



## Scripture

Jeremiah 2:5-6

- This is what the **LORD** says:
  - “What fault did your **fathers** find in me that they strayed so far from me?
  - They followed **worthless idols** and became **worthless** themselves.
  - They did not ask, ‘**Where is the LORD**,
    - who brought us up out of **Egypt** and
    - led us through the **barren wilderness**, through a **land of deserts** and **rifts**, a **land of drought** and **darkness**,
    - a **land where no one travels**, and **no one lives?**’

## Scripture

Jeremiah 2:7-8

- I brought you into a **fertile land** to eat its fruit and rich produce.
- But **you** came and **defiled** my land and made my **inheritance** detestable.
- The **priests** did not ask, ‘**Where is the LORD?**’
- **Those** who deal with the law did not know me;
  - the **leaders** rebelled against me.
  - The **prophets** prophesied by Baal following **worthless idols**.

## Scripture

Jeremiah 2:9-11

- “Therefore I bring **charges** against you again,” declares the **LORD**.
- “And I will bring **charges** against your children’s children.
- Cross over to the coasts of **Kittim** and look, send to **Kedar** and observe closely; see if there has ever been anything like this:
  - **Has a nation ever changed its gods?**
- But my people have exchanged their **Glory** for worthless idols.

## Scripture

Jeremiah 2:12-13

- Be **appalled** at this, **O heavens**, and **shudder** with great horror,” declares the **LORD**.
- “My people have committed **two sins**:
  - They have forsaken me, the **spring** of living water, and
  - have **dug** their own cisterns,
  - broken **cisterns** that cannot hold water.



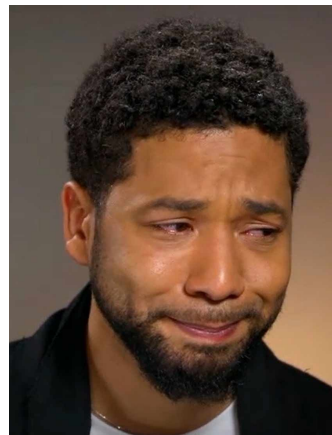
## Introduction

- In December 2021, a jury in Chicago found actor **Jussie Smollett**, a one-time star in the TV hip-hop drama **Empire**, guilty of five of six felony disorderly conduct charges in connection with an **incident** the previous year.
- Smollett claimed at the time that **two masked men** wearing MAGA hats . . .
  - **assaulted him**,
  - put a **noose** around his neck, and
  - **doused** him with chemicals.



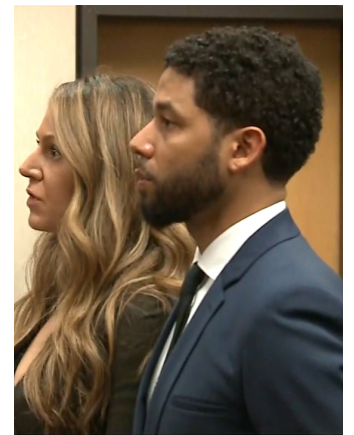
## Introduction

- After investigating his claim, however, **police** concluded that Smollett paid two men \$3,500 to carry out the **scheme**, which the actor characterized as a hate crime against himself.
- Prosecutors said that the 39-year-old actor orchestrated the attack as a **hoax** to raise his show-business profile.



## Introduction

- Smollett was sentenced on March 10, 2022, to **150 days** in county jail.
- The **revelation** that the incident was a **setup** of his own doing dealt a severe and possibly fatal blow to Smollett's career — just the **opposite** of what he apparently was **hoping** to achieve by the faked attack.
- After he was arrested, **Smollett lost his role as a singer-songwriter** in the final season of **Empire**.
- And during the trial, he admitted in court: **“I’ve lost my livelihood.”**



## Introduction

- On March 16, 2022, Smollett was released pending the outcome of an **appeal**.
- **Howard Breuer**, CEO of Newsroom PR, put it bluntly when he said,
  - “Smollett now joins Bill Cosby, Matt Lauer, and Kevin Spacey
  - on the **Mount Rushmore** of the **forever canceled**.”



## The Unprofitable Exchange

Jeremiah 2:12-13

- I've mentioned **Smollett's story** not to add to his critics but as a **modern-day example** of something **God** says in our Jeremiah passage about the **people of Judah**:
  - ➔ “... **my people** *have changed their glory for something that does not profit*” (v. 11).
- And in even **sharper detail**, **God** said,
  - ➔ “**my people** ... *have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water*” (v. 13).

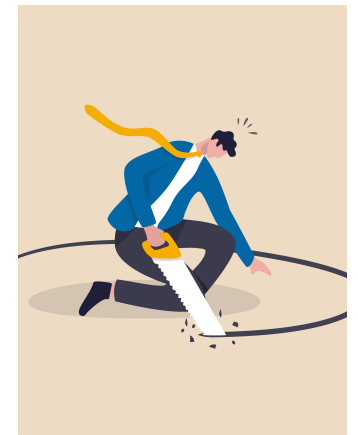
## The Unprofitable Exchange

Jeremiah 2:12-13

- The **theme** of these verses is how some **abandon** the Lord for something
  - far less and
  - fail to recognize
  - that **God** is the source of life and well-being.
- **Smollett**, by his hoax, did something similar and **exchanged** his rising-star career for **exile** from the work he professed to love.

## The Unprofitable Exchange

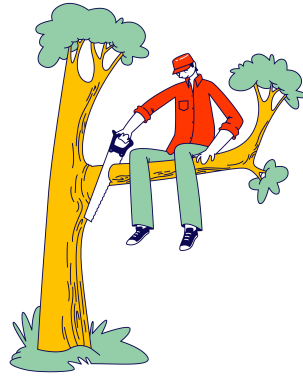
- Both Smollett's folly and Judah's failure to keep faith with **God** were forms of **self-sabotage**.
- In fact, **self-sabotage** is more common in the **human condition** than we might expect and is symptomatic of mental, emotional, and/or spiritual problems.
- According to psychologists, **Self-Sabotage** is the act of destroying or damaging, either consciously or unconsciously, what is really in our **best interest**.
- In other words, **Self-Sabotage** is the foolish practice of **self-hate** often done as a result of low self-esteem or guilt.



## The Unprofitable Exchange

Consider this list of some **behaviors** that could be described as self-defeating or self-sabotage:

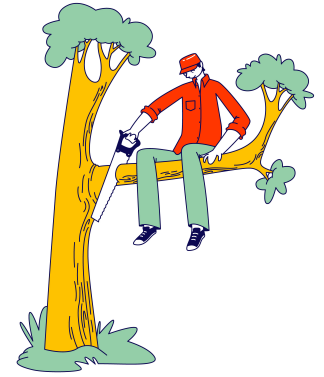
1. **Avoid** people or situations that might cause fear, hurt, or pain. (The idea is that if **one** avoids risk — if you don't commit to a job, person, direction, or goal — **you can't fail**.)
2. Not standing up for oneself or being unable to ask for what one needs.
3. Constantly seeking attention or approval from others.
4. Aggression, bullying, and verbal, emotional, or physical abuse (Often, abuse hides one's own feelings of insecurity, unworthiness, and poor self-image.)



## The Unprofitable Exchange

[continued]

6. **Substance abuse** or other addictive behavior (overeating, gambling, overspending, risky sexual patterns, workaholic syndrome, etc.).
7. **Procrastination**.
8. Patterns of lack of punctuality.
9. **Picking fights** with friends or partners over inconsequential matters.
10. Refusing to accept responsibility for one's own mistakes.
11. **Blaming others** for difficulties in one's life.
12. **Inability** to receive constructive criticism.



## Failure to Learn from Experience

- Now **Experience**, some say, is the best teacher,
  - but acts of **self-sabotage** suggest that we frequently do not learn from our losses and
  - instead, go on repeating self-defeating actions in our lives.
- The **person** ...
  - who always comes to work late and
  - those who complicate their lives by postponing important obligations
  - are effectively **shooting themselves in the foot**, again and again, and eventually, they have no foot left.



## Failure to Learn from Experience

- The young essayist **Kris Kidd** may be a case in point.
- He has a gift for putting into words the **depression** and **self-destruction** that has marked his experience in life thus far.
- One reviewer of his work — Office Magazine — says that Kidd gives readers **“a monstrous glimpse into his inner world.”**





## Failure to Learn from Experience

- Here's something Kidd wrote about his **self-inflicted** wounds:
  - **Sadness** is a way of escaping the abstraction of happiness.
  - **Rock bottom** is a surprisingly comfortable place to lay one's head. No responsibilities.
  - **Falling feels awful**; I'd rather stay at the bottom.

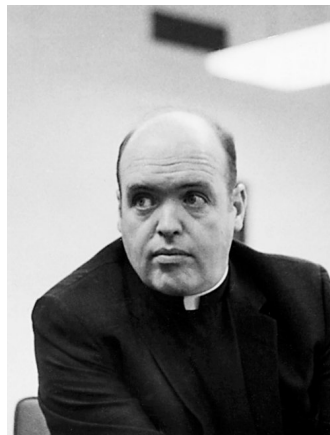


## A Question of Growth

- **Kidd** is in his late 20s, but in truth, even some of us who are more **mature** and **healthy** sometimes do things we know will handicap our future and hurt others as well.
- We may puzzle over our **motives**, but we do these things nonetheless.
- One way of moving **forward** is to ask ourselves
  - what we are getting out of **unprofitable behavior**
  - that exchanges the **water of life** for dry and cracked cisterns.

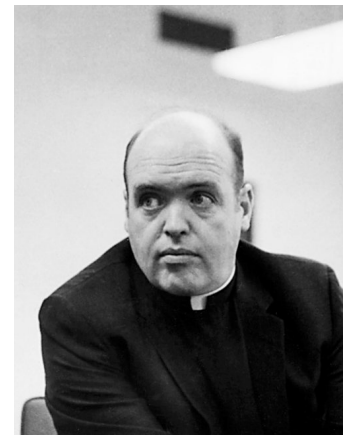
## A Question of Growth

- Psychologist and former priest **Eugene C. Kennedy** says that
  - asking ourselves what we are getting out of our **self-destructive behavior**
  - “helps us achieve the **self-knowledge** ... which is
  - indispensable for further steps toward **maturity.**”



## A Question of Growth

- **Kennedy** goes on to say that
  - if we want to see ourselves **whole**,
  - to see our actions in a way that can lead to a **new** understanding of ourselves,
  - we can begin. . . by asking
- **What am I getting out of this anyway?**



## Woman at the Well

- Sensing that his **popularity** was growing too strong, **Jesus** leaves Judea and heads for Galilee.
- His journey takes him through Samaria, and at a town called **Sychar**, he and his disciples stop to rest.
- While his disciples go into town to purchase provisions, **Jesus** asks a woman for a drink of water from the well.
- However, since she isn't a Jew, she asks Jesus, **"How can you ask me for a drink?"**



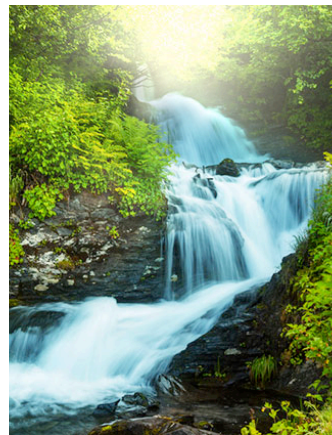
## Woman at the Well

- Jesus answered her, "If you knew the **gift of God** and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you **living water**." (John 4:10)
- Finally, realizing that Jesus wasn't talking about physical water but **spiritual water**, the **woman** asks for the water Jesus is offering—water that satisfies the soul and gives eternal life.
- But before she could come to the place where she could receive this gift, she had to come clean with her **destructive** behaviors and attitudes.



## Woman at the Well

- While she wasn't necessarily **lying** about her marital status, **she** was deeply involved in sin and several **self-defeating** relationships with men.
- Nevertheless, her desire for **"living water"** was greater than her **desire** for emptiness and shame.
- Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a **time** is coming and has now come when the **true worshipers** will worship the Father in **spirit** and **truth**, for they are the **kind of worshipers** the Father seeks. (John 4:21a, 23)



## The Road to Living Waters

- This Monday, September 12th, I will be 68 years old.
- Forty years ago, when I was 28 years old, I became a Christian.
- I did so because I wanted **living water** and was tired of being miserable, unhappy, and depressed.
- For too long, I followed the **ways of this world**, and what **faith** I did have was corrupted by **self-destructive** attitudes and actions.
- Although I thought of myself as a Christian, I was not worshipping the Lord as a **"true worshiper."**
- I never went to church, prayed, or studied the Bible.
- Instead, I **ignored God** and paid the price, and the **pleasures of this world** didn't satisfy me. I was very thirsty for the **Holy Spirit** and rivers of **"Living Water."**

## The Road to Living Waters

- Finally, coming to the **conclusion** that I wasn't heading down the road, I asked **God** for his forgiveness and **stopped** ignoring him.
- The more I poured my life into becoming a **"true worshipper,"** the more I was **filled** with joy and satisfaction and no longer had any desire for those **self-sabotaging** attitudes or actions.
- In fact, as some of you know, I would wake up in the morning with a **song in my heart** and a whole **new** attitude and disposition.
- So I say to everyone, **reject** the empty cisterns of this world and instead dig deep for the **"Living waters"** from **God's Spirit**, and you will have peace and grace.



## Conclusion

- For if we become **"true worshippers"** of God through the **words** of Christ, we will always be **spiritually** satisfied, which will protect us from unhealthy or destructive attitudes that lead to **destructive** actions and behaviors.
- So then,
  - Do to **others** what you would want them to do to you.
  - Show **sacrificial love** to everyone—even your enemies.
  - Be a **witness** of what God can do through those who believe.
  - Become **imitators** of a **Holy God** and remember the weak.
- If so, your **cisterns** won't leak, and you will keep yourself filled with **"living water."**