

Success through Failure

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

An Excerpt from the *BIBLICAL COUNSELING KEYS*

God's Heart on Failure

- **If you fail to allow the Lord to initiate your plans**, you will find that your plans will fail. (Acts 5:38)
- **If you fail to do what you know is right**, you are sinning against the Lord Himself. (James 4:17)
- **If you fail to forgive through the grace of God**, a root of bitterness will grow. (Hebrews 12:15)
- **If you fail to live with your faith in Christ**, Satan can do much damage to your life. (Luke 22:31–32)
- **If you fail to enter the “rest” of Christ**, you will not have the peace of Christ. (Hebrews 4:1)

God's Heart on Success

- **If you put your trust in the Lord**, you will be led by the Lord. (Proverbs 3:5–6)
- **If you rely on God's Word throughout your life**, you will conquer sin in your life. (Psalm 119:11)
- **If you live in dependence on Christ**, you will receive strength from Christ. (Philippians 4:13)
- **If your “life source” is Christ**, you will bear much fruit throughout your life. (John 15:4)
- **If you rely on Christ's power for your life**, you will be godly throughout your life. (2 Peter 1:3–4)
- **If you bear burdens of others in the name of Christ**, you will fulfill the Law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)
- **If you live a humble life**, you will receive God's grace throughout your life. (James 4:6)

*“Humble yourselves, therefore,
under God's mighty hand,
that he may lift you up in due time.
Cast all your anxiety on him
because he cares for you.”*
(1 Peter 5:6–7)

What Does a Fear of Failure Produce?

- **Paralysis**—failing to take any action or make any decisions for *fear of being wrong*
- **Purposelessness**—moving from one job or profession to another with no real sense of commitment or direction for *fear of making a wrong decision*
- **Perfectionism**—doing only those things that can be done flawlessly, those that carry little or no risk of failure, for *fear of criticism*
- **Pride**—refusing to engage in certain activities for *fear of being less than the best and feeling inferior to someone else*
- **Paranoia**—distrusting the motives of those who ask you to do things for *fear of being exposed as being less than adequate*
- **Procrastination**—putting off tackling an assignment or performing a task for *fear of doing it poorly*

*“There is no fear in love.
But perfect love drives out fear,
because fear has to do with punishment.
The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”*
(1 John 4:18)

The Primary Cause of Failure

Preoccupied with the opinions of others? (John 12:43)

Refusing wise counsel? (Proverbs 15:22)

Ignoring the power of prayer? (James 4:2)

Depending on self-effort? (Galatians 3:3)

Expecting praise and personal recognition? (Luke 14:11)

*“Pride goes before destruction,
a haughty spirit before a fall.”*
(Proverbs 16:18)

Faulty Thinking Checklist

- ❑ Do you think you must avoid the hurt that results from having failed? (Hurt cannot be avoided in life. It gives opportunity for mental, emotional, and spiritual growth.)
- ❑ Do you think it would be terrible if you made a wrong decision? (Every wrong decision can teach you something of value and can be a stepping stone to making right decisions.)
- ❑ Do you think you must never make a mistake? (Mistakes are common to everyone.)
- ❑ Do you think God will reject you or be angry with you if you fail? (God knows you will fail and is pleased with your fortitude and persistent acceptance of challenges that stretch your abilities and strengthen your reliance on Him.)
- ❑ Do you think failure is an indication that you are stupid or weak? (Failure is universal, experienced by both the literate and the illiterate, the strong and the weak.)
- ❑ Do you think others will think less of you if you fail at something? (Others value you for your character traits and Christlike attitudes and actions rather than whether or not you fail at something. And remember, they, too, have failed.)
- ❑ Do you think it is a bad reflection on Christ when you fail? (Your failures provide a platform to show others that your security is in Christ, not in your successes.)
- ❑ Do you think failure is shameful and sinful? (Failing does not make you a failure. Failure is sinful only when it is a result of disobedience.)

*“My thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.
‘As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”*
(Isaiah 55:8–9)

Wrong Responses to Failure

- **Wrong Belief:** “Failure is a sign of personal defeat. I must accomplish my goals and be successful in the eyes of others to feel good about myself.”
- **Right Belief:** “Failure is God’s way of deepening my dependence on Him. Success is submitting to God’s goal of Christlikeness for my life—regardless of the outcome.”
“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (Romans 8:28–29).

Change Your Focus

“Dear Jesus, I will let my mind focus only on what is ... (Read Philippians 4:8.)

- **True:** ‘Although I’ve experienced pain in my past, I purpose to ignore Satan’s lying accusations and focus on Your truth.’
- **Noble:** ‘Since bitterness is really dishonoring to You, I release all of my bitterness out of respect for You.’
- **Right:** ‘Although I am treated unjustly by others, I’m choosing to act in a way that is right in Your eyes toward others.’
- **Pure:** ‘Although my heart hasn’t always been pure, I will commit to a life that is pure.’
- **Lovely:** ‘Even though others have shown disrespect, I will extend Jesus’ loving respect.’
- **Admirable:** ‘Even though I don’t feel that others admire me, I want them to admire Christ.’
- **Excellent:** ‘When my plans failed and I lost purpose, I learned to excel with Your plans and purpose.’
- **Praiseworthy:** ‘When I feel defeated with no sense of worth, I know that Jesus is praiseworthy and my worth is in Him.’”

Key Verse to Memorize

“The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Key Passage to Read

1 Peter 5:6–10

When You Have Failed

The fact that you have failed doesn’t make you a failure.

- Refuse to view failure as final.
- Expect failure to have consequences.
- Use failure as a stepping stone to success.
- Search for the good that God wants to bring out of failure.
- Research the lives of others who have failed.
- Realize that although you will fail, God will never fail you.
- Develop perseverance and never give up.
- If your failure is a result of sin, ask God’s forgiveness.
- If your failure has hurt others, ask their forgiveness.
- If your failure has hurt you, accept God’s forgiveness and move on.

- Recognize Satan as the source of inner accusation. He condemns; the Spirit gently convicts. And remember, Satan will still try to condemn even after sin has been confessed. The Bible describes Satan as ...

*“The accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before
our God day and night ...”*
(Revelation 12:10)

Turn Stumbling Stones into Stepping Stones

- Return to your first love. (Revelation 2:4)
- Recall your failure. (Revelation 2:5)
- Repent through godly sorrow. (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- Receive God’s forgiveness. (Psalm 31:1–2)
- Respond correctly to brokenness. (Psalm 51:17)
- Remember God’s sovereignty. (Psalm 75:7)
- Recognize God’s purpose. (Psalm 11:7)
- Realize your need for Christ. (John 15:5)
- Refuse to quit. (Philippians 3:13–14)
- Reach out to comfort others. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)
- Rely on Christ within you. (Galatians 2:20)

*“We know that in all things God works
for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.”*
(Romans 8:28)

What to Do When Someone Fails You

- Extend an outstretched hand. (Matthew 14:31)
- Encourage conversation by asking questions. (John 21:15)
- Express the person’s value to God. (John 3:16)
- Entrust responsibility when appropriate. (John 21:15–17)
- Explore a plan for achieving success in God’s eyes. (Romans 12:1–2)

*“Praise be to the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion
and the God of all comfort, who comforts us
in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those
in any trouble with the comfort
we ourselves receive from God.”*
(2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

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