

Nine Tests Every Christian Must Face

Lesson Four- The Failure Test

Joshua 7:2-3 (NLT)

Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the city of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. [3] When they returned, they told Joshua, "It's a small town, and it won't take more than two or three thousand of us to destroy it. There's no need for all of us to go there."

Joshua 7:4-5 (NLT)

So approximately three thousand warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai [5] chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.

Those that read the newspaper's cartoons, we are familiar with the lovable Charlie Brown and his failures. He fails:

Baseball
Flying Kites
Winning the Little Red Haired Girl
Kicking a football.

Failure happens to everyone who tries...

Theodore Roosevelt once said that "The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything."

So it is with failure!

No one is immune

Top Fears People Face

1. Fear of Criticism
2. Fear of Rejection
3. Fear of Pain
4. Fear of Loss

5. Fear of Failure

While we cannot always identify with the Successes in life...all of us can identify with failing.

Failures in the Bible

Moses—fled to the wilderness for 40 years
John Mark—rejected by Paul
Simon Peter—denied Christ three times
Abraham—lied regarding his wife
David—committed adultery and murder
Samson—loved Delilah

Glorious current Failures

Charles Shultz—rejected by Walt Disney
Albert Einstein—kicked out of school
Thomas Edison—failed 10,000 times to create an incandescent light bulb
Abraham Lincoln—lost seven elections and failed in businesses twice
Ronald Reagan—lost the Republican nomination 1976 to Gerald Ford

Failure is a matter of perspective

Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs—and struck out 1,330 times
Hank Aaron hit 755 home runs—and struck out 1,383 times
Richard Petty won 200 races out of 1,185 starts
The great soccer player Pele made less than 3% of the shots he took
Basketball great Michael Jordan made less than half of the shots he took

Responses to Failure

1. One—We tend to blame God.

- ***Joshua 7:7** (NLT) Then Joshua cried out, "Sovereign Lord, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side!*

2. Two—We tend to blame Others

- ***Gen 3:12** And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*
- ***Gen 3:13** And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

3. Three—We tend to blame Circumstances

- ***Neh 4:10** And Judah said, The strength of the burden carriers is weakening, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall.*

The catch phrase of today's society is **"It's not my fault!"**

Five signs of impending failure

One—a loss of focus

- ***Jos 7:3** They went back to Joshua and reported, "You don't need to send the whole army to attack Ai--two or three thousand troops will be enough. Why bother the whole army for a town that small?"*

Two— Over-confidence

- ***Jos 7:4** Joshua sent about three thousand soldiers to attack Ai. But the men of Ai fought back and chased the Israelite soldiers away from the town gate and down the hill to the stone quarries. Thirty-six Israelite soldiers were killed, and the Israelite army felt discouraged.*

Three—Ethics Slip

- ***Jos 7:11** I said everything in Jericho belonged to me and had to be destroyed. But the Israelites have kept some of the things for themselves. They stole from me and hid what they took. Then they lied about it.*

Four—Poor Self-Management or Self-Control

- ***Jos 7:12** What they stole was supposed to be destroyed, and now Israel itself must be destroyed. I cannot help you anymore until you do exactly what I have said. That's why Israel turns and runs from its enemies instead of standing up to them.*

Five—Lost Love

- ***Jos 7:13** Tell the people of Israel, "Tomorrow you will meet with the LORD your God, so make yourselves acceptable to worship him. The LORD says that you have taken things that should have been destroyed. You won't be able to stand up to your enemies until you get rid of those things."*

Dangers of Failure

Failure causes in some an exaggeration of reality

- ***Joshua 7:9** (NLT) For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe us off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?"*

Failure causes some to give up their efforts

- ***Act 21:14** Since we could not get Paul to change his mind, we gave up and prayed, "Lord, please make us willing to do what you want."*

Failure causes some to never risk again

- ***1Sa 7:13** So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.*

Failure causes some to prevent others from trying

Failure causes some to be resentful of those who do succeed

- ***Gen 30:1** Rachel was very jealous of Leah for having children, and she said to Jacob, "I'll die if you don't give me some children!"*

Four Things to know about failure

- Failure does not have to be Final...you can try again
- Failure does not have to be Fatal...you can be bigger than your failure
- Failure does not have to be Fruitless...you can learn from your failure
- Failure does not have to produce Fear...the world will not end because you failed

The purpose of the Failure Test

- Failure reveals our need for God
- Failure reveals our limitations
- Failure can reveal a sinful nature
- Failure maintains in us humility
- Failure makes us value mercy and forgiveness

Overcoming Failure

1. One—Seek God for Divine Direction
2. Two—Get to the root cause of the failure
3. Three—regard failure as a learning process
4. Four—Be prepared to change strategies
5. Five—Never give up—EVER

Failure is not Failure if you can learn from it.

- Failure is only Failure if you quit without learning from the experience
 - ***Joshua 8:1** (NLT) Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take the entire army and attack Ai,*

for I have given to you the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.

- **Joshua 8:18** (NLT) *Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Point your spear toward Ai, for I will give you the city." Joshua did as he was commanded.*
 - **Joshua 8:19** (NLT) *As soon as Joshua gave the signal, the men in ambush jumped up and poured into the city. They quickly captured it and set it on fire.*
 - **Joshua 8:22** (NLT) *Then the Israelites who were inside the city came out and started killing the enemy from the rear. So the men of Ai were caught in a trap, and all of them died. Not a single person survived or escaped.*
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- Failure causes us to realize our need of God.
 - Failure causes us to realize our need of mercy.
 - Failure causes us to realize our need of giving grace.

God gives us the failure test in order to cause us to realize that we cannot trust in our own abilities, strengths, and gifts. To succeed, we need God's favor and His divine help.