

It is Never too Late to Start Over

Job 17:11

"My days have passed. My plans are shattered and so are the desires of my heart."

We have looked at how to deal with *Delays*. Last week we looked at how to deal with *Doubts*. Tonight I want us to look at how do you deal with *Defeats*. The fact is everybody experiences some type of *failure in life*. Life is not an unbroken series of victories. We all have *setbacks, failures, defeats, and losses*. Nobody is perfect. Everybody makes mistakes. Sometimes a defeat can seem to overwhelm you. Sometimes we bring the defeat on ourselves. Sometimes we didn't bring it on ourselves. But sometimes we just feel overwhelmed.

This is the way Job felt. Job 17:11 says, "My days have passed. My plans are shattered and so are the desires of my heart." Have you ever felt like that? My days are past and I have been left behind. My plans are shattered and the desires of my heart are the same way. Maybe you felt like that this week.

I realize that tonight as we talk about how do you rebound from a *failure*, some of you are sitting there saying, "I don't need this message." But you had better take some good notes. Because someday you are going to need to hear this message again. Everybody experiences defeats in life. Everybody has failures. You are going to need it someday so you might as well take it down now and use it for preventative medicine. You will fail many times in life but *you are never a failure until you give up.*

Tonight I want to look at some of the causes of failure and then talk about what God's word says about how do you start over. How do you get a fresh start in life when you've had a failure in your life?

The book of Proverbs has a lot of insight into what causes failure. There are five different things that cause failure in our life according to the book of Proverbs.

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1. **We fail when we do not plan ahead.** It is like the old saying, "If you fail to plan you are planning to fail." You have got to plan ahead. Proverbs 27:12 says, "A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them. But the simple minded man never looks and suffers the consequences." **Are you simple minded?** Some of us have a tendency to be impulsive. Yet the *sensible man* plans ahead. The *impulsive person* never looks ahead and suffers the consequences.

Proverbs 16:9 reads like this in the Hebrew, "We ought to make our plans counting on God to direct us." **One of the reasons we fail is we just do not plan.** Was it raining when Noah built the ark? No. It did not rain for 120 years. **That is what I call long range planning.** For 120 years he worked on that ark. Jesus told the story about a man who built a building and before he got it finished he had to give up because he had not planned ahead. **We fail because we do not plan.**

2. **We fail when we think we have arrived.** Proverbs says we fail when we think we have it all together. You are never going to get anywhere if you think you are already there. Proverbs 18:18 says, "Pride leads to destruction and arrogance to downfall." Somebody said, "The person who gets too big for his britches will eventually be exposed in the end." **When we think we have got it all together watch out.**

The Bible says, "Let him who stands take heed lest he fall." **Pride causes us to fail.** The average American always thinks he is above average. I really do not think there is anybody in the world *who thinks they are average.* **We always see ourselves as above average.** One of the symptoms of pride is we don't think we need any advice, "I've got it all together. I don't need anybody. Me and Jesus, we've got a good thing going. I don't need anybody to tell me what it's all about." **Therefore, they develop into a kind of a Lone Ranger Christian.**

Proverbs 15:22 says this, "Plans fail for lack of council, but with many advisers they succeed." **We fail because we do not plan ahead.**

We fail because we think we have arrived. Remember the lesson of the whale: Just about the time you get to the top and you are ready to blow that is when you get harpooned. **Watch out!**

3. We fail when we are afraid to take risks. Proverbs 25:29 says, "Fear of man is a dangerous trap but to trust in God means safety." The moment you start to worry about what other people think, you are doomed. It is a trap. "Fear of man is a snare," the Bible says. **And the fear of failure can be a cause of failure.** Fran Tarkington said one time that fear sets you up to be a loser. "Maybe I should wait. I am afraid." And you miss a golden opportunity.

The greatest failure is the failure to try. When I die I want four words written on my tombstone: "At least he tried." Failure comes when we are afraid to take risks. Sooner or later, you have got to take risks. **That is what brings abundance.** That is what brings success in life. Do not be afraid to go out on a limb, that is where the fruit is. When we are afraid to take risks and we fail.

4. We fail because we give up too soon. The trouble with many people that during trying times they just stop trying. Failure is the path of least persistence.

How many ball games have been won in the last seconds? Keep on keeping on. Never give up.

Last week we looked at a verse that said, "Don't give up because we will eventually reap a harvest - if we don't give up, if we don't grow weary." We give up too soon. Proverbs says, "A lazy fellow has trouble all through life." **If at first you do not succeed, you are normal.** Try again. Many times success is right around the corner. **You are never a failure until you quit.**

Thomas Edison tried 200 different elements before he found the right element to make the incandescent light bulb. He said, "Don't

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call it a failure, call it an education. I know 200 ways that don't work." Do you know how many offices Lincoln ran for before he became President? Do you know how many times he lost? He lost almost every election he ran for until he became President. Proverbs says we fail because we are lazy. We don't want to work. Listen to this statement from Readers' Digest: "The value of a postage stamp is its ability to stick to one thing until it gets there." I like this one, "An oak tree is a little nut that refused to give its ground." Proverbs says, "Don't be lazy, work!"

We fail because we do not plan ahead, when we think we have arrived, when we are afraid to take risks, and when we give up too soon.

5. We fail when we do not listen to God. That is the number one reason we fail. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to man but in the end it leads to death." God's word is filled with guidelines, and principles to make our lives all that God wants it to be and all that we want to be. But most of the time we want to listen to our feelings, "I feel that this is the right thing to do, even if God's word says it differently."

The fact is, God's word is usually the opposite of natural inclinations. God says the way to get is to give, the way to be honored is to be humbled, the way to greatness is to be a servant. These are some of the paradoxes of the Bible. Usually you could take your natural inclination and figure out the opposite and figure that's God's will. God says, "My ways are not your ways. They are higher than your ways." When we don't listen to God, we are in trouble. Lack of prayer causes a lot of failure.

Regardless of the cause, we all fail. What do you do when you fail? How do you respond? God is more interested in your future than He is in your past. The Bible shows us a way to get a fresh start.

1. Accept responsibility for your own

failure. Proverbs 28:13 says, "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance." The man who refuses to admit his mistake, is wasted, and worthless. If you have made a mistake, just admit it. **Face up to it.** Be honest with yourself. Be honest with others, "I was wrong." **Most of us are experts at passing the buck.** It is in our natural sin nature to pass the buck. Adam passed the buck and blamed his wife. And ever since then we pass the buck.

Losers are pros at blaming other people. Frank Reeve said, "To blame is to be lame [b-lame]." **When you are blaming you are being lame.** Losers are pros at passing the buck. We blame the **economy**, we blame the **weather**, we blame fate, we blame **luck**, we blame your **parents**, you blame your **spouse**, you blame the **government**.

But God says if you want to start over -- if you failed - just admit it. I don't know where we get the idea that we have to pretend that we are perfect. We are not. **You are not perfect!** And neither am I.

In 1974 after an 88 game winning streak, UCLA basketball lost to Notre Dame. They lost in a game that they had been ahead by eleven points. The next day in the headlines John Wooten, the coach, said, "Blame me." **That is the mark of a winner.** He does not pass the buck. He said, "We just got overconfident."

Accept responsibility for your own failure.

2. Stop regretting and start repenting. When you have had a major failure you need to stop **regretting** and start **repenting**. The Greek word for repent means, "to change your mind, to look at it a different way, to change your direction, to change your heart." **It means to change, you do something about it.** You **do not** just set around a

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moan, "I'm a failure. I'm a flop. I can never be used by God again. I am wasted. I am worthless. God is going to set me on the shelf." **Stop regretting and start repenting.** 2 Corinthians 7:10 says this, "The sadness that is used by God brings a change of heart that leads to salvation and there is no regret in that. But worldly sadness causes death." **There are two kinds of sadness mentioned in this verse: Godly sadness and worldly sadness.** What is the difference? **Godly sorrow motivates you to change. It brings a change of heart. It motivates you to do something,** "I am going to change. I am going to be different. I have learned my lesson. I am going to learn from it." **If you are going to fail, fail intelligently.** Always learn from it. It motivates you to change.

Worldly sorrow is demoralizing, depressing, it causes death. It causes us to be depressed, "Poor me!" One of the most devastating emotions in life is self pity, "Poor me! I'm going to go eat worms. Nobody likes me, everybody hates me. Poor me!" **You never learn anything at a pity party.** That is worldly sorrow.

Godly sorrow leads to repentance. It leads to a change of heart. Almost every success in life is built on a failure. **You learn from it.** I am convinced that some things are only learned through failure. How many times as a little kid did Mom say, "Don't touch the hot stove." **But it looks so inviting.** You have to touch it one day. One day my mom said, "Don't stick your fingers in the egg beater." **What did I do?** I was helping my mom and shell beans and she said, "Whatever you do don't stick beans up your nose." **What do you think I did as soon as mama was not looking?** In the Good News translation, a verse from Psalms, "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."

Stop regretting. Regretting does not change anything. All it does is keep you looking in the past. **It is like looking in the rear view mirror and trying to drive while you are doing it.** You are going to crack up

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if you are always focusing on the past. Stop regretting and do something about it. **Change**. Slam the door on *self pity*.

2. **Forget the former and focus on the future.** Philippians 3:13-14 says, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Paul says, "Forget what is behind and focus on what is ahead, I press on. I don't let my defeats defeat me."
What memory in your life are you allowing to continually manipulate you? Every time it comes up you think, "I wish I'd never done that! I regret that!" And you are manipulated by it. **Some of you are allowing your *past* to control your *future*.** And that, my friend, is a mistake. Your past is past. **That is the good news of the book of Romans.** Your *past* is past. It is water under the bridge. **You can't change the past by worrying about it.** Let it go and focus on the future. It is not so much where you have been, but what direction your feet are headed now that counts. **Focus on the future and forget the former.** The past does not have to control you any more.

I don't care what your failure is in life. You are not washed up unless you choose to quit, unless you choose to give up, unless you choose to reject the grace of God. The choice is condemnation or confession. **You can either live in condemnation or you can confess it and get on with life.** Forget the former and focus on the future.