

ENTHUSIASM IN SPITE OF FAILURE**By Jay Emory**

Some time ago I read this intriguing statement from Winston Churchill, the one-time prime minister of England: “Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Consider that for a few moments.

The quotation resonated with me because people who know me are aware that I typically have lots of enthusiasm. But not always. This quote reminded me that I am to get back up in the midst of failure and keep climbing the hill – maintaining the same level of enthusiasm! This can be difficult, especially in our culture that in many ways will tell us that any failure is final. However, as Churchill pointed out, success is borne out of failure; success will be inevitable if we persevere.

Growing from failure. God’s Word says that we become stronger facing our failures – actually growing from them! Reading 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, written by the apostle Paul who experienced more than his share of failure and adversity, tells us all we need to know: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

When failure comes, my human nature says, ‘Take it easy. Just don’t try that again, Jay!’ However, the quote from Churchill reminds me not be deterred with a failure, but to press on and try again. And at the same time, I should maintain a high level of enthusiasm!

Learning from failure. The Bible does not say we should necessarily be excited about failures. However, God’s Word gives us the strength to learn and grow from our failures, even in the midst of them. The Apostle Paul explains why in Romans 5. He states we should “glory in our sufferings” (Romans 5:3). Another translation says we should “rejoice” in them. This gives us an incredible formula to consider:

Suffering + Faith + Time + Trust in God = Hope

Another apostle, James, even goes as far as to say not only are we to rejoice in sufferings but we are also to “consider it pure joy...whenever I face trials of many kinds.” But he does not stop there. James continues, “because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). Without failure and adversity, we would never learn how to persevere.

Coping with failure. Every day we can find ourselves dealing with suffering (also known as failure) in various forms. These might include such things as: difficulties in communicating with people we work with; dealing with demanding, even unreasonable customers; failing to close an important sale or losing a major client; or facing disappointment and discouragement when

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our day does not proceed as planned. How do we cope with such times in an appropriate manner? The key is to realize and act upon the promise that God's grace is "sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

What are we to learn from all of this? I believe God wants us to stay focused every day and pray diligently for each day to be successful, without loss of enthusiasm, despite the failures and setbacks that will inevitably show up. We need to remember that Jesus Christ has us and will not let go. He alone can provide enduring hope amid our daily failures.

Jay Emory is the President of BancFirst and has been a financial professional for over 30 years. His stated purpose is to connect with men and women and impact their faith and financial lives through encouragement and connection. He leads a CBMC Connect3 group at his office in Yukon, Oklahoma.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is your reaction to the quotation from Winston Churchill, that "Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm"?
2. Why is it so difficult for many of us to maintain our enthusiasm when we encounter significant failures and adversity?
3. One of the verses cited states that God's grace is sufficient for us, that His power is made perfect in our times of weakness. Do you believe this? How easy – or difficult – is it to trust and act upon this biblical assurance?
4. Mr. Emory offers this 'equation': Suffering + Faith + Time + Trust in God = Hope. Do you find this helpful in understanding how the Lord can use our failures and struggles to enable us to grow personally and spiritually? Why or why not?

Challenge for This Week

Are you seeking Him today? Are you willing to joyfully accept His work in your life in times of failure, as well as times of success?

Sometime this week you might pray something like this: 'Lord, help me to remember that failure is not an option – it is necessary for success. Help me stay enthusiastic when failure arrives so Your power can rest on me, recognizing that when I am weak, then I am strong.'

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:

Romans 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 1:25, 2:2-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 11:32-34

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