

Are you a failure?

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Do you remember a story in the Bible where a group of Pharisees publicly humiliated a woman who had committed adultery? It is found in John 8:1-11. Do you remember Christ's response to the Pharisees (verses 7-9)? Do you remember Christ's response to the woman (verse 10-11)?

Jesus told the lady that He did not condemn her. What glorious news! And then He instructed her to quit sinning.

I offer the following material as information to help people after they have confessed their sins to God. I offer this to people who want to follow Christ's admonition about recovering from sin.

In John Maxwell's book *Failing Forward* he gives 15 steps to failing forward. In this commentary I want to focus on his first three steps.

They are:

- What's the Main Difference Between People Who Achieve and People Who Are Average?
- Get a New Definition of Failure and Success.
- If You've Failed, Are You a Failure?

The difference

What is the difference between people who achieve and people who are average?

Family background? Having a good family growing up is something for which to be grateful, but it is not a reliable indicator.

Wealth? Economic background can be an advantage to those who don't view life with entitlement, but it is certainly no guarantee of achievement.

Opportunity? Opportunities that surface can certainly make a difference in a person's life, but opportunity is in the eye of the beholder.

High morals? We all would like to think that this is the key, but we have seen people with high morals achieve little and scoundrels become high producers.

According to Dr. Maxwell, he recognizes one factor that separates those who consistently shine from those who don't. He describes it this way: "their perception of and response to failure."

A new outlook

How do you define failure?

One of the greatest problems people have with failure is that they are too quick to judge isolated situations in their lives and label them as failures. It would be better to keep the bigger picture in mind. A long-range perspective leads to perseverance.

People think failure is avoidable. It's not. Here are what Dr. Maxwell called "rules for being human."

1. You will learn lessons.
2. There are no mistakes—only lessons.
3. A lesson is repeated until it is learned.
4. If you don't learn the easy lessons, they get harder. (Pain is a valuable tool to get your attention.)
5. You'll know you've learned a lesson when your actions change.

People think failure is an event. It's not.

People think failure is the enemy. It's not.

People think failure is irreversible. It's not.

People think failure is a stigma. It's not.

People think failure is final. It's not.

Moving forward

Every successful person is someone who failed yet never regarded himself as a failure.

Wolfgang Mozart, one of the geniuses of musical composition, was told by Emperor Ferdinand that his opera *The Marriage of Figaro* was "far too noisy" and contained "far too many notes."

Artist Vincent van Gogh, whose paintings now set records for the sums they bring at auction, sold only one painting in his lifetime.

Thomas Edison, the most prolific inventor in history, was considered unteachable as a youngster.

Albert Einstein, considered by many to be the greatest thinker of our time, was told by a Munich schoolmaster that he would "never amount to much."

Here are seven abilities that Dr. Maxwell considered as necessary to fail forward.

1. Achievers reject rejection.
2. Achievers see failure as temporary.
3. Achievers see failures as isolated incidents.
4. Achievers keep expectations realistic.
5. Achievers focus on strengths.
6. Achievers vary approaches to achievement.
7. Achievers bounce back.

Biblical examples

Jesus Christ is a wonderful example. He was so close to the Father and He never sinned.

However, there is one area where He did not set an example for us. Since He never sinned, He did not set us an example of repentance.

For that lesson, we must look to the men and women in the Bible who sinned, repented and then moved forward.

As you consider the biblical examples of repentance, consider the material in Dr. Maxwell's book.

All the people in the Bible failed. Yet they weren't failures. They depended upon God's grace. They accepted God's forgiveness. They accepted God's instruction to avoid future sin.

How about you? Even though you have failed, are you a failure?