

Leadership in Times of Rejection and Failure

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The reality of failure

Leadership involves risk, mistakes will be made.

Failure is not falling down; it is remaining there when you have fallen.

The reality of failure

Our mistakes won't irreparably damage our lives
unless we let them.

—James E. Sweaney

We really only learn from our failures. Our successes
confirm us in our habits.

—Clive James

“Jesus Christ’s life was an absolute failure from every standpoint but God’s.”

—Oswald Chambers

Persons rejected as failures:

- Bill Gates—device to read traffic tapes and create reports, failed
- Walt Disney
- Abraham Lincoln
- William Wilberforce—Slavery Abolition Act, 1833
- David
- Paul

From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city,

in perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

—2 Corinthians 11:24-29

All people fail at certain instances in their lives. The only thing that makes them different is how they manage to stand up or how they choose to fail again.

Success is stumbling from failure to failure
with no loss of enthusiasm.
~Winston Churchill



MattMcWilliams.com | Life. Leadership. Love. Learned the Hard Way.

“I failed my exam in some subjects but my friend passed. Now he’s an engineer in Microsoft and I am the owner.”

—Bill Gates

Failure can bring destructive thinking

Betrayal

Hurt

Hopelessness

Grief

Loss

Disillusionment

Bitterness

Doubt/shame

Anger

Anxiety

- Attribution error: “We take the credit for our successes and blame others for our failures.”

5 Things Failure Teaches Leaders

1. Failure ultimately shapes you as a leader
 - Powerful source of know-how and understanding, teaches about survival, renewal and reinvention of yourself
2. Who you can trust and depend on
3. Allows you to see opportunities with broader observation
4. Enables you to see the responsibility and impact of leadership
5. Awareness of our failures helps us to understand and deal with the failures of others

Warning Signs of Impending Failure

1. Losing sight of what's important. Preoccupation with trivia, micromanaging
2. Poor communication—lack of focus.
3. Risk aversion—past success can create a fear of being able to sustain it. Fear of failure can render leaders unable to take risks

Warning Signs of Impending Failure

4. Deterioration in ethical conduct—highest principle of leadership is integrity
5. Poor self-management—neglect of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs
6. Lost love—responsibility of leadership may seem frustrating and fruitless

Types of failure encountered in leadership

- Moral failure
- Performance failure
- Program expectations/objectives not achieved
- Employee or colleague mistakes
- Inappropriate procedures
- Crisis in external environment

Dealing with rejection

- Inquire of trusted individuals as to the reasons for rejection
- Analyze/assess impact of your relationship with others
- Learn to listen to others
- Seek input from others
- Build communication skills
- Affirm others, give credit where credit is due
- Concentrate on team-building

Those who have handled best the problems of rejection and failure are people who have been pioneers in pursuit of a cause, they were not focused on themselves—their success, popularity, comfort or fame. All of these, when they came, were mere byproducts of their unwavering commitment to a purpose much larger than themselves.

Maintain perspective:

- Planning isn't as valuable as learning
- Learning comes from trying
- Trying inevitably involves failures
- It is in trying and re-trying that we achieve progress

“Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances.”

—Ellen G White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331

Dealing with moral failure

- Admit mistake
- Get out of the limelight
- Make things right where possible
- Set your life in order
- Be patient in re-building your reputation

When you guard your secret life with God, your public life will take care of itself.

Failure of a colleague

- Get the facts before making judgment
- Confront individual in private
- Address the situation in a timely manner
- Resolve issues at the lowest level possible
- Inform those who need to know—but don't publicize the matter
- Discipline with discretion (may need to have legal counsel in cases of dismissal)
- In cases of repentance—find ways to maintain connection and provide encouragement

Conflict—failure in relationships

1. Address anger appropriately ('cool off' first)
2. Seek understanding (identify the reason)
3. Assume the best (we'll all get/give filtered info)
4. Share feelings honestly.
5. Speak truth respectfully.
6. Attack the problem, not the person.
7. Deal with specifics, one at a time.
8. Ensure a fair process
9. Accept responsibility for mistakes
10. Focus on the future

Failure of a program

- Be candid, take responsibility
- Analyze carefully (Root of failure can lie in poor planning, inadequate resources, fuzzy goals, poor oversight, unexpected developments)
- Learn from what has happened
- Make a course correction
- May have to start over again

In summary

- The gospel doesn't keep us from failure. Rather it transforms it into deeper meaning and a more hopeful purpose.

- The idea that God will not give you more than you can handle is misleading. Sometimes God takes us through seasons of darkness and silence to that we will strain to see His face and hear His voice.

“And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

—2 Corinthians 12:9,10

In summary

- The gospel doesn't keep us from failure. Rather it transforms it into deeper meaning and a more hopeful purpose.
- The fork in the road—failure has the potential to transform or destroy.

Learn from every failure

- Thomas A Edison: “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”
- James Dyson: 5,127 vacuum cleaner prototypes

In summary

- The gospel doesn't keep us from failure. Rather it transforms it into deeper meaning and a more hopeful purpose.
- The fork in the road—failure has the potential to transform or destroy.
- Exploring failure is the most useful result of failure.

Discussion:

- What have you learned from failure?
- Describe a situation in which you had to deal with the failure of another person? How would you handle the situation now?

www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/145943-6-reasons-why-church-leaders-fail.htm

www.forbes.com/sites/glennllopis/2012/08/20/5-things-failure-teaches-you-about-leadership