

5 Things to Do When You Fail

Failure is inevitable, but it isn't the end of the world. It often creates serious consequences, dark days, afflicted relationships and sleepless nights, but it is not fatal.

We fail. We say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing, miss a cue or make a poor decision. Our kids are hurt, our wife or husband is angry, our boss is disillusioned. A colleague is let down, the future is jeopardized, the car is bent, the money is gone.

So what's a person to do? Here is a five-part action strategy to help you face your failures and use them to grow spiritually.

1. Recognize your failure. Denial should not be one of our core competencies.

Every morning, the first thing you should do is declare to the Lord you are depending on Him today, not your own resources, smarts, position, power or talents. This declaration effectively leaves Him in charge of you and the day's activities. That means He is in charge of letting you know if you are on a collision course with failure or augured into failure's swamp. This is called conviction. You will recognize His voice when He speaks.

It is important to recognize your failure because without fail the enemy of God will seize your failure as his opportunity to assault you further. But not to fear! God's Word declares repeatedly that you are "in Christ." In failure or not, this is a good place to be!

2. Own your failure. There is no good reason to attempt to hand off or dodge your failure. True, there may be unpleasant consequences. But your identity, acceptance and value are secure. Your heavenly Father has said so.

The man who is in Christ is secure. In fact, you are as secure as Christ is strong. Other people might not recognize this fact, but that doesn't change its validity. A secure person is not threatened. Secure men and women can be transparent. A secure person can admit that they made a mistake, committed an act of thoughtlessness or made a poor decision. A secure person accepts responsibility.

It is significant that you are secure in Christ. Insecure people behave irrationally. Insecure people don't accept responsibility. Insecure people fail to provide healthy leadership. Whether in the midst of failure or in the celebration of victory, we are secure in Christ. There is nothing we can do that will separate us from Him, including fail (Rom. 8:38-39).

3. Apologize for your failure. The person who is in Christ is confident. A confident person says, "I was wrong and I apologize." Or, "I offended you. I'm sorry."

Fear is the opposite of confidence. It is the belief that God is not big enough, gracious enough or forgiving enough to handle your failure. Fear emerges from the philosophy adhering to the fallacy of failure. There is no failure that God cannot forgive. There is no failure too great for His grace. There can be no darkness that will consume His light. If a failure or dark pit exists that is greater than God's grace, then God is not supreme, your failure and darkness are.

Failure does not mean that you are no longer secure in Christ. A confident man taps into his security in Christ and apologizes for his mistakes.

4. Speak honestly about your failure. Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10, NIV). As the secure, confident man in Christ, a strong man speaks candidly of his failure. Strong men evaluate their failure and use it to gain spiritual maturity and momentum (2 Cor. 10:5; 7:10-11; Rom.

7:7-25).

I have a dear friend who struggles mightily against a pornographic addiction. In addition to speaking honestly about his struggle, he also speaks honestly about what drives his temptation: He is tempted to prove his masculinity through vicarious sexual conquest. In addition to helping him understand the dynamic of his struggles and failures, his honesty helps others to speak honestly about their failures and grasp how to tap into the strength of Christ.

5. Be proactive in your failure. You can turn the tables on your failure. Don't let your failure be a demoralizing, fearful, dark pit. Take action!

Rather than succumbing to the fallacy of failure, pray that God will help you to use your failures as a training ground for your spiritual benefit. By seizing upon the fact that your failure does not make a definitive statement about your acceptance, value or masculinity, you position yourself to face failure and let your heavenly Father redeem it for your benefit, and His glory.

While it is true Peter failed miserably on the night of Christ's crucifixion, he shone brightly when he jumped overboard to swim to where the resurrected Jesus called his name from the beach (John 21:7). He was proactive in his failure and abandoned himself to Christ's redemption and forgiveness.

Christ calls to every one of us in the midst of our failure. Will you answer His call?

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