

ECCLESIA
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
Pastor Luther H. Holmes, Jr.
August 2022
Bible Enrichment Series

NINE TESTS EVERY BELIEVER MUST FACE
LESSON 4 – THE FAILURE TEST

KEY CHAPTER: James 1:1-12 (Message Bible)

1 I, James, am a slave of God and the Master Jesus, writing to the twelve tribes scattered to Kingdom Come: Hello!

Faith Under Pressure

2-4 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So, don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work, so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

5-8 If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who "worry their prayers" are like wind-whipped waves. Don't think you're going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open.

9-11 When down-and-outers get a break, cheer! And when the arrogant rich are brought down to size, cheer! Prosperity is as short-lived as a wildflower, so don't ever count on it. You know that as soon as the sun rises, pouring down its scorching heat, the flower withers. Its petals wilt and, before you know it, that beautiful face is a barren stem. Well, that's a picture of the "prosperous life." At the very moment everyone is looking on in admiration, it fades away to nothing.

¹² Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.

Introduction

We are living in a time that most of us never would have expected or predicted. Now more than ever we recognize that we do not know what tomorrow holds.

In times like these the question must be asked, how should we, as followers of Jesus, respond during these unusual and uncertain times?

Tonight, we turn to the book of James where we have this reminder: that while trials are certain and come in all shapes and sizes, joy is possible as we recognize God's purpose and provision in the midst of our trials.

Context

James was the half-brother of Jesus, and he was a pastor in the church in Jerusalem in the years following Jesus's return to Heaven. ***James is writing to real people, in a real situation.*** These are people who are facing real trials. As individuals and as a church we must strive to have a view toward joy in the midst of unexpected situations. We don't know what tomorrow holds, but we can trust that God will use our trials to accomplish His purposes. As we navigate uncertain times, we must trust His plan, submit to His work in us and go to Him in faith asking for wisdom.

The first phrase of verse 2 provides a call that frames the entire section that follows. James is calling on believers who are facing trials to consider their trials with joy. On its own this may seem like a call to unsubstantiated happiness, but the verses that follow reveal the reason saints can truly, *count it all joy*.

We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that our trials have a purpose (1:2-4) As we face trials, we can have this hope: That God is using our trials to make us perfect and complete. The call for joy or rejoicing in the knowledge that God uses trials to bring us to maturity is a theme throughout the New Testament (≡; Romans 5:1-5)

How can we endure with joy?) Jesus endured the cross with joy as his motivation (Hebrews 12:2) While Jesus endured the cross with joy, He still experienced pain, grief and sorrow (Matthew 26:37-39). Enduring with joy does not mean we don't experience pain, but it does mean that we have hope and purpose in the process. We can experience joy in our trials by knowing that God provides wisdom for the journey. In times of difficulty, we become acutely aware of our need for wisdom. It is easy to feel lost or unprepared. God does not leave us alone to find our way through our trials, He generously and graciously gives wisdom to those who ask in faith.

God is ready and willing to give wisdom, but there is a qualifier, we must ask believing that He will give it. We must trust that He will hear and answer our request. The person who doubts is described as double-minded and will not receive wisdom from God.

In this series, we will examine "Nine Tests Every Believer Must Face" knowing that they're all working together for our good. The nine tests for our learning are:

- (1) The Wilderness Test. (alone in storms)
- (2) The Test of Time (just waiting and waiting)
- (3) The Motivation Test (Doing the right things for the wrong reasons?)
- (4) The Failure Test (We all fail if we try to do something)
- (5) The Self Will Test (Are you stubborn in your ways?)
- (6) The Discouragement Test
- (7) The Misunderstanding Test
- (8) The Frustration Test
- (9) The Servant Test

Tonight, we begin with Lesson 4

THE FAILURE TEST

Joshua 7:2-3 (NLT)

Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the city of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. [3] When they returned, they told Joshua, "It's a small town, and it won't take more than two or three thousand of us to destroy it. There's no need for all of us to go there."

Joshua 7:4-5 (NLT)

So approximately three thousand warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai [5] chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.

Those that read the newspaper's cartoons, we are familiar with the lovable Charlie Brown and his failures. He fails:

Baseball
Flying Kites
Winning the Little Red-Haired Girl
Kicking a football.

Failure happens to everyone who tries...

Theodore Roosevelt once said that "The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything."

So, it is with failure!

No one is immune

Top Fears People Face

1. Fear of Criticism
2. Fear of Rejection
3. Fear of Pain
4. Fear of Loss
5. Fear of Failure

While we cannot always identify with the Successes in life...all of us can identify with failing.

Failures in the Bible

Moses—fled to the wilderness for 40 years
John Mark—rejected by Paul
Simon Peter—denied Christ three times
Abraham—lied regarding his wife
David—committed adultery and murder
Samson—loved Delilah

Glorious current Failures

Charles Shultz—rejected by Walt Disney

Albert Einstein—kicked out of school

Thomas Edison—failed 10,000 times to create an incandescent light bulb

Abraham Lincoln—lost seven elections and failed in businesses twice

Ronald Reagan—lost the Republican nomination 1976 to Gerald Ford

Failure is a matter of perspective

Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs—and struck out 1,330 times

Hank Aaron hit 755 home runs—and struck out 1,383 times

Richard Petty won 200 races out of 1,185 starts

The great soccer player Pele made less than 3% of the shots he took

Basketball great Michael Jordan made less than half of the shots he took

RESPONSES TO FAILURE

1. One—We tend to blame God.

- ***Joshua 7:7 (NLT)** Then Joshua cried out, "Sovereign Lord, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side!"*

2. Two—We tend to blame Others

- ***Gen 3:12** And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*
- ***Gen 3:13** And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

3. Three—We tend to blame Circumstances

- ***Neh 4:10** And Judah said, The strength of the burden carriers is weakening, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall.*

The catch phrase of today's society is "It's not my fault!"

FIVE SIGNS OF IMPENDING FAILURE

One—a loss of focus

- ***Jos 7:3** They went back to Joshua and reported, "You don't need to send the whole army to attack Ai--two or three thousand troops will be enough. Why bother the whole army for a town that small?"*

Two- Over-confidence

- ***Jos 7:4** Joshua sent about three thousand soldiers to attack Ai. But the men of Ai fought back and chased the Israelite soldiers away from the town gate and down the hill to the stone quarries. Thirty-six Israelite soldiers were killed, and the Israelite army felt discouraged.*

Three—Ethics Slip

- ***Jos 7:11** I said everything in Jericho belonged to me and had to be destroyed. But the Israelites have kept some of the things for themselves. They stole from me and hid what they took. Then they lied about it.*

Four—Poor Self-Management or Self-Control

- ***Jos 7:12** What they stole was supposed to be destroyed, and now Israel itself must be destroyed. I cannot help you anymore until you do exactly what I have said. That's why Israel turns and runs from its enemies instead of standing up to them.*

Five—Lost Love

- ***Jos 7:13** Tell the people of Israel, "Tomorrow you will meet with the LORD your God, so make yourselves acceptable to worship him. The LORD says that you have taken things that should have been destroyed. You won't be able to stand up to your enemies until you get rid of those things.*

DANGERS OF FAILURE

Failure causes in some an exaggeration of reality

- ***Joshua 7:9** (NLT) For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe us off*

the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?"

Failure causes some to give up their efforts

- ***Act 21:14** Since we could not get Paul to change his mind, we gave up and prayed, "Lord, please make us willing to do what you want."*

Failure causes some to never risk again

- ***1Sa 7:13** So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.*

Failure causes some to prevent others from trying

Failure causes some to be resentful of those who do succeed

- ***Gen 30:1** Rachel was very jealous of Leah for having children, and she said to Jacob, "I'll die if you don't give me some children!"*

Four Things to know about failure

- Failure does not have to be Final...you can try again
- Failure does not have to be Fatal...you can be bigger than your failure
- Failure does not have to be Fruitless...you can learn from your failure
- Failure does not have to produce Fear...the world will not end because you failed

The purpose of the Failure Test

- Failure reveals our need for God
- Failure reveals our limitations
- Failure can reveal a sinful nature
- Failure maintains in us humility
- Failure makes us value mercy and forgiveness

Overcoming Failure

1. One—Seek God for Divine Direction
2. Two—Get to the root cause of the failure
3. Three—regard failure as a learning process

4. Four—Be prepared to change strategies
5. Five—Never give up—EVER

Failure is not Failure if you can learn from it.

- Failure is only Failure if you quit without learning from the experience
 - ***Joshua 8:1 (NLT)*** Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take the entire army and attack Ai, for I have given to you the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.
 - ***Joshua 8:18 (NLT)*** Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Point your spear toward Ai, for I will give you the city." Joshua did as he was commanded.
 - ***Joshua 8:19 (NLT)*** As soon as Joshua gave the signal, the men in ambush jumped up and poured into the city. They quickly captured it and set it on fire.
 - ***Joshua 8:22 (NLT)*** Then the Israelites who were inside the city came out and started killing the enemy from the rear. So, the men of Ai were caught in a trap, and all of them died. Not a single person survived or escaped.

 - Failure causes us to realize our need of God.
 - Failure causes us to realize our need of mercy.
 - Failure causes us to realize our need of giving grace.

God gives us the failure test in order to cause us to realize that we cannot trust in our own abilities, strengths, and gifts. To succeed, we need God's favor and His divine help.