

NORMALIZE FAILURE

GUIDE FOR
WORKING THROUGH
FAILURE WITH
FAITH



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WHERE THE BRAVE STEP OUT

FAITH AND FAILURE - SHIFT HAPPENS

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Finding yourself at a point of failure is scary and painful. You question everything you thought you knew about your plans, your purpose, and your future, and then you (often) wonder how you're going to pay the bills. I used to think there was shame in admitting to failure, but it led me to a breakthrough that I hope can happen for you too.

The truth is, *shift happens*. Typo intended. Things change. Life moves. Circumstances outside of our control can move our life in a direction that we did not intend nor desire. The question in the midst of one of these shifts is—what will I do with what I can control (without losing myself in the process)?

This was my story during my first spell of joblessness -- an in-your-face kind of failure. Within a matter of weeks, I found myself without a job. Without a place to show up to daily. Without a reason to get out of bed. Without a title. Without significance. Without an identity.

At least that's what the enemy had convinced me. What a bunch of BS. The truth is, of course, all those things still existed. In fact, they were about to be clarified.

This season of failure brought an immense amount of personal pain. Almost all of it self-inflicted.

I was aimless, taking whatever was thrown my way, and stumbling toward what felt like a sure cliff, but

unsure of how to, or perhaps unwilling to, change directions. Self-pity and blame was the medicinal cocktail, and I took my pills daily. A slow poisoning from the inside out. Disconnection from community and breakdown in healthy relationships served as an accelerant to the dumpster fire.

Have you ever seen an ice-skater perform one of those whirlybird twirls? I'm pretty sure that's the technical name. You know, when they start out spinning slowly on their skate and before you know it, they are flying around in a tight circle. I'm always amazed they can do this and proceed to finish the routine as if they are immune to dizziness. They say the trick is to find a fixed point and lock your gaze onto that point. Everything is spinning violently, but your eyes remain anchored to a single point of reference, which gives you your bearings and allows you to focus as the spinning stops. Failure to find the focal point will result in side effects that outlast the spin itself.

If you're reading this and you're experiencing failure for the first time, or the third time or you're afraid you're about to be hit with bad news, remember: you have an anchor.

Whether or not you believe in God, He is with you right now. Maybe more than ever. And whether you believe it or not, you also have an enemy who will do his best to convince you otherwise. The enemy's tools are vast: shame, distraction, blame, self-

loathing, anger, lust, and doubt, to name a few. This might be your desert moment. Luckily the one who is your anchor also had His desert moment.

Jesus was tempted too. He was led out to the countryside by the Holy Spirit to fast for 40 days. Throughout the experience, the enemy appears to Jesus in order to tempt and distract him from his ultimate purpose. For Jesus, that was the next three years of His life in the active ministry that would precede his death.

The devil tempts Jesus three different times. Each encounter attempts to prey on a particular weakness of the human flesh. Each is just the means to a larger end Satan has in mind—to prevent Jesus from stepping into the chapter of His life that was His ultimate calling. To thwart the Son of God being prepared by the Holy Spirit to serve and save the world. To cheat humanity of her redemptive gift.

The devil's mission was death. His motive was fear. Nothing is more terrifying to a creature who seeks death, loss, and destruction than one who offers life, hope, and restoration.

Here's the takeaway. You have an anchor to fix your eyes upon. One who lived through a desert experience and defeated death, sin, Satan, hell, and the grave. Your focal point is the Son of a God, whose image you bear. Fix your eyes, anchor your heart, and refuse the enemy any ground he seeks to steal. Because he's trying to prevent you from stepping into what you were made for, too. The quicker you realize your identity is rooted someplace far more significant than business success, a title, an office building, a daily schedule, a particular community ... the quicker you'll come out of the spin, and have your bearings.

None of those things are bad. It's just that you and I

are not the sum of them. Our identity is as beloved sons and daughters of the Creator God. Our primary job in life is to follow this Jesus we've heard about or come to know. Our second one is to bring the full weight of our gifts, skills, and abilities to bear in the world.

How do you do that in the midst of failure? Here are some tips I received from amazing friends throughout my journey that I hope you find helpful.

- **Name your struggle and fight back.** It's likely that one of those tools of the enemy weighs more heavily on you. Maybe it's shame, or guilt, or fear, or lust. Whatever it is, recognize it. Name it. Ask God to remind you of the truth. Ask Him to help you beat it. Tip: This is not a one and done. Do this daily. Be with God. Hear His voice of truth, so you can recognize the lies when they show up and not fall for them.
- **Get dressed every day and go to work.** My friend Larry wore a suit and tie to Starbucks every day as he navigated his season of unemployment in between senior leadership positions at local financial institutions. For me, this looked like getting out of bed, taking a shower, putting down the book/phone/computer/remote I was holding, and charting a course toward better opportunities.
- **Find out what's already happening in the world around you and get out in front of it.** My friend Ben encouraged me to find an area of momentum in my life and pour my energy into that. The result was a rekindling of passion and giftedness that I was convinced were dry bones.
- **Stop waiting for the success fairy to show up.** Start architecting a plan that will bring you "career happiness" or a recovery from your failure. My friend Julie, an amazing career coach,

has the most loving and kind way of knocking you in the head and saying: "Wake up dummy (PG version). You're talented. You have a great story. People like you. Make a plan, work the plan, and create the opportunities you're longing for." (If you don't have people in your life who say that to you, find some.) For me, this looked like making a network map of relationships, evaluating my skill set, clarifying what I actually wanted to do, and making a whole bunch of bold asks. It's far more likely that your next great career opportunity is on the other side of an authentic conversation with a friend than on the other side of a Monster.com application.

- **Keep showing up.** If there's one thing I beg of you, it's don't put yourself on an island. Pulling away from key relationships, whether out of shame, frustration, laziness, or any other reason, is a recipe for disaster. Sin breeds in isolation. Darkness multiplies darkness. The enemy does his best work when we're convinced we're all alone. Lean into your loving relationships: spouse, children, friends, church community. If you don't have any, find some here with our OCEAN Mighty Networks community. Lean in, get real, be vulnerable, ask for help, offer help, and don't shy away from the elephant in the room. It's likely you're the only one who thinks it's an elephant in the first place.

Failure on a big or small scale is deeply personal and can be extremely difficult. None of what I've shared is intended to minimize that. I do not mean this as a pithy "trust God, and you'll be OK" article.

It's hard to talk about this stuff, but it shouldn't be.

Shift happens, but who you are doesn't have to change or even feel threatened. Your business does not have that power. A few years after my wilderness experience of unemployment and crappy jobs, I was able to look back and see just how intricate each step was. Every job created an opportunity, a skill, or a relationship that led to the next thing. My sister-in-law, Kristan, is prone to say that "God uses our broken mess to build something bigger." I've experienced grace like that. I hope you'll give yourself the chance to experience the same.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The entrepreneurial journey is full of failing - both in big and small ways. Use these cards to remind yourself that there is life after failure, that it's normal to fall, and that you are not alone in those dark moments.



"If we are brave enough often enough, we will fall. Daring is not saying "I'm willing to risk failure." Daring is saying, "I know I will eventually fail, and I'm still all in."
-BRENE BROWN, DARE TO LEAD

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23
"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

PSALM 73:26
"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

"The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing."
- HENRY FORD

"When it comes right down to it, I know of only one factor that separates those who consistently shine from those who don't: The difference between average people and achieving people is their perception of and response to failure."
-JOHN MAXWELL, *FAILING FORWARD*

"To live as God's child is to know that you are loved by your Maker not because you try to please him and succeed, or fail to please him and apologize, but because he wants to be your Father. Nothing more."
-MAX LUCADO, *WILD GRACE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GRACE HAPPENS*

PRACTICING FAILING

One of the ways to normalize failure is to intentionally recognize and reflect on small failures each day.

Use this grid to help you recognize small failures (even if it's for a small thing) and reflect on your experience:

MY GOAL WAS TO ...	BUT I...	BECAUSE...	I LEARNED...
Have three new clients in my sales process this week	Only identified one new client	I spent most of my week on other tasks	My time management affects sales process more than I expected
Exercise for 45 minutes each day this week	Couldn't find time in my scheduled each day	Lots of unexpected meetings & events popped on to my calendar	Unexpected things happen each week, so I should plan for that in my fitness goals

MY GOAL WAS TO ...	BUT I...	BECAUSE...	I LEARNED...

A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE FOR REFLECTING ON EACH DAY - THE DAILY EXAMEN

The Examen is an ancient spiritual practice that helps us reflect on each day (or week, or month). Created by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Examen helps us recognize God's movement and presence in our day, so we can integrate our whole lives, including the areas where we are failing, where we are grateful, and where we are growing.

Thanksgiving

- What am I especially grateful for in the past day . . .
- The gift of another day...
- The love and support I have received...
- The courage I have mustered...
- An event that took place today...

Petition

- I am about to review my day; I ask for the light to know God and to know myself as God sees me.

Review

- Where have I felt true joy today?
- What has troubled me today?
- What has challenged me today?
- Where and when did I pause today?
- Have I noticed God's presence in any of this?

Response

- In light of my review, what is my response to the God of my life?

A Look Ahead

- As I look ahead, what comes to mind?
- With what spirit do I want to enter tomorrow?



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