

Who's Afraid of...Failure!

Matthew 25:14-30

May 19, 2019

Who or what are you afraid of failing?

Do you remember going for your first driver's license test? You studied the manual. Maybe you took a Driver's Ed. class in high school or had someone teach you the basics. You took the written exam, eye test and then came the road test. What part of the road test did you fear the most of failing? Parallel parking!!!

I still get uneasy when I am having to parallel park a vehicle on a city street.

I would like to believe that the person who invented the cars that can parallel park themselves failed miserably at his/her parallel parking when they applied for their driver's license. Instead of letting their failure dictate their fear to try again, they faced their fear and creatively made good out of it. Can't verify the fact but what a great story that would be of facing one's failure and overcoming it in a positive way.

Who or what are you afraid of failing?

Growing up as a kid we wanted so much to please our parents. Who, as a little child, or even as an adult, wants to fail their parents?

We don't want to fail our friends...teachers...boss...spouse...kids..coworkers...coach...teammates...self...God!

Failure is a part of life! In fact do you know what the failure rate is for the average person? 100% failure rate! Nobody is failure free! In fact, God gets that when He reminds us that we are all born sinners. We all have failed and fallen short of His glory. (Romans 3:23)

But He doesn't leave us there wallowing in our mud hole of failure. He gives us a way out...if we are willing to stop wallowing in ourselves and get up and walk out of the mud.

Failure has produced some of the greatest people history has known. Let me pull just one person out of the mud that we all know. This young journalist applied for a job at a newspaper. He got the job. It wasn't too long after being hired that the editor called the young man into his office and handed him his pink slip. He wasn't fired because the paper was downsizing. The reason this young man was fired was that the editor told him he "*lacked imagination and had no good ideas.*" That young journalist's name was Walt Disney. Walt Disney the failure! No imagination! No good ideas!

Imagine if Mr. Disney, the failed journalist, didn't wipe the mud of failure off his face that day? We would be saying things like, "Mickey and Minnie Mouse who?" What or where in the world is this Disney World?" Failure was used by Mr. Disney to turn failure into success.

How do we handle failure? Wouldn't it be great if we had a "DO OVER" button in life. This "DO OVER" button would be readily available when we failed. It would rewind that failure moment back 60 seconds to where we could take back the hurtful words, the aggressive behavior, the stupid addiction choice, the bad attitude displayed or the looks of evil that were given to those we failed.

We realize there is no "DO OVER" button to get us through our failures in life. So how do people try to overcome or face their failures? Some use drugs to numb the mind or alcohol to escape the experience. Some work long hours to take their mind off the failure of family. Some will go into seclusion or wallow in their lazy boy and become a couch potato. How do you deal with failure?

The great human tragedy is seen in lost opportunities because of one being afraid of failing. Lost opportunities are buried when one is fearful of facing their fears.

F.E.A.R. Fear Everything And Run! or
F.E.A.R. Face Everything And Rise!

Samuel Beckett, a poet, put this facing our failure instead of fearing the failure with these words:

"Ever tried. Ever failed.

No matter.

Try again. Fail again.

Fail better." ---Samuel Beckett

Jesus shared the story of success and failure of a boss and three of his business partners. We all would like to have the portfolio of the first two partners. However, it is the third partner, the failure, that most of us relate to and the one most of us need to pay attention to as we live life and experience failures along the way.

The owner of the business was leaving on an extended trip. He gave money to his three partners according to their abilities... according to what their boss believed they could handle. The first partner was given \$5k, the second \$3k and the third partner, \$1k. The first two worked hard..."worked hard" is a key statement, and they were able to increase their initial investment for their boss.

Here is a hint in our journey along the way of this story...God is the boss and we are one of the partners in His kingdom building venture.

The third partner failed! He played it safe and buried his \$1k. The boss returned and was thrilled with the first two partners and their results of hard work. The boss became furious with the third partner.

Let me remind us what he told him, ***"That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this 'play-it-safe' who won't go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness."*** vss. 26-30

The third servant failed by playing it safe. He failed by only thinking of himself. He played it safe to protect himself. He blamed his actions of failure on the boss. He didn't own up to his own failure. He made up excuses for his failure by blaming someone else. The real reason for his failure was his fear...his fear to take a risk, to venture with what he was given. He lacked faith and trust in his boss.

Remember the hint about this story? The third partner, failed to take what God had given and trusted him with and invest it in building God's kingdom. He blamed God, and his fear of pleasing God. He allowed pride to infect his desire to not step out and venture a risk for God, trusting God to guide him.

The third partner got more than a pink slip. He was kicked out into the darkness of failure. He saw the other partners get the "reward of risk." God wasn't going to reward the laziness or fear of the third partner. God wasn't going to forgive the failure of the lack of trying. I bet the third partner had wished he had a "DO OVER" button.

Seems a little harsh don't you think on how God handled this failure? It sort of sparks some fear in our hearts if that is the way God deals with our failures in life. Hear the Good News, God has and continues to use failures in life. Here are some of the highlighted failures of the bible: **Abraham** lied twice about his relationship with his wife and yet he became the father of the people of God...**Noah** got drunk after the flood and yet God still celebrated his trust to build the ark...

David had an affair and had the husband of the woman he had the affair with killed in battle and yet God still used this moral failure...

Jacob deceived his blind dad in getting the 1st rights blessing and God still used him to raise up his people...**Moses** murdered an Egyptian and God used this failure to lead His people to the promised land...**the disciples** abandoned Jesus, **Peter** denied his relationship with Jesus... and God used them to build up his kingdom through the Early Christian church.

Why would God use such a flock of failures? They all recognized their failure, asked God to forgive them, and were able to get out of the mud of self-pity and pride and trust God's will for them. They faced their failure and decided to trust God to make it into something right...something that would build His kingdom.

Jesus, himself, was considered a failure by many. There was the Friday failure of hanging on a cross of crucifixion. Many who walked by mocked and pointed at and made fun of the failure. Friday Failure became a Sunday Success. God raised up Jesus and the world has never been nor will it ever be the same.

God is still using failures today to build his kingdom. He has gone on an extended trip. He will return one day and will call his partners to himself and ask how they did with what he had trusted them with in building his kingdom.

What? Does that mean you and me? Yup!
What fear of failure is keeping you from fully investing what God has invested in you into building His kingdom...one person at a time? Through out the word of God we are encouraged to be strong and courageous and not fearful of failure. God is with us. (Joshua 1:9)

He has invested in us. He is trusting us to do our part in building up his kingdom. He wants to see us go out on a limb for him. He wants to see us get off the bench of security and get on the playing field of faith in Him.

Here is a deep thought to consider...What would you attempt in life if failure wasn't an option?

Here is even a deeper thought...What would you attempt in Christ if failure wasn't an option?

Even if failure happens, God is there to pull us up and help us fail forward.

Failures are opportunities God gives us to move and grow forward. Failures are not to freeze us and prevent God's love from flowing freely in us. We can let failures become road blocks to God's desire and purpose OR we can let them detour us to trust God to guide us and to overcome life's challenges and learn from them...to rise up and live on with a God who loves us.

"...For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again,"

Proverbs 24:16NIV

Failure will try to lie to us. Failure will lie to us by saying, "You will be liked, have value, be somebody only if you are successful. You will be hated, devalued, a nobody, a fool if you fail."

So what do a lot of people do? They listen and live out the lie. They won't try for fear of failure. They allow the lie to cause their spirit to die. True success is facing your fear face-to-face! Success is not about not getting knocked down by a failure in life. Success is about getting back up after being knocked down.

Failure tells us to not take the next step of faith after a failure. I like the attitude that no matter what failure I experience or others experience to take **"the next step."**

What is "the next step" for me after a failure? Is it to ask forgiveness of the one I failed? Is it to show love and not just preach it? Is it to spend more time with the ones I say I love the most?

What is the next step? This is a great thought to ask ourselves whenever we are lying flat out on the ground after a failure has knocked us down. Through Christ we are promised that no matter what the "Friday failure" may be...The "Sunday Success" is there for us through Jesus!

Failure is a part of life. I guarantee you we will have failures. Our concern is will we risk failure to invest what God has invested in us to share His love with others. God still seeks failures who will reach up to Him. He will lift us up and cause our failure to work for His good when we give our lives to His call and allow Him to work our failure for His good in building his kingdom. (Romans 8:28)

The follower of Jesus falls only to rise again and again. The follower of Jesus commits errors of judgment and makes wrong choices. But the failure of a follower of Jesus will not be the end all...he/she doesn't stay fallen. The follower of Jesus allows their failures to be steppingstones to a better self...a more Christ-like partner in His Kingdom.

The greatest failure is not falling...it is the failure to not rise again.

It is better to try and fail than fail to try! Listen to the rest of that poem.

*"Some say risk nothing, try only for the sure thing,
Others say nothing gambled nothing gained,
Go all out for your dream.
Life can be lived either way, but for me,
I'd rather try and fail, than never try at all, you see.*

*Some say, 'Don't ever fall in love,
Play the game of life wide open,
Burn your candle at both ends.'
But I say, 'No! It's better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all, my friend.'*

*When many moons have gone by,
And you are alone with your dreams of yesteryear,
All your memories will bring you cheer.
You'll be satisfied, succeed or fail, win or lose,
Knowing the right path you did choose."*

---William F. O'Brien

The master said to the first two servants who risked failure to build his kingdom,

"Well done my good and faithful servants!"

Who's Afraid of failure?