

Your Failure Is Not Final: 4 Ways to Overcome Your Biggest Mistakes

One of my favorite quotes states, “Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker! Failure is delay, not defeat. Failure is a temporary detour, not a dead-end street.” Abraham Lincoln said, “Those who never fail, never do much of anything.” The Apostle Peter was very familiar with failure. In fact, he was a man of miracles, signs, wonders, and blunders.

The point of chronicling Peter’s failures is not to belittle him but to illustrate that the people God uses in great ways are still very human. And, if we see how God’s grace enabled him to overcome failure, it will fortify our faith that God will do the same for us. Here are Peter’s nine recorded failures:

- He sank when he took his eyes off Jesus—Matt. 14:29-30.
- He verbally rebuked Jesus (not a good idea)—Matt. 16:22-23.
- He wrongly compared Jesus with mere mortal men—Matt. 17:1-5.
- He refused (at first) for Jesus to wash his feet—John 13:8.
- He slept through prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane—Matt. 26:40-43.
- He tried to defend Jesus and cut off Malchus’ ear—John 18:10.
- He denied any association with Jesus three times—John 18:25-27.
- He quit the ministry and returned to fishing—John 21:3.
- He was hypocritical about fellowshiping with Gentile believers—Gal. 2:11-14.

My focus is not to highlight Peter's failures but to learn from them. It's easy to criticize how Peter sank on the stormy sea and fail to realize that he did something no other human being (except Jesus) has ever done: walk on water. So it's better to try and fail than to not try at all. Obviously, Peter rebounded and became a prominent leader in the New Testament church. This proves that defeat doesn't have to have the final word in our lives. Failure is not final if we do the following four things:

1. **Keep an eternal perspective.**

While Peter adamantly swore he would never deny Jesus, the Master predicted the opposite: "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Truly, truly I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times" (John 13:38). Then Jesus added, "Let not your heart be troubled ... in My Father's house are many dwelling places. ... I am going to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-3). In other words, "Peter, you are going to fail, but you will recover from it. Don't focus on your temporary failures, focus on My eternal purpose for your life."

Failures are merely events in life. Just because you fail doesn't mean *you* are a failure. It simply means you're human. Welcome to the club. Failure is just a temporary part of life. If we learn to keep an eternal perspective, failure won't defeat us or define us. Stay focused on the big picture of God's eternal plan. One day you'll look back and laugh at your failures and realize that they weren't so big in the grand scheme of things.

2. **Sever the ties with the past.**

Christ's crucifixion coincided closely with the Feast of Passover. Approximately 50 days later, Peter preached his Pentecost sermon and caught 3,000 souls in the gospel net. Immediately after Jesus' death, Peter must have felt

worthless. When the rooster crowed, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter. ... And Peter went outside and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:61-62).

Can you imagine how dejected he felt after doing the very thing he swore he’d never do? He felt condemned and unworthy to even be called a disciple. Perhaps he thought, *I’m a complete failure. I’m such a miserable disgrace. Maybe I should go back to the only thing I was ever any good at—fishing.* And so he did (John 21:3).

Then he had an encounter with Jesus that was very similar to their first meeting (compare Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:3-19). A repentant Peter was restored, reinstated and became the main spokesman for the apostles.

How did Peter overcome such major setbacks? He severed the ties with the past. He chose to live in the provision of God’s grace instead of being a prisoner of his past. He avoided the mistake of those who live in the past and, consequently, forfeit their future.

3. Never stop believing.

Peter failed, but his faith didn’t fail because Jesus prepared him—“But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have repented, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:32). So no matter how many times we disappoint God or ourselves, we should never stop believing. We are not a failure unless we quit. Solomon said, “for a just man falls seven times and rises up again, but the wicked will fall into mischief.” If you, like Peter, get knocked down, bounce back up again, more determined than ever to keep believing.

History is full of examples of people who used failure to find a formula for success. Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor for a lack of ideas and went bankrupt before building Disneyland. Henry Ford went broke several times before he became a pioneer in the automotive industry. Albert Einstein

was expelled from school, and his teachers said he was mentally slow before he made his mark in math and science. Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times on his way to hitting a then-MLB record 714 career home runs. Bret Favre threw 317 interceptions on his way to setting a then-NFL record 508 touchdown passes. Thomas Edison performed 10,000 experiments on a particular project before succeeding. He said, "Why, I haven't failed; I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work!" Friend, never stop believing!

4. **Always keep growing.**

Later in life, as a seasoned veteran of the faith, Peter wrote, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18a). God sees our potential, not just our present. When Jesus first called Peter, he was spiritually immature. "Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). Peter became great, but not overnight. It was a growth process. Growth takes time. Failure can be a springboard instead of a setback if we learn and grow from it. Peter made many blunders, but look at how God used him—preaching to masses, healing the sick, boldly leading the early church and giving his life as a martyr. Despite his failures, he became an overwhelming success.

Take heart, friend, there is no failure in your life too great for the grace of God to overcome. Never let defeat have the last word. Failure doesn't have to be final. {eo}

Ben Godwin is the author of four books and pastors the Goodsprings Full Gospel Church. His weekly telecast, The Word Workshop, airs on TV-16 and Charter Cable #10 on Mondays at 9 p.m. and Tuesdays at noon and live streams on . To read more articles, visit his website at and take advantage of his 4-book bundle for \$25.