

Don't Waste Your Failures

How is your life going? Is it going the way you want it to go? Are you experiencing some struggles and failures? We all want to do it right, do we not? Even if you are having problems now, I think if the truth were known everybody is trying to do it right. Everybody wants to do it right and they have trouble figuring it out. Because we are human, we are not God; we are going to miss it. We are going to fail and you have to learn from your failures. If you miss it and mess up, what are you going to do? Are you just going to blow it off and never think about it again; or are you going to say I am not going to waste this failure? I know in my own life when I mess up there are two things I do; first I pray my head off and say, "Lord, I am so sorry. Please kill all of the bad seeds of what I said or did. Please kill it, Lord. Do not let any fertilizer get put on it. Oh God, just help." That is the first thing I do. We are going to study from the Bible and see what else you can do. There are some things you can learn and move in and do as you unfortunately fail at something.

Turn in your Bible to II Timothy 2:20. He is talking to people about what kind of a vessel you are for God. Timothy was a young man. He was a protégée of Paul. He had a Greek father. He had a mother named Eunice and a grandmother named Lois. These women raised him to know the Lord. He was young. He was afraid. He had been prophesied over. Paul said "Do not neglect the gift that came on you when the elders laid their hands on you and prayed." God does give people gifts and you are supposed to step out in them but you are going to make mistakes if you do. My father said to me, "Betty, do not ever forget in a basketball game the guy out there trying the hardest sometimes has the most fouls," so it is okay if you make mistakes. God does not expect you to get out there and try new things that you are not familiar with, hard things that would be hard for anyone and never make a mistake. He says, just do not waste your failures and I will teach you how.

This is the young preacher, Timothy talking. He had to be the wisdom for the people in his church and a lot of them were older than he was. Paul said to him, "Timothy, just be who you are. Be strong in the Lord and even if they are older, they will still listen to you." Here he goes, this young man. "In a wealthy home there are dishes made of gold and silver, as well as some are made from wood and clay. The expensive dishes, the ones of gold and silver, are used for guests and the cheap ones are used in the kitchen or to put garbage in. If you stay away from sin you will be like one of these dishes made of purest gold, the very best in the house so that Christ himself can use you for His highest purposes." I am going to read that sentence to you again. You may be continually sinning in some area; like anger, like losing it in pressure, or whatever it may be. It is hurting things. Listen to this. I am going to read it to you one more time. "If you stay away from sin you will be like on those dishes made of purest gold, the very best in the house so that Christ himself can use you for His highest purposes. Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men have, but stay close to anything you want to do right." Paul is writing to Timothy and saying, "Timothy, these are the things I want you to tell your people, but I want you to know them for your own life Timothy. So I am taking the time to tell you these things and I want you to pass them on." Further on it says, "Faithful men get the teachings of God and pass them on to faithful men." That is what we do. That is discipleship. He is saying, "Timothy, you are young. Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have." We all know what those are. "Stay close to anything that makes you want to do right." Remember, we are not going to waste your failures, so here is a clue. "Learn to stay close to anybody or anything that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love and enjoy the companionship of those who love the Lord and have pure hearts."

Paul is mentoring Timothy and then he is preaching these things that Paul had taught him to people. Paul said, "Timothy, in the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian for people will only love themselves and their money. They will be proud, boastful. They will sneer at God. They will be disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them and thoroughly bad. They will be hardheaded and never give in to others. They will be constant liars and troublemakers and they will think nothing of immorality. They will be rough and cruel and sneer at those who try to be good. They will betray their friends. They will be hotheaded, puffed up with pride and prefer good times to worshipping God." That is what the world is like today. That is failure. When people do that, it is your picture of failure. God says that some of you are like that. Sometimes you get tempted or you get with the wrong people. The next thing you know, you are involved in things. God is warning you ahead of time. Do not forget that you reap what you sow.

What happens when you do blow it? What happens when you have messed up? What do you do? In Psalms 51 King David is being as serious and as honest with God as any man could be. He did not pull any punches. He did not make excuses for himself. He just talked to God first and foremost. What am I talking about? King David had God's hand on him. He had fought so many wonderful wars and won so many. He was God's anointed servant. He was called and prophesied over that his kingdom will never end through his line. He did great until he got to the end of his life and quit doing what God had called him to do. He was tired of going to war. At the time of the year when it was time to go to war the Bible said King David stayed home. His top men had gone, but he was not there. One night he goes out on his balcony, looks across at another house and up on the balcony is a beautiful woman, stunningly beautiful, taking a bath and he wants her. He finds out she is the wife of Uriah, one of his main generals. David failed right there. I am sure God was warning him. I am sure it was happening, but all he could think about was that "I want that woman. How am I going to get her?" He called her to the palace. He slept with her and probably thought well that is over. She got pregnant just from that time with him. David realized her husband is at war. I have to get him home and get him to sleep with her so nobody will know what I have done.

Once you fail, you start covering up your failure. You have to do other things to cover it up more and more and more. You get in deeper and deeper. You can even get in worse sin than ever. That is what David did. He called Uriah up and he said, "You know you have done such a good job on the front, you have done a great job. I want you to take a little time and go sleep, go home, rest, enjoy your wife." They had a thing in the war that they did not sleep with their wives during war. Uriah would not do it. He would not do it. So what is David going to do? Unfortunately, he failed some more. He thinks, what am I going to do? I am in trouble. He comes up with a plan and tells his leaders, go where the heat of the battle is and put Uriah at the front and pull back a little bit. They did what he said. Uriah was killed by the enemy, but he was really murdered by David. He took Bathsheba for his wife and she had the baby. See the story of failure. He thought he got away with it and then the baby died. He still thought he got away with it. He went through prayer trying to pray for the baby to live. He was confronted by Nathan the prophet. He was confronted. He said, "I want to tell you a story. There was a man who had a little lamb. He was the family pet. The children loved him. They fed him. The man fed him from his plate. Another man wanted some lamb and got that lamb killed. What do you think about a guy like that?" David said, "That is terrible, terrible. Something ought to be done about that." Nathan said, "You are that man." David knew what he was talking about. It is amazing.

What did David do? This is how you can know David really was a man after God's own heart. He did a horrible thing; but when he did and was found out, the first thing he did was the right thing to do. What did he do? My Bible commentary says that Psalms 51 was written after Nathan the prophet had come to inform David of God's judgement against him because of his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, her husband. Listen to what he says. "O loving and kind God, have mercy. Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgression. Oh wash me, cleanse me. Cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again for I admit my shameful deed. It haunts me day and night. It is against You and You alone God that I sinned. I did this terrible thing. You saw it all and Your sentence against me is just." You know a lot of times when you fail and God punishes you, you get mad at God and yet David did not. He did not waste that failure. He said, "Your sentence against me is just." It was. It should have been worse. God had mercy. David said, "But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me; however, You deserve honesty from the heart. Yes, utter sincerity and truthfulness. Oh give me this wisdom. Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood and I shall be clean again."

One of the things we need to learn from failure is what God says to do about it. God says, "If you will repent, if you will not make excuses, if you will say I did this, I feel awful about it. Oh God, have mercy on me. I am so sorry." Look what the Bible says. David said it. "Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood and I will be clean again." This is 1,500 years before Jesus. The way people atoned for their sins was they killed a lamb, sprinkled the blood and it forgave the sin of the people. David believed God. David believed God's Word. When you need forgiveness like that and some of you are in jail watching this show. You have done terrible deeds. Do not minimize it. Do not say, yeah but.... Do not say anything; just say, "Yes, I did. Oh God, cleanse me and I will be cleansed by the cleansing blood." What is the cleansing blood today? It is the blood of Jesus. It still cleanses and can make you white as snow. You can still be a good person. You can still do good things to help people. You can still be in God's plan for your life. It might be altered a little.

Do you remember Chuck Colson? He was a bad guy. He probably went to church too. He was into doing his life for himself and he did something bad in the government. He was an advisor to President Nixon. He went to prison for it. If you had been a big high-level man in America, had high-level friends and end up in prison; wouldn't you think your life was over? Plan A probably did go by

the roadside, but God always has plan B, always. God has a way of making plan B better than plan A. How does that happen? Plan A obviously was the right plan. Obviously, everybody could look and tell that, but that is our God. He is a redeemer and he can make plan B better. From being in prison and seeing what men and women encounter in prison, the injustice or not being taken care of, or getting out and going right back into crime because there was nobody to help them when they got out; Chuck Colson started Prison Fellowship. It is now all over the world helping people in prison get back on their feet and have that good life after failing. You can do it too.

There is somebody watching me right now and you are in prison. You are saying, "Lady, are you serious? Could it really happen to me?" I am saying by the power of Jesus Christ and the cleansing blood, yes. You can be a great success with no sin or crime or anything. You can be a good person. God can redeem your life. He is called the redeemer.

Does punishment come any way? Yes. You cannot do things that are so bad and think that God is going to have mercy and you will not have to go to jail. Everything has consequences. God in his mercy can hold back the worst of the consequences, but you are still going to have to reap what you sow. David knew it too. Psalms 51:8 says, "And after You have punished me, give me back my joy again. Do not keep looking at my sins. Erase them from Your sight." God does. So many times one of the hard things in life is people who say, "Well you did that. I remember ten years ago when you did that and five years ago you did that and last year you did this. I will never forget it." God forgets it. God says, "I will remove your sins as far as the east is from the west. I will remember them no more." How can that be? God does not forget anything. God is good. He chooses to forget. What did David say then? "Create in me a clean heart Oh God, filled with clean thoughts, a clean mind and right desires. Do not toss me aside, banished forever. Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore again to me the joy of my salvation and make me willing to obey You."

One of the lessons to learn in failure is that you have to be willing to obey God. What do you do? 1) First, you do what David did. You repent. Name the baby. Yes, I did it. 2) Acknowledge your sin as against God first of all. You have probably never even thought about that. You thought it was against that person. No it is against God first. 3) Take full responsibility. Do not push the blame off on somebody else if they really did not do it. Make restitution the best that you can. Whatever it takes, it shows God that you mean it. 4) This is maybe the most important. I do this a lot. Pray and ask God, "Teach me everything I can learn from this. Do not let it be over until I have learned everything I am supposed to learn from it." If you learn what you need to learn, you will never go through it again, even if it takes another two years. 5) The next thing is that you learn discipline. God punishes. God is a just God. He does not have favorites. Nobody gets off. If I mess up I get in trouble, you mess up you get in trouble, because we have a loving God who is also a just God. It is going to happen to you though. You cannot be perfect. You cannot be beating yourself up.

I came up with some questions I thought you could ask yourself in order to not waste this failure. As long as you fail, do not waste it. The first one is in II Corinthians 10:13. It says, "Remember this, the wrong desires that come into your life are not anything new and different. Many others have faced the same temptations and no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you cannot stand up against it for He has promised this and He will do what he said. He will show you how to escape temptations power so that you can bear up patiently against it."

Look back in your life and identify where God warned you. Who did He send in your life? I have even had people in my life that I am not even very good friends with; and they will come up to me and say, "Betty, everything okay in your life? I have been thinking about you a lot lately." I look at them and think, "You do not really know me," and the Lord says, "Ah, but I know you and I know them. I want them praying for you." The next question to ask yourself is, what should you have avoided? Remember it said when Paul was talking to Timothy to run from these wrong desires, these wrong things. What should you have avoided? Next, what people should you have listened to? Who was really trying to talk to you? Who gave you good advice? Who can you go to for good advice about this now? The next one is, where was that way to escape and what does the Word say about it? The Word is your guide. The Word is there to help you, to help you avoid things. What does the Word say about my situation? I will give you an example. I know somebody who has a really bad temper. They lose it all the time and turn around and feel sorry for it, so then they act sweetie sweetie. The damage has been done. You need to ask yourself, "What does the Word of God say about this situation so I can learn and then remember it when I am getting close to falling?"

Are there any advantages of failure? Yes, sometimes it forces you to get help you would not have gotten otherwise. Some of you have made messes and had to go to a counselor in order to get the wisdom you need and to help you avoid it. It keeps you humble. It teaches you things and enables

you to help others. Do not waste your failure. God is for you, not against you.

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. How do we avoid failing God?
2. What steps do we take when we have failed Him?
3. What are the questions we should ask ourselves to learn the most from our failures?
4. What are the advantages of failure?

To watch the video on DON'T WASTE YOUR FAILURES, Pillar Six, Leadership Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Betty Swann, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Betty Swann, Betty Swann Ministries, P.O. Box 8882, Amarillo, TX 79114-8882, Amarillo, TX 79109, phone 806-433-4649, www.bettyswann.com, betty@bettyswann.com