

# BIOGRAPHY



## NAME

Jimmy Swaggart

## OCCUPATION

Television  
Personality,  
Evangelist, Radio  
Personality

## BIRTH DATE

March 15, 1935  
(age 83)

## PLACE OF BIRTH

Ferriday,  
Louisiana

## FULL NAME

Jimmy Lee  
Swaggart

## ZODIAC SIGN

Pisces

## Jimmy Swaggart Biography

Television Personality, Evangelist, Radio Personality (1935–)

Jimmy Swaggart is a Pentecostal radio and television evangelist. He also recorded best-selling gospel albums before his career unraveled due to a scandal.

### Synopsis

Jimmy Swaggart was born March 15, 1935, in Ferriday, Louisiana. In 1952, he joined his father's newly formed ministry. In 1962, he recorded the gospel album *God Took Away My Yesterdays*. In 1968, he launched a national radio program called *The Camp Meeting Hour*. *The Jimmy Swaggart Telecast* premiered in the mid-1970s. His empire began to unravel in 1987, when his adulterous affairs were uncovered.

### Early Life

Pentecostal evangelist Jimmy Swaggart was born on March 15, 1935, in Ferriday, Louisiana. He was the first child born to sharecroppers Minnie and W.L. Swaggart, who were fervent participants in the local Assemblies of God congregation. Throughout his teens, Swaggart and his cousin Jerry Lee Lewis rebelled from their religious environment by frequenting local rhythm and blues clubs, where they quickly gained reputations for their piano playing ability. Over the next few years, Swaggart struggled with the demands of his family's fundamentalist Pentecostal faith and his love for music.

Swaggart abandoned his pursuit of a musical career, deciding instead to dedicate his life to the church. In 1952, he joined his father's newly formed ministry, where he met and married fellow parishioner Frances Anderson. After joining a group of itinerant preachers, the couple spent the next few years traveling throughout the South.

In 1962, with the help of the now-famous Lewis, Swaggart recorded the gospel album *God Took Away My Yesterdays*. Impressive record sales coupled with a growing congregation influenced Swaggart to form his own record label. With annual recordings that included the bestselling albums *This Is Just What Heaven Means to Me* and *There Is a River*, he continued to draw larger and more diverse audiences.

### Growing Fame and Wealth

In 1968, Swaggart moved to Baton Rouge, where he launched a national radio program called *The Camp Meeting Hour*. By the late 1970s, *The Camp Meeting Hour* was broadcast on 650 radio stations while Swaggart continued to lead revivals with audiences estimated in the thousands. Swaggart's success on radio inspired him to try his hand at the much more lucrative medium of [television](#). Featuring fiery rhetoric and extremist ideology, *The Jimmy Swaggart Telecast* premiered on Jim and Tammy Bakker's fledgling PTL Network in the mid-1970s. The show reached an audience of two million, becoming the highest rated religious program in America.

At the height of his popularity, Swaggart was a celebrity in the gospel circuit, with a lavish lifestyle to match. With contributions from his loyal parishioners, Swaggart was able to finance a Bible college, printing plant, recording studio, [television](#) production center, and church sanctuary, as well as a \$2.5 million estate that housed his fleet of expensive cars. His ministry also owned a private jet for a time as well, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

## Controversy

Swaggart's empire began to unravel in 1987, when the national spotlight fell on his adulterous affairs with various prostitutes. As sufficient evidence of Swaggart's numerous sexual liaisons surfaced, the Assemblies of God stripped him of his ministerial credentials. Despite a tearful confession to his family and congregation, his immediate attempts to escape ridicule and rebuild the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries proved to be in vain.

Swaggart has since reestablished himself as a minister. With his son Donnie, he maintains a smaller congregation at the Family Worship Center in Baton Rouge.

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