in a Selfie-Centered World*

“The greatest need in human life is a Do-Over—here it is. I cannot imagine anybody who would not benefit from this book.”

—JOHN ORTBERG, senior pastor of Menlo Church; author of *All the Places to Go*

“Dave and Jon Ferguson have built one of the most dynamic and influential churches in America through their passion for telling others about the love of Jesus. Their Spirit-filled energy and vision flows through their book *Starting Over*, with the life-changing message of redemption and grace.”

—NICKY GUMBEL, Holy Trinity Brompton

“We all have regrets. Thankfully, we are reminded by Dave and Jon Ferguson that everything is going to be okay. This book is filled with stories and practical

steps to learn how to be okay and overcome regret. It is an inspiring and compelling message of hope and freedom. Let *Starting Over* be the launching pad for a new season of regret-free living and leading!”

—BRAD LOMENICK, former president of Catalyst; author of *The Catalyst Leader* and *H3 Leadership*

“One of the greatest stories in the Gospels is when John summoned as many who had the courage to the Jordan River. There they could confess their sins and *start life all over again*. John wanted the whole nation to start over because the one to whom he pointed, Jesus, was ushering in a brand new world. *Starting Over* contains the pastoral accounts of one person after another who, like those who entered the Jordan River with John, have learned that God’s grace forgives, restores, and ushers one person after another into a life without regrets. What a marvelous book about God’s abundant, forgiving, new-life-making love.”

—SCOT MCKNIGHT, Julius R. Mantey Professor of New Testament,
Northern Seminary

“Regrets are part of the human condition, but how we process them is key to how we will live beyond them. In *Starting Over*, the Ferguson brothers provide insight and tools to help us live beyond regret and into the new opportunities for life and flourishing that God has for each of us.”

—DEBRA HIRSCH, author of *Redeeming Sex* and *Untamed*

“I’m not perfect. I’ve experienced regrets. *Starting Over* provides practical next steps to neither suppress nor forget but rather redeem and release the regrets I’ve experienced in my life. Unless you’re perfect, and none of us are, I think you’ll appreciate this opportunity for a new start as well.”

—TONY MORGAN, founder and chief strategic officer, The Unstuck Group

“*Starting Over* drives home the message that God has an unending promise of redemption for us. We live in a fallen world and all deal with regrets in this life. . . . Our staff plans to take hold of this tool, and our congregation will experience its impact. I know you will too.”

—JOBY MARTIN, lead pastor, The Church of Eleven22

STARTING OVER

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**DAVE FERGUSON &
JON FERGUSON**



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STARTING OVER

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“Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will
certainly do nothing effective.”

G. K. CHESTERTON

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PREFACE

It's going to be okay.

Soon enough, we'll have some bold things to say to you. But we want to start this book with a gentle, reassuring whisper. And what we want to whisper is this: *It's going to be okay.*

If you've gone to the trouble to pick up (or download) this book called *Starting Over: Your Life Beyond Regrets*, then we're pretty sure it's because an incident, or a series of incidents, is weighing on you and you're unhappy. Something went on in your past that hurts every time you think of it. The idea of starting over sounds incredibly desirable to you, but you're not sure it's possible in your case. And do you want to risk the possibility of more disappointment, more heartache?

If you're feeling this way, we're sorry. And we want you to know it's going to be okay.

While you're going through your painful regret experience, you're far from alone. Researchers say that children as young as nine express regret.¹ Everybody you know who is out of grade school with developed mental faculties has experienced regret and is probably experiencing some of it right now. Regret is an unavoidable consequence of living in this world.

Not surprisingly, the human race has learned a lesson or two about regret along the way. Sages have opined about it. Older generations have passed down wisdom to younger generations on this topic. Artists have produced arresting portrayals of regret. Psychologists have investigated it clinically. The Bible teaches about it directly and indirectly in countless ways.

And now we offer you *Starting Over*. Here, you'll find a clear and practical synthesis of the most important truths that Scripture, science, and story can teach us about beginning again after we've made a mistake or something has

gone wrong in our lives. If there's a formula for returning the dawn to our lives, this is it.

The two of us are brothers, and we wrote every bit of this book together. But just so you know, starting with chapter 1, we'll be writing from the perspective of "I," referring to Dave. That's merely for the sake of simplicity. Both of us are speaking to you all the way through.

We are pastors who have not only endured our own regrets, as you have, but have also listened to literally thousands of people tell us about their regrets. An old phrase describes pastors as those who have "the cure of souls" in their care. We have a God-given burden to help the members of our church find the cure for the aches within them. What we've learned from helping them to start over, and starting over ourselves, we now want to share with you via the pages of this book.

So right now we're asking, trust us just a little. Enough to keep reading to see if we can teach you something that will help you start over. Ignore your fear, silence your doubt, and place a bet on the hope you have within you that maybe, just maybe, life can begin anew for you.

The fact is, starting over is not an out-of-reach dream.

It's the way to live your life beyond regrets.

SECTION 1

**STARTING OVER,
STARTING TODAY**



THE SORRY CYCLE

Check out these regrets anonymously posted online:

- I regret marrying my husband three weeks ago. I should have called it off before I walked down the aisle. I am twenty-three and just haven't had the time to learn to love myself yet.
- My biggest regret, one that plagues me in my waking moments and some sleeping moments, is that when I was given the opportunity to go to USC for screenwriting I didn't take the chance.
- I regret not telling people how he hurt me. Now, if he is hurting other people, it's my fault.¹

This stuff is gut wrenching.

And oh so familiar.

Regret is a universal emotion. We all make wrong or foolish choices, or something or someone does something hurtful to us, and we regret it. Sometimes we even start regretting a decision before we make it—because we're so sure the consequences are going to disappoint us!

Some people have bigger regrets or dwell on their regrets more than others do, but everybody has them. So don't feel alone if you look back on some episodes of embarrassing boneheadedness or epic nastiness in your past and wish you could do it again differently.

I wrote this book to help you and many others deal with regrets and start

over again. I wrote it for those of us who have ruined relationships, lost jobs, or failed when given golden opportunities. It is for us if we have spent a night in jail, rejected good advice, or hurt somebody we cared about. This is a book for all of us who have regrets of any type burdening our souls and aren't sure how to face the future.

Truthfully, it's for every one of us.

I bet your mind is already simmering with thoughts of your own regrets. They might be minor regrets that you can dismiss from your head whenever you want or major regrets that are painful and crippling and ever present to you. Maybe you even have a mega regret that you try to suppress beneath the surface of your consciousness. It feels like holding down an underwater volcano, doesn't it? Exhausting.

Whatever the magnitude of your regret, and whatever the cause, I have a word of hope for you:

This is not the end.

You don't have to stay stuck in regret.

DIAGNOSIS: REGRET PARALYSIS

Let me tell you how I came to write this book. It started with an observation Jon and I made shortly after the release of our previous book, *Finding Your Way Back to God*.

In that book we described a series of five awakenings that people go through if they feel they have become distant from God and are finding their way back.

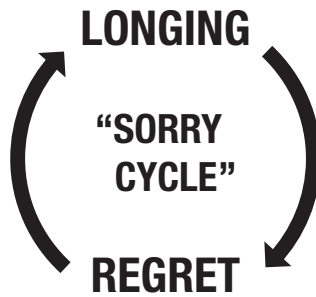
1. *Awakening to longing*—"There's got to be more."
2. *Awakening to regret*—"I wish I could start over."
3. *Awakening to help*—"I can't do this on my own."
4. *Awakening to love*—"God loves me deeply after all."
5. *Awakening to life*—"Now this is living!"

In our conversations with people who had read the book, we were pleased that what we had written resonated with so many people. But we noticed some-

thing curious: many of the people we talked to experienced the Awakening to Regret but then got stuck there.

For example, one woman in her midthirties told us, “I wish I could start over after my divorce—I really do. But you have no idea how the breakup has affected the way I feel about myself. How lonely I am. What big financial trouble I’m in today. Not to mention the loss of my hopes for having children, which was my biggest dream. Honestly, I don’t really see God as caring about me or having anything much good left for me.”

Jon and I can’t remember which of us first coined the term, but somewhere along the way we started using the phrase *Sorry Cycle* to describe what people meant when they said things like this. They were sorry about what happened and felt sorry for themselves, but they just couldn’t seem to get beyond that. Essentially they were going from longing to regret, back to longing then regret, in an endless cycle of repetition.



They were stuck in their regrets.

Paralyzed.

And miserable because of it.

Divorce, abuse, addiction, bankruptcy, the loss of dreams, and other experiences that people go through can be terrible. It’s easy to see why so many of us get trapped in sorrow and regret. But getting stuck like this only makes a situation worse. And so we have to be honest about what’s really happening here—we have to admit there’s a Sorry Cycle in operation.

Psychologists have a term for getting stuck in useless regret: *rumination*. Like a cow chewing its cud, we go over and over our regrets in our mind. That's the Sorry Cycle, and it's destructive. Clinical psychologist Melanie Greenberg, in an article called "The Psychology of Regret," says:

Regret can have damaging effects on mind and body when it turns into fruitless rumination and self-blame that keeps people from re-engaging with life. This pattern of repetitive, negative, self-focused ruminative thinking is characteristic of depression and may be a cause of this mental health problem as well. . . . Regret can result in chronic stress, negatively affecting hormonal and immune system functioning. Regret impedes the ability to recover from stressful life events by extending their emotional reach for months, years, or lifetimes.²

Going round and round in the Sorry Cycle is harmful to our minds and bodies—and I would add our souls to that list too. Furthermore, as we function poorly, the people around us, including our spouses, kids, friends, and coworkers, are forced to deal with a severely damaged person. In a sense, we take them along with us for a ride in the Sorry Cycle.

Sometimes we think that if we try to ignore our regrets they'll shrink over time—or better yet, go away. The opposite is true. Regrets tend to grow over time. And so do their costs. If I neglect my marriage for one month, for example, that is regrettable. But if I neglect it for ten years, the damage will be immeasurably greater.

And then there are the opportunity costs.

Can you imagine the benefits you *aren't* enjoying because you haven't gotten over the failure of your business venture, the rupture in your family, the humiliating public exposure of your immorality, or whatever else you're ruminating about? What peace are you not experiencing? What sense of satisfaction in accomplishment are you missing out on? What connectedness with others are you doing without? What work of creativity are you not able to produce, or what

service to the needy are you unequipped to provide? How might your relationship with God be more intimate?

If we don't deal with the roots of our regrets, if we don't make the choice to start over, the costs of what we're missing out on can be enormous and will accrue exponentially over time. Yet sadly, the fact remains that many people, possibly including you, are spinning in the Sorry Cycle today. If left unchecked, anybody's Sorry Cycle can turn into a downward spiral.

A SELF-MADE FAILURE STORY

When I was in my twenties, I knew God was calling me to lead a church. I was desperate to learn how to do that to the best of my ability. And that's why I latched on to Donald.³

Donald was the genius behind one of the fastest-growing churches in the country. He wasn't the upfront guy, but everyone close to him knew that he was the leader who put it all together and was responsible for seeing thousands of lives changed.

For that reason, I wrote to Donald and begged him to give me an internship. "I'll do it for free," I said. "I'll get your coffee. Whatever. Just let me hang out with you!" That's how much I wanted to have the opportunity to learn from Donald.

I was thrilled when he said yes to my plea, and I quickly packed my stuff and drove across the country.

The internship turned out to be all I had hoped for and more. Later, I would implement much of what I learned from Donald when I founded Community Christian Church.

I loved and admired my mentor Donald so much.

And that's why I was both stunned and grieved a few years after my internship when I learned that Donald had basically chucked his whole life.

Shockingly, in what seemed like a moment of utter recklessness, he left his wife of twenty years. His explanation was brief and shallow: "We were

emotionally disconnected.” No doubt there was more to it than that, though I never learned any more details about the causes of the split (nor did I need to). But in any case this marriage was over and Donald’s relationship with his two teenage sons would never be the same.

In the midst of all this turmoil, Donald’s senior pastor also “suggested” that Donald should resign his ministry position. So that’s what he did, begrudgingly. And then, having moved into a small apartment, he lived almost as a recluse for a long time, until he finally got a job as a part-time professor at a community college.

The man who had taught me the importance of relationships was terribly alone.

After hearing what had become of Donald, I called him. On the phone, I thanked him again for all he’d done for me, and he seemed to appreciate that. Then I asked him about how his life was going.

“Are you in touch with any of the old team back at the church?” I asked.

He said no. Then he went on to talk bitterly about the judgment he felt he’d received from some at the church. Eventually, though, he admitted that he had rejected them at least as much as they had rejected him.

“Have you tried to make amends with Barbara?” I asked.

Again, no. The tone of his voice said he wasn’t interested in trying to reconcile with his wife.

“What about the boys? What are you doing to restore your relationship with them?”

Here Donald got emotional. I could tell he was in anguish about being estranged from his children. “I’ve lost them forever,” he said.

“But have you *tried* to reconcile with them?” I persisted.

“I did at first, but there’s no point in trying anymore,” he said. “It’s too late.”

I hung up the phone that day feeling sad and more than a little confused. I still couldn’t understand how this guy whom God had used so powerfully could

bail on his family and ministry. Nor could I understand why he was refusing to try to fix some of the mess he had created. He felt badly about what he'd done. But clearly, he wasn't going to do anything about it.

He was stuck so firmly in the Sorry Cycle that he couldn't even imagine a way out of it. And I'm sorry to say that nothing has really changed in the twenty years that have passed since then. As far as I know, Donald has never apologized, never made amends with anyone he hurt, and never truly pursued reconciliation with his family or old friends. He has continued to live a quiet and lonely life with regret seemingly his only companion.

This is what we cannot permit to happen in our lives! And we don't have to. We don't have to get stuck in a Sorry Cycle.

Are you with me?

Next, I want to help you start dealing with your own regrets more productively by helping you understand them better. You see, there are certain kinds of regrets that cause us to get stuck in the Sorry Cycle. There are three categories that are like giant buckets we can use to start sorting and making sense of our regrets.

Three Types of Regret

1. Regrets of action
2. Regrets of inaction
3. Regrets of reaction

WHICH BUCKET IS YOUR REGRET IN?

Every regret is unique, and the sorrow we feel in response to our regrets is deeply personal to us. Yet I've observed that there are three jumbo categories that everybody's regrets fall into. We feel sorry about what we did ("I blew it"), sorry about what we missed out on ("I was too afraid"), or sorry for ourselves ("Why me?"). In other words, we have regrets of *action*, *inaction*, or *reaction*.

Keep your most painful regrets in mind as you read the descriptions that follow, and see if you can identify which buckets they fall into.

Regrets of Action

The first jumbo category of regrets consists of all those things that make us smack our foreheads whenever we think of them and say, “*Ugh!* I wish I’d never . . .”

I’m talking about:

- Lies we’ve told
- Relationships we’ve torpedoed
- Insulting labels we’ve applied
- Dumb choices we’ve made
- Rage we’ve unleashed
- Money we’ve blown
- Addictions we’ve fed

Sometimes we have regrets about our actions almost as soon as we’ve done them. For instance, I know I’ve said things and instantly wished I could take the words back. Other times it takes us longer to realize the mistakes we’ve made.

Action regrets constitute the largest and most common category of regrets. Because we make choices many times every day, and because none of us is perfect, we’re all vulnerable to regretting what we’ve done. They might be mere mistakes—errors of judgment or carelessness. Or they might be evil we did knowingly and now we are sorry for it. Either way, they appear in our lives like weeds popping up in a garden and choking out what’s beautiful.

Regrets of Inaction

Take a look at this prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*:

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against thee
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.⁴

What we have done: That's action.

What we have left undone: That's inaction.

Often these are referred to as sins of commission and sins of omission. As I've said, the things we regret aren't necessarily sins; sometimes they're just mistakes. Even so, they all weigh heavy on our spirits.

When I refer to regrettable *inactions*, I'm talking about things like:

- Opportunities missed
- Time wasted
- Risks not taken
- Love left unexpressed
- Words not spoken
- Gifts not given
- Forgiveness withheld

Researchers say that, in the short term, people tend to regret actions. In the long term, though, we're likely to regret inaction.⁵ It seems that, as we reminisce about our lives, we're prone to wonder about what might have been if we had taken a risk instead of playing it safe.

Older people and the dying, when they look back over a life that seems all too short, often say things like, "My life might have been so much better if I'd gone to college like my parents wanted," or "I wish I'd followed my dream of being an artist instead of just paying the bills as a corporate suit," or "I wish I'd tried harder to work it out with my spouse and never filed those divorce papers," or "What made us so scared about having a child?" or "Why didn't I enjoy life more when I had the chance?"

A poet has said,

For all sad words of tongue or pen,

The saddest are these: "It might have been!"⁶

That's the sound of a regret of inaction.

Regrets of Reaction

Many people, when they evaluate regrets, think only of regrets of action and inaction. But we can't stop there, because sometimes our greatest regrets start with something hurtful that was done to us. Some of these regret reactions come from . . .

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Rejection
- Betrayal
- Mistreatment
- Disability
- Accident
- Illness
- Isolation

When bad things are done to us, quite naturally we regret them. There's nothing wrong with that.

What could be problematic is what we do in response to these regrets. For example, we might assume responsibility that's not ours. (*Maybe there was something I could have done to keep Dad from leaving us.*) Or we might take on shame or blame we don't deserve. (*Maybe if I had dressed differently he wouldn't have touched me like that.*) Or we might stew in bitterness, resentment, and anger. (*I will never forgive the way my brother stole the girlfriend I wanted to marry.*) One way or another, we ruminate unhealthily on our regrets in a Sorry Cycle, and the feelings within us corrode our hearts.

THE GOD LONGING

Whether your biggest regrets are regrets of action, inaction, or reaction, I want you to consider something that might help to explain them all. You see, I believe

that all our regrets have a spiritual dynamic underlying them. Specifically, I believe that all of our regrets come directly or indirectly from pursuing longings outside of God.

You might be a follower of Jesus, as I am. Or you might have some different spiritual belief. Maybe you're not even sure God is out there at all. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, *Starting Over* will give you tools to navigate the road ahead. But even if you don't believe in or are distant from God today, I want you to think about how your regrets might be a part of how a loving God is working in your life for your good.

In *Finding Your Way Back to God*, Jon and I point out that we all have longings for love, purpose, and meaning. As we pursue these God-given longings, we often try to fulfill the longings without God, and that leads to regret. Then that regret leads to more longing, which we again try to fulfill without God, and that brings more regret. Over and over and over we do this. We get stuck cycling between longing and regret.

Let's look at how all three types of regret point us to the true home for our longings—God. As we move from regrets of action, to regrets of inaction, to regrets of reaction, the connection with God may seem progressively more abstract. But in each case, our failure to take our longings to God is the real reason for our sorrow.

The God longing, and regrets of action

It is relatively easy to see how we feel regret when we act on our longings in ways that take us further from God. For example, when we have an affair or click on pornography, rather than turning to God to fulfill our desire to feel loved, we turn to someone or something else—and that leads to regret. Or when we allow our longing for purpose to cause us to become workaholics, that leads to regret. And if we repeat actions like these over and over, we get stuck in a repetition of longing and regret, longing and regret: the Sorry Cycle.

The God longing, and regrets of inaction

This is a little more subtle, but we also feel regret when we don't act on our longings. We long to be loved, but insecurity keeps us paralyzed, preventing us from pursuing a relationship. We long for our lives to have purpose, but fear of failure keeps us from going to college or filling out the application for an interview. The feelings of insecurity and fear that we allow to run our lives do not come from God. And if we give in to them over and over, we again get stuck in a cycle of longing and regret.

The God longing, and regrets of reaction

Our regrets of action and inaction are individual to us. They are about what we did or didn't do. When we get to regrets of reaction, though, we're dealing with hurtful situations caused by other people or by the world. You feel the impact individually, but it can also be communal and global. Yet even here the roots of the problem lie with misplaced longing.

To understand this, we have to go back to the beginning of humankind—theologians look to the story in Genesis 3. Our earliest ancestors sinned, and it has affected everything in a destructive way. What we refer to as the Fall has consequences that we feel to this very day.

The Fall affected every part of us, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. Each person is intellectually limited, meaning we don't know everything and sometimes make ill-advised decisions. Meanwhile, our feelings get tangled up and we don't always know how to react properly to what goes on. Worst of all, we have an inclination toward sin that causes us to act out in wicked ways at times.

All of this explains our evil and foolish decisions and our poor reactions—yours, mine, everybody's. And it's not just individual behavior we're talking about. Our flawed nature also affects our family, the other groups we're a part of, and our society as a whole. If it's human, it's fallen.

Sadly, this gives us innumerable opportunities to hurt each other. People's regrettable actions and inactions affect us every day, often causing us to have

counterproductive reactions. And of course we have to admit that we harm others in the same way.

As if that's not enough, the Bible suggests that even nature has been affected by the Fall. In Romans 8:20, the apostle Paul says, "The creation was subjected to frustration." In other words, sin altered a world that God had originally designed to be a safe place for the human race. So if you want an explanation for all the diseases and natural disasters that plague humankind, here is the answer: the Fall.

If we go further in Romans 8, we see that the world has a longing that cannot be satisfied apart from God. Paul says, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." And then the next verse explains that this is similar to the individual longing we all feel without God: "Not only so, but we ourselves . . . groan inwardly."⁷ There it is—global longing and personal longing. Both are in operation all the time in our lives.

Regrets of action, inaction, and reaction can all be traced back in one way or another to attempts to satisfy longings outside of God. This is good to know, because if there's a spiritual dynamic underlying all our regrets, then there's also a spiritual solution to our regrets. It's in turning toward God that we have the possibility of starting over.

RESTORED TO LIFE

J. R. Ferralez, a middle-aged man with short gray hair and a mustache, sat in the dark on a pier jutting into Lake Michigan, near where he'd parked along Chicago's Lake Shore Drive. He had come to this same spot many times in the weeks since his seventeen-year-old son, Josh, had been killed in an automobile accident. Often he would spend the whole night gazing out over the moonlit waves, remembering, thinking, praying.

J. R. was battling with God. Sometimes he would shout toward the water,

as if God were across the waves and might shout back. Sometimes J. R. would swear at God in his anger. Again and again, there were tears.

More than once, people walking by on the pier would ask J. R. if he was okay. He would mutter something to get rid of the well-meaning passersby. He realized they must have thought he was out of his mind.

In a sense, he was.

He was working through a massive and painful reaction to something terrible that had happened. He just couldn't seem to come to terms with his son's death.

With Josh gone from this world, J. R. didn't want to stick around any longer either. Finally he challenged God aloud: "If I jump in, are you gonna save me?" He stripped down to his underwear, left the rest of his clothes on the pier, and jumped into the cold water, immediately starting to swim toward the horizon.

When he got about two hundred yards from shore, he tried to force himself down into the murky water as far as he could go. Twice he did this. He wanted to stay under. He wanted to drown. But he just couldn't physically manage to keep himself down. His body kept bobbing back to the surface, where he would find himself reflexively gasping for breath as he looked out across the lake into the dark sky.

He tried a third time to force himself below the waves and again bobbed up. This time, though, he wasn't facing the darkness. God had turned his face toward the lights of the Chicago skyline.

To the south, he noticed the lights of Soldier Field, where he had watched many games with Josh by his side.

He noticed Grant Park, where they'd attended summer festivals together.

He began remembering good times he'd enjoyed with Josh.

"For the first time since his death," J. R. told me later, "memories came flooding back that brought joy instead of anger and despair. For the first time since my son's death, I wanted to live. I wanted to be there for my wife, and for my other son who was still living, and for my granddaughter."

Fatigued yet hopeful, he began to swim back to the pier and to life.

This grieving father had been stuck spinning in the Sorry Cycle, unable to come to terms with his teenage son's death. Yet even in his case, by turning to God, J. R. broke free. Of course he still grieves for Josh, but he is no longer bound by anger or confusion. He has moved on to a life that is filled with rich relationships, and he is sharing his story to encourage countless others.

If he can break the Sorry Cycle, anyone can.

STOP THE SORRY-GO-ROUND, I WANT TO GET OFF!

For you, this chapter has probably stirred up uncomfortable and specific thoughts of regrets. Let me assure you that you are not doomed to spin forever in the Sorry Cycle over these regrets, any more than J. R. Ferralez was doomed to spin in his.

As long as you're drawing breath, it's never too late to start over. In fact, I'm willing to say:

. . . no matter what you did or didn't do or what was done to you,
 . . . no matter when it happened,
 . . . no matter how badly it has hurt you,
 . . . no matter how old you are now,
 . . . no matter how hopeless you may feel,
 . . . *it's still possible to start over!*

Although we can't change the past, each of us can have a regret-free life in the future if we will stop looking backward and start moving forward into different ways of believing and behaving. The journey may be a long one. But there's nothing stopping us from taking the first step this very day.

Do you believe that?

Even if you only *want* to believe that, please keep reading.

I'm not appealing merely to your self-interest. I don't want you to be free of the Sorry Cycle and moving ahead in life just so you can be happier (although wouldn't that be nice?). I'm also appealing to you on behalf of the people you love and who love you—people whose lives you can make better when you've

broken the power your regrets hold over you. And even more than that, on behalf of all the grace-filled, Spirit-powered things that God still wants to do through you. With God, your future life beyond regret can be amazing!

In the next chapter, I'm going to give you a way of looking at regrets that might seem counterintuitive to you. At first it might even seem crazy. But I believe that as you think about it, you'll begin to agree that this new perspective on regrets has the ability to set you free from the Sorry Cycle.

You can start over, starting today.

No, this is not the end.

This is the beginning.

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