

Babylon revisited and learning from the past

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



In today's society, many people try so hard to be perfect, but one must realize that mistakes are simply a natural part of life. F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of *Babylon Revisited*, tells a short narrative about Charlie Wales, a man who has made many mistakes in his life. These mistakes include uncontrollable alcoholism, unemployment, and possible involvement in his wife's death. In addition to his personal disasters, Charlie is also trying to regain custody of Honoria, his daughter, but proving himself to Marion, the current legal guardian, is becoming rather difficult. Even though Charlie is aware of the mistakes he has made and is taking full responsibility for resolving these issues: "It would be silly of me to deny that about three years ago I was acting badly...but all that's over" (Fitzgerald 391). Despite Marion believing that the mistakes Charlie has made are hurtful and negative, Charlie Wales is a changed man. His mistakes have given him the opportunity to learn from his experiences and become the better person he is.

Important lessons we learn come from the bad decisions we make throughout our lives. In the article *Penn State Notebook: Hackenberg Sees Hardship as Learning Tool* Bill West, author, states, "Whether it's good or bad, we're going to...continue to get better from it" (West). Failure encourages us to look for other resolutions when we do not get our desired result. We continuously learn new information until we achieve our goal. Nowhere is this more evident in *Babylon Revisited* than when Charlie Wales explains himself to Marion, arguing, "Oh no...I've learned. I worked hard for ten years...It won't happen again" (Fitzgerald 393). Charlie has clearly realized the error's he previously made, and because of that, he has been

able to turn his life around in a direction that isn't like the irresponsible one he had before. It says in the journal article *How to Improve Patient Care by Learning from Mistakes*, "mistakes can lead to lifelong professional and personal learning, and greater efficiency" (Hunter et al 2011). Therefore, we should view our setbacks as useful life lessons that we might need in the future to help prevent the same mistakes from happening over and over again.

Mistakes have the ability to change you into something better than you ever were before. They alert you when you are on the wrong path; therefore, we are then able to redirect ourselves into the right path. This is prevalent in the short story when Charlie himself states, "No, no more...I'm going slow these days...You were going pretty strong a couple years ago... I'll stick to it alright...I've stuck to it for over a year and a half now" (Fitzgerald 383). Charlie used to be a heavy drinker, but his refusal to the beer shows his development, changing old bad habits. Thus, mistakes allow us to make improvements within ourselves. Alan Margolies, author of *F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Perspectives*, believes he found an obligation to "something worth" being ventured (Margolies 181). Charlie also says in the book, "things have changed now...changed radically with me." (Fitzgerald 390). Charlie is staying sober, something he's never done before, for the sake of his child and himself. Hence, past lapses help us become the best versions of ourselves.

In one's life, you experience hardship simply because it's a part of being human. Mike Brady says in the article, *How to Improve Patient Care by*

Learning from Mistakes, “ Importantly recognise that learning from mistakes can occur only after they have been identified.”(Brady), and this is exactly what Charlie did. Unfortunately, Wales experienced a great amount of hardship in his life. He dealt with the hardships of being an alcoholic, having no job, and being blamed for his own wife’s death. These failures made proving himself to Marion that he has changed almost impossible. Although, the people who think that the mistakes you make define who you are as a person are wrong. In fact, the mistakes you end up making can be a very transformative and positive force in one’s life. They enable you to learn from your experiences which prevents you from making the same mistakes later on in life; thus, you grow and change as a result.

Works Cited

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