

Success through Failure

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

Responding to Failure . . .

It is amazing how little we know about ourselves. God has to take us through all kinds of failures to reveal the pride and conceit that lies dormant in the corners of our character. The only way we can be of any use to God is to rightly respond to the disappointments that puncture our pride and hurt our heart . . . all for His purpose of placing us on the Ladder of Success!

*“Count it all joy, my brothers,
when you meet trials of various kinds,
for you know that the testing
of your faith produces steadfastness.
And let steadfastness have its full effect,
that you may be perfect and complete,
lacking in nothing.”*
(James 1:2–4)

Biblical Examples of Failure

Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother’s inheritance.

“Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.’”
(Genesis 27:19)

Moses murdered an Egyptian.

“He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”
(Exodus 2:12)

David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

“David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house.”
(2 Samuel 11:4)

Paul persecuted followers of Jesus.

“Falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’”
(Acts 9:4)

Peter denied knowing Jesus.

“Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, ‘You also are not one of his disciples, are you?’ He denied it and said, ‘I am not.’”
(John 18:25)

Basic Cause of Character Failure

The cause of character failure is the sin of **pride**.

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)

Key Verses to Memorize

“I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 3:13–14)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

1 Corinthians 1:27–31

Rungs of Wrong Thinking

Fearful of ridicule—“They’ll make fun of me if I fail.”

People laughed at Robert Fulton’s strange, smoking craft chugging down the river, yet “Fulton’s Folly” became the first steamboat in 1807.

Easily discouraged—“I told you I would blow it.”

Albert Einstein failed his university entrance exams on his first attempt.

Lacking confidence—“I don’t think I can do it.”

Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, but he also hit 714 home runs.

Lacking conviction—“It really doesn’t matter that much.”

Thomas Edison had over 5,000 failures before he found the right combination for the light bulb.

Lacking trust in God—“I really don’t have what it takes.”

When the great pianist Paderewski first chose to study the piano, his music teacher told him his hands were much too small to master the keyboard.

“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”
(2 Timothy 1:7)

The Ladder to Success

Recall your failure—Evaluate the areas in which you were wrong. (Revelation 2:5)

Repent through godly sorrow—Experience godly sorrow, which leads to deeper growth. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Receive God’s forgiveness—Freedom is found in accepting forgiveness. (Psalm 31:1–2)

Respond correctly to brokenness—Humility touches the heart of God. (Psalm 51:17)

Recognize God’s purpose—God uses failure to produce growth. (Psalm 119:71)

Realize your need for Christ—Apart from Christ, you can do nothing of value. (John 15:5)

Refuse to quit—Correct response to failure builds endurance. (Philippians 3:13–14)

Reach out to comfort others—Help others to see failure from God’s perspective. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

“It is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.”
(Psalm 75:7)

Lean Your Ladder on the Lord from 1 Peter 5:6–10¹

Let your spirit be humble before God and others.
(1 Peter 5:6)

Leave your fear and devastation in the hands of God.
(1 Peter 5:7)

Lock Satan outside the door of your mind.
(1 Peter 5:8)

Learn the sweet fellowship of Christian suffering.
(1 Peter 5:9)

Look to the God of grace to restore you. (1 Peter 5: 10)

*“Humble yourselves, therefore,
under the mighty hand of God
so that at the proper time he may exalt you,
casting all your anxieties on him,
because he cares for you.”
(1 Peter 5:6–7)*

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1. For this section see Andre Bustanoby, *A Reason for Hope When You Have Failed* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1986), 55–58.



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