

# Don't Be Afraid To Fail

Believers tend to see failure as a sign of spiritual deficiency. But God can use it to teach us and strengthen our faith.

Have you ever failed at anything in your life? Do you know anyone who has?

If you've been around long enough, the answer to both questions is a resounding "yes!" That means you know how difficult it can be to bounce back from a failure, especially if you are a Christian. Believers seem to think that spiritual people will always do the right thing, and that a misstep or failure is a sign that our spirituality is deficient.

Yet with faith, it is possible to be even stronger after a failure. Numerous biblical figures, including Peter, Moses, David and Abraham demonstrated this truth.

When I conduct seminars on this topic, I lead people through the following logic:

**Question:** Is failure a learning experience? **Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Can we often learn more from failure than from success? **Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Are we always to be learning and growing? **Answer:** Yes.

I consider the most significant redemptive failure in the Bible to be Samson. Samson is mentioned as a hero of the faith in Hebrews 11, right along with Moses and Abraham. "And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson," the writer of Hebrews tells us (v. 32, NKJV).

When Samson's name is mentioned, there is no asterisk or

footnote pointing out what a colossal failure he was. In fact, it was his faith during a time of failure that earned him this honorable mention.

Let's look at three lessons we can learn from Samson's life. If you don't know his story, take time now to read about him in Judges 13:1-16:31.

### **1. God is often leading you, even though you may not know it.**

The Bible tells us regarding Samson: "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.' Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?'

"And Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleases me well.' But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel" (Judg. 14:1-4).

Notice that Samson's parents did not realize his request for a wife from among the Philistines was prompted by God. In a similar way, God is working in your life to fulfill your purpose whether you realize it or not. It doesn't matter what you can see or understand. Faith requires that you believe God is at work in your life, even in the failures and hardship.

Once I was driving someplace and got lost. The delay made me late for an important meeting. I was so distressed that I was not on time—punctuality is one of my highest values. Yet several years later I encountered a situation in which I was able to use the same roads I was on when I was lost to get to another place I needed to go. God was using my failure to

prepare me for future success.

I know this example doesn't seem significant in view of the much bigger issues we face in life, but doesn't the end result hold true for more crucial failures, such as relational breakdowns or business losses, as well? God uses our failures, which can be monumental at the time, to prepare us for some future success.

In Samson's case, his family didn't understand what was going on, and neither did Samson. God was leading him, however—positioning him right where God wanted him to be so he could do what the Lord wanted him to do.

It may not seem as if God is leading you, but He is. When you feel as if He isn't there, trust Him more, not less. Put your hope in the God of your purpose and move on. Have faith in God, even in the midst of a seeming failure.

## **2. Don't ignore or run from your past; face it.**

Samson's story continues: "So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

"Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion" (Judg. 14:5-9).

I would argue that your most significant and life-giving

testimonies are not the great successes you've had but your greatest failures and the way in which God helped you recover from them. Like Samson, you may have wrestled some lions such as loneliness, bankruptcy, broken relationships and unemployment. Even if you are young, you undoubtedly have testimonies of defeating, through the power of God, lions that came to destroy you.

When Samson returned to the lion he had torn apart with his bare hands, it brought forth something sweet that fed both him and his parents, even though it was dead. What is in your past that you thought was dead? Is it a failure, or something you enjoyed doing but no longer do? Or is it a significant victory that you don't talk about anymore?

Perhaps it's time to revisit that and see if there is something sweet in it. In faith, go back over the lessons you learned during a time of failure and see if they can help you or someone else today. Use those lessons to write a book or screenplay, counsel others or simply encourage yourself as you face today's trials. When you faithfully recount your victories in the midst of failures, God will help you bring forth something sweet.

### **3. When you fail, run to God—not from Him.**

If you are familiar with Samson's story, you will recall that after falling in love with the Philistine woman, Samson unwittingly gave her the secret to his strength—his uncut hair. The Philistines used this knowledge to take his strength away, and he ended up shaved, blind and in prison. But while he was incarcerated, God prepared him for his ultimate victory, described in the passage below.

“So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, ‘Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.’ So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. Then Samson said to

the lad who held him by the hand, 'Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.'

"Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there—about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed. Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!'

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life" (Judg. 16:25-30).

Earlier in this chapter we find a significant verse: "However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven" (Judg. 16:22). Even though Samson failed, the source of his strength (his hair) began to return when he focused again on fulfilling God's purpose for his life.

At this point in the story, however, Samson was a miserable failure, or so it seemed. He was defeated, blinded and forced to entertain his enemies. Yet Samson prayed and God heard him, and he literally brought the house down at his last performance.

You have to admire Samson's faith. If failure disqualifies someone, then why was he praying? What right did he have to ask God for another chance? And why did God hear his prayer? God didn't seem to mind that Samson was a faithful failure.

We too must overcome our tendency to run from God when we fail. We inherited that trait from Adam and Eve, who hid from God in the garden after they disobeyed Him (see Gen. 3:8). In faith, we must overcome the tendency of running from God and

substitute it with a habit of running to God. The Scriptures assure us that we can approach God boldly, just as Samson did, even when we fail.

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

What lessons can you learn from Samson’s failures? How can you apply them to your current situation? Is it time to trust God even though it seems as if nothing is happening in your life? Is it time to re-evaluate your past through the eyes of faith and see if there is a failure-turned-victory that can yield something useful for Him and others?

Take time to write out your answers on a piece of paper or in your journal. Put down your thoughts as you study Samson’s life. Then look at the lessons from other faithful failures such as Moses, David and Peter. Use their profiles to map out a faith path to recovery, turning your failures into wonderful learning lessons for you and others.

If Samson made it, so can you, but only if you don’t allow your failures to derail you. Having faith in God will keep you on the right path and will help make you into a “faith-full” failure, as Samson was.

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# How to Finish Strong

**Success in the Christian life is not measured by how you start. What's most important is whether you are standing at the end of the race.**

Before he died, the apostle Paul wrote with confidence about his life, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7, NKJV). He wasn't boasting. He was saying that he had remained true to the course God had laid out for him. He had not only lived well but also finished well.

I believe that every Christian has a course set out before him—whether, like Paul, he is in full-time ministry or not—and that he will be judged based on how successfully he finishes it. We all are called to both begin and end well—and to live well in between.

As I age, I think more and more about finishing my life well. Like most people I've always tended to think that the end is far away, somewhere in the distant future.

Scripture confirms, however, that we have no guarantee of tomorrow. As the psalmist wrote, "My times are in Your hand" (Ps. 31:15). I have to ask myself: If I went home to be with the Lord tomorrow, how would anyone know whether I finished well?

The final word on whether a person finishes well belongs to God and God alone. I'm not sure anyone else will be around to hear His "Well done, good and faithful servant" (see Matt. 25:21), if He should say that to us—certainly not those who are still living.

But we can get some idea of what it means to finish well by evaluating the success or failure of various Bible characters. Just for discussion's sake, let's assign each person a grade to evaluate how well he finished.

**Jesus (A+).** Jesus did all things well while on the earth (see Mark 7:37), including dying on the cross in accordance with God's will. In John 17:4, Jesus prayed to His Father, "'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.'" Jesus knew why He came and stayed true to His purpose.

He finished His work, entrusted Himself to the Father and died on the cross, a seeming failure to those closest to Him, but a beloved Son to His heavenly Father. There is no hint of failure in anything He did. By every heavenly standard imaginable, Jesus finished well.

**The apostle Paul (A).** Paul finished well, and as we already determined from his comment in 2 Timothy 4:7, he knew it. In verse 8 he goes on to say, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

He knew it was possible not to finish well in spite of all his hard work for Jesus. But he had a safeguard. He wrote, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul lived a holy life and left a collection of inspired epistles that still guide God's people today.

**Joseph (A).** Joseph was a great manager and leader who distinguished himself in service to Pharaoh and saved the Israelites from starvation. He positioned his sons to be blessed by his father, Jacob, and received a double blessing when his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, each became the head of a tribe along with their uncles, Joseph's brothers.

**Moses (B+).** Moses was a faithful and meek man with whom God spoke face to face. Yet Moses' anger cost him a chance to finish well. He was not permitted to enter the Promised Land because he misrepresented God by striking the rock instead of speaking to it as God had commanded him to do (see Num. 20:10-12). He did, however, make sure there was a smooth transition of leadership to Joshua, and he left a written legacy—the Pentateuch—that has influenced the world for millennia.

**David (B).** David lived a full life with many successes and failures. His end, however, was less than laudable. While his servants were trying to make him comfortable in his last days, his sons almost tore the kingdom apart because their father had not put in place his successor (see 1 Kings 1). It seems that David never could control his sons, and that caused problems for Israel after he was gone. Yet he was a man after God's own heart, the Bible tells us, and we still sing and recite his music and poetry today.

**Jacob (B).** In many ways, Jacob was more spiritual at the end of his life than he was during his early years. He blessed Pharaoh when Joseph brought him before the ruler (see Gen. 47:7). And he discerned that Joseph's son Ephraim, younger than his brother Manasseh, was to receive the greater blessing. Jacob is an example of a man who finished better than he started.

**Solomon (C).** Solomon left a wonderful collection of proverbs and ruled with wisdom. But he was such a hard taskmaster that upon his death the people petitioned his son to have their taxation and workload reduced. Rehoboam refused and promised even harsher conditions (see 1 Kings 12). The people rebelled, and 10 tribes broke away from Israel and formed their own nation with their own king. Solomon didn't learn from the fact that his father, David, almost missed his chance to install Solomon as king. Because Israel split apart right after his death, Solomon gets only an average grade.

**Samson (D).** Samson would probably get a D grade for his life in general. He betrayed the secret of his strength and was taken prisoner, having his eyes gouged out in the process. He died pushing down the supporting columns of the house in which numerous enemies of the Israelites (the Philistines) were being entertained. The house collapsed, killing them all. Because he ended his life with this act, he is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as a hero of the faith. Samson left no heirs, built nothing, and in many ways left a good example of how not to finish well.

**King Saul (F).** Saul's saga is one of the saddest in the Bible. He started out head and shoulders above his peers. He ended a defeated, desperate man who lost his throne, his son and his legacy. His name today is synonymous with poor leadership because he hunted and persecuted his God-chosen successor, his own son-in-law David. Saul did not even come close to finishing well, and his failure has been well-chronicled for posterity.

**The Pharisees and Sadducees (F).** The members of both religious movements that flourished in Jesus' day finished poorly. They were so threatened by Jesus' teachings that they put Jesus to death to maintain the systems they had developed. They continued their ways by persecuting Jesus' disciples after Jesus' resurrection. Their poor leadership culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

What can you learn from these examples? I believe there are five guidelines you can follow that will help you finish your walk with the Lord well.

**1. Maintain holy living.** There is no greater obstacle to finishing well than sin. It tarnishes the best of records and intentions. You must always allow the Holy Spirit to work in you to ensure that you become more like Jesus.

This involves a commitment to prayer, fellowship and Bible

study. And don't ignore issues such as anger, which caused Moses to miss entering the Promised Land. Make every effort to live a holy and obedient life.

**2. Know your purpose.** Paul could say that he had finished the race because he knew what his race entailed. Jesus finished the work the Father gave Him to do. Both knew their reasons for being here and stayed true to their work. In re-examining the list, it is obvious that the most successful finishers knew their purpose and stayed true to it to the end.

**3. Be true to your purpose.** Both Solomon and King Saul knew their purposes, but they got sidetracked by selfish ambition and personal pleasure. The Pharisees rejected God's purpose, and that marked the beginning of the end for their movement and way of life (see Luke 7:30). The best finishers, such as Jesus, Paul and Joseph, were productive to the end.

**4. Leave some kind of legacy.** I don't think you have to construct a building or start a movement named after you to leave a spiritual legacy. Of the characters we studied, some wrote, others had family who carried on their name or work, still others left a body of work that could be emulated.

Finishing well requires that you think through what you will leave behind that has the potential to bless others after you're gone. There is no guarantee that will happen, for only God can provide that kind of impact. But those who finish well think about what they have the power to produce that can pass on to people the work God has done in their lives.

**5. Leave behind a good name.** Proverbs 10:7 says, "The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot" (NKJV). That's quite a statement!

What kind of name does King Saul have among Bible readers? What about Solomon? Paul? Samson? The Pharisees?

Not many people are remembered beyond one or two generations

after their deaths. So if nothing else, you can finish well by leaving behind a good name that your children and grandchildren can remember.

If you don't have children, then you can leave a good name among those who knew you best, whether friends or associates. For that to happen, you will have to spend some time being a blessing to others, using your time and gifts to serve their needs.

Ultimately, it is most important to finish well in God's eyes. When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, not many people were happy with the job he was doing. Yet today there aren't too many cities in the United States that don't have some memorial to his work and name.

Perhaps we should remember Nehemiah's prayers as we consider our lives and our desire to finish well. On two separate occasions, Nehemiah prayed that God would remember him for the work he had done: "Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people" (Neh. 5:19); "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!" (Neh. 13:14).

If you are obedient to God's will for your life and walk in holiness, you will finish well in His eyes. And that is all that is important—to please God. So give some thought to finishing well, and then get back to work, fulfilling the purpose He has assigned for you. If you do that, you will receive an A in His book!

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# Why You Can't Give Up On the Church

**Mean-spirited and abusive church leaders have hurt lots of people. If you've been wounded, please don't give up on the church.**

A while ago I visited a large church to meet with the staff. The objective was to give the pastor feedback and recommendations about their strengths and weaknesses. What I found was all too typical.

While meeting with staff members individually, I discovered a great deal of mistrust, anger and fear. Although the church had every appearance of success—large facilities, multiple services, multifaceted programs—there was much dissatisfaction and even dissension in their midst.

After two days of interviews and observations, I made my report to the pastor. He responded in anger.

“There aren't any problems here,” he said, “especially with me or my leadership style. The problem is the staff. They are lazy. I am giving them names of people, and they aren't following up to build this church.”

“The answer is not understanding different personalities and styles. The answer is that I should fire every one of them.”

I was paid for my time (a check commensurate with what the pastor thought of my services) and politely thanked for the visit. What happened on the way to my car, however, was revealing.

Many of the staff thanked me for coming. One man said: “You're

the only one who has ever spoken honestly to [the pastor]. He can be so mean, and the church is being run by a few of his favorites.”

Another commented, “This is the first time I can remember open and honest communication taking place among the staff.” Yet another said: “We need what you’ve done. We’re going to do all we can to get you back here as soon as possible!”

But I left knowing I would never be invited back to that church. Sometime later, I read this startling comment on the state of the church in the May 2002 issue of Charisma magazine:

“Hundreds of thousands of charismatics have been so offended by leaders they have either stopped going to church or attend a middle-of-the-road Protestant church where the leadership isn’t weird, even if there is no life.”

The writer did not quote his source for the numbers, but my experience backs up his statement. Yet the churches abandoned by disillusioned members continue to limp along, and those people who stay are sometimes so enamored with the pastor’s personality they are easily reduced to mere spectators in the weekly church performance.

My life’s work and passion is to help people find and fulfill their purpose. For people to find their purpose, they need leaders who know how to focus on the people and not on themselves. For them to fulfill their purpose, they need leaders who take seriously the job descriptions for the ministries of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher and pastor.

Paul tells us that Jesus calls “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a

perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13, NKJV, emphasis added).

Yet often in a church the leader is a strong man or woman, usually the founder or a relative of the founder, who has built the church through his or her personality and a mix of gifts. Typically the leader employs an authoritarian leadership style that is reminiscent of Moses or the Old Testament prophets. Because this style is depicted in the Bible, it is assumed to be godly. It is not.

And though this style of leadership may be useful in building the church to a certain size, it isn't effective in managing the church once it grows beyond that size. What's more, this approach tends to “chew up” people who are trying to serve the vision of the leader.

Why? Because the key characteristic of it is anger. I have found a lot of anger among church leaders in general. Their anger has injured many people, resulting in their purpose, gifts and experience being lost—or severely hampered as they try to serve the church.

The Bible is full of examples of authoritarian leaders whose leadership style and relationships with associates were characterized by anger. Let's look at a few of them.

**Moses**. Moses was a product of his age, a time when authoritarianism was the rule of the day. Though Moses was for the most part a meek leader, his anger prevented him from entering the Promised Land.

His anger also caused him to misrepresent the Lord when He was dealing with the people. After the Lord had told him to “speak to” the rock to bring forth water, he instead “lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank” (Num. 20:8,11). God honored Moses' leadership by providing water, but Moses was not permitted to enter the land God had

promised to the Israelites. His problem: anger.

**King Saul.** As Saul got older, his anger became more pronounced. He became jealous because his trusted No. 2 man, David, experienced great success in battle and the people honored him above Saul for his achievements. Saul did not share in the people's joy.

"Saul was very angry ... and from that time [he] kept a jealous eye on David" (1 Sam. 18:8-9, NIV). The Bible tells us that Saul tried to assassinate David on three occasions and spent much of his latter reign pursuing David in order to eliminate his rival to the throne.

**Herod the Great.** Herod ruled during the time of Jesus' birth. He arranged to have family members and rivals to the throne murdered and then spent his life mourning them. When the Magi who came to visit Jesus did not follow his instructions to return to him and tell him where they had found the Child, "Herod ... was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under" (Matt. 2:16, NKJV).

Jesus' disciples James and John. During one trip, the Samaritans prevented Jesus and His disciples from passing through their territory. The Bible tells us that "when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But He turned and rebuked them" (Luke 9:54-55).

Jesus wasn't impressed with the men's appeal to what I call an Old Testament prophetic syndrome. Some leaders feel obligated to follow a stern style because they believe it is how God wants them to be. Jesus rebuked His followers then for their anger and revenge; I'm sure He would do the same today.

**The Sanhedrin and the High Priest.** These Jewish religious leaders enjoyed their position of authority and became angry

when anyone challenged them. That is one of the reasons they killed Jesus.

A significant display of their anger led to the murder of Stephen, the first martyr. “[The Sanhedrin] were furious. ... They all rushed him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him” (Acts 7:54,57, NIV).

You can see that anger was the trademark of all these leaders. It fueled jealousy, fear, intimidation and ruthless tactics.

Authoritarian leaders have little patience for those who do not respond quickly to their demands. They see themselves as owners, not stewards, and consider dissent a personal affront that requires swift retaliation, lest the dissension spread like a virus and their vulnerability be exposed. No matter how wonderfully their relationships with others in the church begin, it is only a matter of time before their imperfect followers stir up their wrath and find themselves in the hands of an angry minister.

Let’s consider one more biblical character—Elisha, the Old Testament prophet. He raised the dead, performed other unusual miracles (such as causing a metal axe head to float on water) and delivered the word of the Lord to God’s people.

But it was hard to work with Elisha because he had a temper. Historically, his temper has been excused, overlooked and even justified because he was a “prophet of the Lord.” It is commonly assumed that the deaths he caused were the will of God in response to the sins of those who died.

But what if they weren’t? What if Elisha’s anger, coupled with his true prophetic power, somehow released a curse on the people he was supposed to bless? What if the Bible, by reporting Elisha’s actions, wasn’t endorsing them but simply reporting them as historical facts? Let’s look at three examples.

In 2 Kings 2:23-24 we read that 42 youths were mauled because they mocked the prophet of God. Was their experience God's will, or did Elisha's anger unleash a harsh sentence on some irresponsible youth?

Even a cursory reading of 2 Kings 5 makes it clear that Elisha's servant, Gehazi, was wrong to pursue Naaman and take a contribution that his master had already rejected. But was the just sentence for his folly a lifetime of leprosy for him and his family?

Second Kings 6:32-7:2 gives us another example. In this account, the king becomes angry with Elisha and travels to his house to kill him. Elisha tells the elders who are sitting with him to bar the door so that the king's messenger—and the king, who is directly behind him—cannot enter to carry out their plan.

No punishment comes to either of them for plotting to murder Elisha. Yet when the king's officer simply questions a prophetic word Elisha gives, the officer pays with his life. Why was the king spared and the officer sentenced to death?

Some say the officer died because of his lack of faith in the prophet's word. But is unbelief a worse crime than murder?

I think there is a possibility it was Elisha's anger that was the cause. I see a pattern of anger in Elisha's life that made it difficult to be around him when he was challenged or questioned.

As a leader (and a strong one, I've been told), I've had to deal with anger. I'm still learning to deal with it. During the process, I have reflected again and again on the words of James, who wrote, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).

James didn't say never to be angry; he said that anger should not be immediate. Similarly, I'm not saying a leader should

never be angry; I'm saying anger should not be a predominant emotion in anyone's leadership style, especially that of someone who is committed to being a servant-leader.

I want to help leaders understand how destructive an angry, heavy-handed style can be both to themselves and the people they lead. I want people who are experiencing this form of abuse to realize it is not God's endorsed style of leadership. And I want those who are called but not yet in leadership positions to formulate a more gentle, Christ-like leadership philosophy.

Perhaps you have suffered firsthand, as a sinner, in the hands of an angry leader. I encourage you to forgive and to allow the lessons you've learned to help you eliminate anger from your own leadership repertoire. Don't let your experience make you shy away from church altogether.

You might be a leader who was or is angry and has hurt others as a result of it. The people you hurt may have been wrong in what they did, but that doesn't justify your anger.

Repent and ask their forgiveness. Ask God for a new heart to lead, so anger won't cost you the Promised Land as Moses' anger did him.

To help you be the leader God wants you to be—whether you are the head of a church or simply leading a Bible study in your home—I direct you to a passage in Peter's first epistle: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

These verses give three helpful tips for any leader who wants to be more effective and avoid the angry minister syndrome. First, lead willingly. Some leaders are angry with people because they are angry with God. Second, lead without focusing

on money. Third, lead as a servant, not as an overlord.

It's time for the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control—to become a central part of our leadership style rather than anger. It's time for us to pattern our ministry after that of Jesus, rather than the flawed biblical characters of the Old Testament.

If we follow His example, no matter what our calling, we will succeed in fulfilling our own purpose and helping others fulfill theirs. And instead of tearing others down, we will build up the body of Christ so that we all can attain “to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).<sup>3</sup>

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