

Fear of Failure Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What percentage of the time do you like to try new things and what percentage of the time do you prefer to stick with what you already know you enjoy?
2. Do you prefer figuring out new things on your own or in a group?

Read the following passages: Exodus 2:11-15; 3:1-14; 4:1,10-13.

Moses's story as an adult began with a major failure. Although he wanted to help his suffering people, his actions clearly did not have the result he had hoped for. When, many years later, God called Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses had no confidence that he could do what God was instructing him to do. Moses was paralyzed with the fear of failure. We, too, often have an unhealthy perspective on failure. Many of us try to avoid failure at all costs, and this goal can prevent us from attempting the things God has called us to do. We need a new perspective on failure.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. *Failure is almost never permanent.* Although Moses had resigned himself to tending flocks in the wilderness for the rest of his life, God was not finished with Moses. We often think that if we fail, we will never be able to recover. How does the Gospel message help us resist the temptation to think that our failures are (or will be) permanent? Are there any areas in your life that you have given up on (or feel tempted to give up on)?
2. Sometimes ending things is good. How do we recognize when an ending is healthy and when it is unhealthy?
3. *Failure is something we experience. It is not our identity.* When you experience a failure, are you able to separate that failure from your identity, learn from it, and keep moving forward, or are you prone to allow that failure to shape your identity in an unhealthy way? Explain. What can we do to process our failures in a way that will help us move forward?
4. Does distancing ourselves from failure as an identity inevitably cause us to downplay the significance of our sin? Explain. What should we do when our failure is a sin, not just the result of inexperience or trying something challenging?
5. When we experience a failure, the bad feelings that often come along with failure can make us more prone to think that our failure is pervasive. It's not just that

something is wrong, *everything* is wrong. How can we push back on the temptation to “go global” with our attitude toward failure?

6. *Failure is unavoidable.* Even when Moses did exactly what God told him to do, things did not always go very well. We cannot go through life without experiencing failure. But this does not mean that all failures are “good” failures. Give some examples of “good” failures and contrast these with some examples of “bad” failures. Can you think of any recent occasions when you’ve experienced a “good” failure?
7. Read Matthew 25:14-30. What’s wrong with always playing it safe? What kind of risks does God want us to take?
8. What is one way you would like to see your perspective on failure change?

Pray