

## Life with God in Recovery

# FACING FAILURE



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***This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every Morning; great is your faithfulness.*** (Lamentations 3:21-23 NIV)

There is a desire in each one of us to succeed, to win, to excel! Yet often we feel like a failure. This feeling of failure has a tendency to terrify us and take away our hope.

There are two types of failure that we face. The first is the failure that comes from human limitation. We set our goals too high. We compete. We compare ourselves with others. Often we end up feeling upset with ourselves because we can't measure up to our own level of expectation or the expectation that others may have challenged us to. A sense of inadequacy follows and we find ourselves filled with shame, fear, and embarrassment.

An example of this type of failure is recorded in the book of Matthew. The night before Jesus died he shared the Passover meal with his friends, including one of his closest companions, Peter. Then the group headed over to the Mount of Olives.

***On the way Jesus told them, "Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, 'God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' Peter declared, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you."*** (Matthew 26:31, 33 NLT)

Peter's expectation of himself was that he would stay at Jesus' side regardless of the actions of anyone else. However, on that very night, Peter denied three times that he was with Jesus or even knew him. To emphasize his denial he even swore at the bystanders. Peter left that scene weeping bitter tears of failure.

Like so many of us, Peter meant what he said to Jesus but he failed to recognize his own powerlessness to succeed based solely on his own desire and effort. Oswald Chambers writes, "Every element of our own self-reliance must be put to death by the power of God. The moment we recognize our complete weakness and our dependence upon Him will be the very moment that the Spirit of God will exhibit His power."

God created us and knows each of our limitations. His expectation is that we will use the gifts we have been given and, with His help and guidance, do the best that we can in each circumstance. When we attempt to imitate someone else, or live according to someone else's standards, we are not following God's plan for our life.

Trying to be what God never intended us to be is a sure recipe for failure. God has a purposeful plan for each of our lives and will help us attain any extraordinary thing that He has designed for us to do. However, we must be willing to ask, "Lord, what will YOU have me to do in YOUR strength and in YOUR power to build up YOUR kingdom?"

Jesus had great plans for the apostle Peter. Even though Peter failed Jesus at a critical moment, Jesus specially sought him out after His resurrection for healing and restoration. Peter went on to be one of the strongest witnesses for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we are willing to submit to the plans God has for us and rely on His wisdom and power, He will lead us in the way He has prepared for us to go and we will succeed.

***We thank God for the power Christ has given us. He leads us and makes us win in everything. He speaks through us wherever we go. The Good News is like a sweet smell to those who hear it. We are a sweet smell of Christ that reaches up to God. It reaches out to those who are being saved from the punishment of sin and to those who are still lost in sin.*** (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 NLV)

The second kind of failure we face is the failure that comes from sin. We settle for less than we could be. We wallow in resentments. We hold grudges. We cling to unhealthy ways of living. We live according to our own human plans instead of God's good, pleasing and perfect plan. We often embrace violence instead of peace, self-centeredness instead of caring, hatred instead of love, despair instead of hope. Sin strolls through our lives like an accepted guest. The Bible describes our battle with this kind of failure:

***When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am!*** (Romans 7:21-24a NIV)

Who can rescue us from this type of behaviour? Scripture clearly promises us that Jesus can. Jesus endured the cross to pay the penalty for our sins of rebellion against God. When we repent and receive forgiveness for our sinful behaviour, we also receive the power of God to live a life of holiness. This includes the power to let go of grievances against others and to live at peace with them. God gives us the power to say "NO" to the demands of our addiction.

When we seek God's way of living rather than our own way, we will no longer set ourselves up for failure. We will, in fact, have the satisfying experience of peace and true success that our hearts have long been seeking.

***The power of the Holy Spirit has made me free from the power of sin and death. This power is mine because I belong to Christ Jesus.*** (Romans 8:2 NLV)

#### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways do I fail God, myself, and others?
2. How have I tried to be someone God never intended me to be?
3. What makes it difficult for me to ask for help and direction?
4. Am I seeking God's help and direction as I face my failures?
5. Where do I see God's offers for help in the middle of my failed efforts? Where do I need to?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I admit that I have often tried to be what you never intended me to be and so I've failed. I've tried to be my own problem solver but I lack both wisdom and strength to get the job done. I've tried to be my own future planner but I can't see far enough to know what's best. I'm so glad You know my limitations and are prepared to meet me where I'm at. Today I commit to seeking to know Your way and to welcome Your power to take me from where I am to where I need to be. Help me to surrender my prideful understanding of how things need to be and accept the way You are guiding, even if I don't always understand. Help me to learn from my failures and receive healing from You along the way. Amen