



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE MASTER CARPENTER

WEEK 5— How Failure Grows My Faith

1. Everyone experiences failure at some point in their lives. Share a time in your life when you experienced failure. What do you consider to be your greatest failure? What did you learn from it? If there were one bit of advice that you could pass on to others about your experience, what would it be?
2. Why do you think we fear failing so much? Is there something you never tried in life because you were afraid you would fail? What is one thing you would try in life if there was a guarantee that you would not fail?
3. Read Matthew 14:24-33. Why do you think Peter initially thought that he could walk on the water if he got out of the boat? Why did Peter start to sink even after he saw that he could walk on the water? We have never been asked by Jesus to walk on water, but there will always be times in life where God asks us to do something that seems impossible at first glance and would require us to trust him to accomplish it. What is a circumstance in your life where you “walked on the water”? What did that experience do to your faith in God? Is there something you know God is asking you to do right now that in your mind would be “walking on water”? What is it?

Answer— Obviously Peter knew that Jesus was God at this point and he had enough faith in Jesus that he knew that if Jesus wanted him to walk on the water, then he could even do the impossible. He started to sink when he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to look at the storm, he stopped relying on Jesus to keep him up and began thinking about the possible consequences of what the storm could do to him. God asks us to do things that in our own strength and ability, are just as impossible. Even though we are afraid of what might happen, we need to focus on Jesus and take a step of faith and begin to do what God wants us to do.

4. Read Psalm 55:12-14. Many times when you attempt to do what you think God wants you to do and step out in faith and do what might seem to be impossible, other Christians will criticize you. Why do you think this is?

Answer—When Christians know that they should be doing more for God and they are not, they do not like to reflect on that truth. Many times when they see others trying to accomplish

something great for God, it makes them feel guilty about what they are not doing. Instead of using this as a motivation to try to do more themselves, it is much less work to just tear down what others are trying to do so that everyone is like them and they can feel better about themselves. Instead of being builders of something great, they just tear others down. It is easier to blow out someone else's candle than lighting your own. It is easier to drag everyone down to your level than to raise yourself up to theirs.

5. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. What does this tell us we need when we are in danger of failing? Have you ever experienced a failure that you recovered from because you had people who helped you? Have you ever gone through a storm where you had no one in your life to help you? Why is it often so hard for us to seek help from others? How can we as a small group get better at helping each other through difficulties?

Answer—God never intended us to “go it alone” as Christians. There is no such thing as the “Lone Ranger” Christian. Now, there are times in our lives when there is no one to rely on but God, but that it is not the way God designed us to function. We need each other, we are family. The main reason we find it hard to ask for help is usually two reasons: First, we do not want to be an imposition on other people, we may feel our problems are too small or too large to bother others with. This is a lie from the pit of hell, it is Satan who wants to isolate us and make us feel like no one would want to help. The second reason can be summed up in one word: Pride. We do not want to reveal that we do not have everything together and that we need help. Pride is also the main thing that keeps us from trusting God, the belief that we are able to handle everything ourselves. In order for our small groups to get better at this, every person needs to be committed to two things; to share with others when we are struggling and to let each other know that we are willing to help regardless of the struggle.

6. Pastor Rick said that we must identify our faith deficiencies or we are destined to repeat our failures. What did he mean by this? What area of your life do you feel you have the greatest faith deficiency? Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What does this passage tell us we should do to overcome these deficiencies?

Answer—Hebrews 4:14-16 calls Jesus our high priest. A priest was a person who interceded to God on the behalf of others. It says that as a human, he experienced everything that we experience. So he knows your struggles, where your faith is deficient and he is waiting, as our priest, for you to come to him for help and he is always there to help you. You must make the decision to go ahead and trust him in the areas where your faith is deficient and do what you are afraid to do. When you don't fail because you are trusting in Jesus for your success, then your faith will grow and you will no longer be deficient in that area. Faith always requires a first step on our part and then God takes over from there.

7. Pastor Rick said that we need to harness the courage from the Holy Spirit to try again. Is there an area of your life where you have given up because of failure, but you know God wants you to get up and try again? What can you do differently this time to increase your odds of success?

Answer—To succeed where you have failed in the past you will need to do two things; first, trust in God to give you the strength you need and anticipate success because you are involving him and his power. The second thing you need to do is seek the help of the Christians in your small group to give you encouragement and prayer and assistance where needed.