

Failure

Re-Routing: God's Back Roads to Joy—part 9

August 4, 2024

Joy definition #9: Moving. Toward God's purposes, people, and problems

Route to Joy #9: Failure.

DAY 1: The sting of failure

1. God's men are not immune to the awful sting of failure. Even the apostle Paul knew the sting of apparent failure. So did the great prophet Elijah.

Galatians 4:11 (RSV) I am afraid I have labored over you in vain.

2. Peter also knew the bitter taste of failure. On the night Jesus would be betrayed and arrested he prophesied to his disciples that they would all abandon him. Peter wasn't buying any of that!

Matthew 26:33 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

³⁴ *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."*

³⁵ *But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.*

3. What strikes you about Peter's attitude about himself? Why didn't Peter take the words of Jesus to heart?

4. Later that night Jesus was arrested. In the darkness of night, Peter followed the arresting party to the outer courtyard where he could see Jesus being interrogated. Peter settled around a fire, trying to go unnoticed in the firelight.

Matthew 26:69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. ⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

⁷¹ *Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷² He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"*

⁷³ *After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away." ⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed.*

⁷⁵ *Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

5. Failure can come when we least expect it. Peter had felt confident and sure of himself.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Frustration, Futility, Failure

1. Peter's failure, largely as a result of his pride led to his downfall. Not even the stern and direct warning of Jesus could crack Peter's self-confidence. He refused to listen or take Jesus seriously.
2. A man's pride and self-confidence can create messes all across the spectrum of his life.
3. If God allowed Adam and Eve to live in a perfect world, where nothing went wrong, their pride that was so destructive would never be exposed and dealt with. Something had to be done!
4. After Adam and Eve sinned, God spoke to each one individually. He pronounced curses to Eve and all the daughters of Eve, and to Adam and to all the sons of Adam. Here is what God said to Adam (and to men everywhere).

Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

4. What God tells Adam about the world he will face is different than what Eve and women face. It's a different kind of pain and frustration.
5. Let's try to understand what God is saying to men. Have you ever worked in a garden over a period of time? If so, what comes to mind? Was it easier than you imagined? Harder? If so, how was it harder?

6. In my own garden, there is a constant battle with weeds—spring weeds and fall weeds. It is a never-ending battle. Victories won today will have to be won again ... and again ... and again.

7. This passage to Adam is metaphor for the world in which men find themselves.

8. What is this world? It is embedded with three difficulties. Next to each of them, jot down what strikes you from your own life:

a. Frustration—

b. Futility—

c. Failure—

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Hopeful warrior against 5 enemies...

1. The world in which we live is hard, and it is meant to be hard. The bible identifies five enemies we face. The metaphor for man, living in a fallen world is to be a **hopeful warrior**.

2. The bible tells us we have 5 enemies. How many can you name?

3. Let's identify 5 enemies we face in this life.

a. **Me!**

My own sin nature.

b. **People.**

Every person also has a sin nature. When sin natures meet, things like conflict, misunderstanding, hurt feelings, etc. occur.

c. **Satan.**

We face a formidable foe.

d. **The ways of the world.**

Temptations, allures, counterfeits all beckon us away from God.

e. **The fallen world.**

This is what we looked at in Genesis 3:17-19

4. As you look at these 5 enemies, what thoughts cross your mind? Jot down your thoughts under the enemy with which you identify, above.

5. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Enemies #1, #2, and #3.

1. Enemy #1: Me!

*Romans 7:23 ... but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war** against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.*

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.

- a. Can you identify with Paul? The good he wants to do he doesn't do. And, what he knows he shouldn't do, he finds himself doing anyway?
- b. In what ways does this resonate with you? Be specific.

2. Enemy #2: Everyone around me!

*1 Corinthians 3:3 (RSV) ... for you are still of **the flesh**. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?*

- a. "The flesh" is our sin nature.
- b. What kinds of frustrations do you have in your relationships?

3. Enemy #3: Satan.

*1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. **Your enemy the devil** prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

- a. While our secular world sneers at the belief in Satan, Satan laughs. What does Peter say about Satan?
- b. Satan is the tempter. He is a liar (denying the truth of God we know). He is "the Accuser." He puts evil thoughts about God and others in our head. He seeks to create chaos in our private lives and conflict and division in our relationships.

4. As you think about these first three enemies, where does your mind go?

5. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Enemies #4 and #5, AND definition #9 of joy!

1. Enemy #4: the ways of the world

1 John 2:15 (RSV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.

- a. In what ways does John define “the world?” Look for four or more particulars.

- b. The ways of the world are intoxicating, seducing us away from God.
- c. The tempting ways of the world waft through the winds of movies, TV shows, in commercials, on-line ads, blog posts, and podcasts.

2. Enemy #5: we live in a fallen world.

- a. We introduced this topic back in DAY 2.
- b. The world doesn't work like we want it to.

Romans 8:20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

3. As we live in this world, we will face the awful sting of frustration, futility, and failure. All of these enemies are used by God to draw us to Himself, to trust Him, and be used by Him for His purposes.

4. Failure is never final unless you let it be. In the following verses, jot down what we learn by “failure” or feeling like a failure.

Proverbs 24:16 (RSV) ...for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again; but the wicked are overthrown by calamity.

2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed.

5. The joy God is building in men, through the fallen world of frustration, futility, and failure is a joy that moves into a difficult world anyway with a treasure to give—the life of Jesus, alive in me.

6. What strikes you about today's devotional?