

IS THERE LIFE AFTER FAILURE?

WHEN DREAMS (ALMOST) COME TRUE

I walked into a dimly lit room on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, California. The producer of two of the most successful secular rock bands of all time, with more than 130 million albums sold, had assembled half a dozen of his creative team. He had invited me to present a 20-minute video I had produced describing a prospective multi-media youth tour. The 90-minute production was designed to reach millions of young people with a captivating, high-tech gospel message. As the video promo ended, the producer turned to me and remarked, “That was the best presentation of a project I have ever seen. I am very interested.”

Our meeting had been set up at the request of the wealthy Christian owner of an established secular TV network. He had asked this top producer to critique the project and give his recommendations. The producer’s conclusion: “If he [*the TV network owner*] doesn’t provide financing for the tour, I will.” It turned out that, though this producer was not a Christian, he had a praying sister who was. Later that day he showed my video to a Warner Brothers’ Vice President, and once again, received a positive response.

I left the meeting ecstatic. The fact that it happened at all was a miracle, not to mention his overwhelmingly encouraging reaction. This had been a dream of mine for years. I had spent hundreds of hours with a team of creative people developing the tour concept,

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writing the script, and producing the video. Many other extraordinary contacts were made with highly capable Christians in the entertainment industry who were eager to use their gifts and resources to see this youth tour come to pass. Finally, it seemed that it was all coming together; everything I had prayed for—everything I had dreamed about.

Within weeks, the rock band producer flew to meet with a renowned Christian TV personality and myself to finalize the project. Lengthy discussions took place. Agreements were made. Everything seemed to be on course, until a Christian concert promoter advised the producer that there was not a large enough Christian market to make the tour viable.

It was a marvelous concept...

...a brilliant presentation!

...but too small a market!

Suddenly, everything I had worked so hard to see happen was taken away. It was over! I was in shock! How could God have allowed all of these remarkable meetings to take place and not bring the project to completion? I was totally unprepared for this jarring turn of events. And yet, this had not been my first experience with the “left hook from nowhere.” On two other occasions I had been perfectly set up for massive disappointments.

Several years before, I had been given the opportunity to pitch a movie project I had been working on for ten years to an executive for the most well-known Christian film distributor in America. It received his enthusiastic endorsement, calling it, “the best distribution process for 35mm films he had ever seen.” Yet despite the glowing reports, only a short time later, I realized the movie project would not be funded. In the end, it too, went belly up.

A few years after this ill-fated movie venture, I began developing a TV show for a top Christian musician. It was full of edgy concepts and innovative ideas. Once again, I threw my heart and soul into the preparation, pouring many hours into its development. The vision for the TV show was embraced; the show was successfully produced; but I was not involved. Here again, I was completely devastated and utterly traumatized. I would not soon recover. I had yet to learn the secret of living in contentment no matter what my circumstances were.

PEELING MY HEART OFF CLOSED DOORS

Once, while visiting with friends, I watched a seven-year-old boy run in and out of the house all afternoon. As the day wore on and the temperature dropped, the boy's mother decided to close the sliding glass door leading into the back yard. Somehow the little guy didn't notice, and a few moments later, going 50 mph, he smashed into the invisible barrier. He didn't just fall backward, he was propelled backward. He hit the glass so hard, I thought, "He's dead! There's no way he could have survived unscathed!" But much to our amazement, a few minutes later, with his nose somewhat readjusted, he was up and about, though moving much more gingerly.

After each of my media projects died a slow death, I felt exactly like that battered boy. Having hit a brick wall with the "pedal to the metal," the wind didn't just leave my sails; God forcibly removed it. My heart sank in disbelief as I tried to grasp the unexpected turn of events. I was completely at a loss. Why had God consistently shown His hand of favor in each venture? Why would He allow me to invest so much time and energy on each of these worthwhile projects if He didn't want them completed? Why would he have me pray and see my prayers answered, only to ultimately watch the endeavors melt into oblivion?

Frankly, it seemed unspeakably cruel.

With each of these projects I stood waiting, as a faithful sentry, by open doors of opportunity only to have them abruptly slammed in my face. Yet, I refused to believe these shut doors would remain closed forever. The remarkable miracles I had seen God perform in two projects in particular seemed to refute that possibility. So I continued to stand outside the doors and wait for them to reopen. The waiting turned into years. In the end, I would

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accept the inevitable: these endeavors were on life support and I would have to pull the plug. I had to let my dreams die, walking away both shaking my head and shaken to the core.

I could only conclude: the greatest miracles I had ever seen took place in projects that God never intended me to complete.

Try filing that one away.

It would take me years to fully process what had gone on and come to terms with God's ultimate intention for each of these life-altering situations. Even though today I am completely at peace with the death of those projects, in the past it was not always so. It seemed not only out of character for God to allow such mixed messages, but emotionally criminal. I was convinced my appeal to a higher court in heaven would most assuredly render a different verdict. But, for what seemed an eternity, my petitions were unanswered.

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I have come to believe that “onward and upward” is in fact a non-biblical perspective. Though somewhat overstated, “onward and downward” would be much closer to the truth. “Before honor is humility.”¹ God always defaults to what is ultimately in our best interest, and therefore has no intention of fulfilling all of our dreams. As the One who shaped and fashioned our inner needs, why would God fulfill a dream He knows is inherently unfulfilling? It has taken me half-a-lifetime to realize that His commitment is to fulfill His dream for me, which is infinitely better, though inevitably hidden from my eyes. “It is God’s privilege to conceal things and the king’s privilege to discover them.”²

God's motive in this high-stakes game of hide-and-seek is pure and purposeful, though our experience on earth can be, at times, extremely painful. Many who have gone through unexplainable tragedy, often arriving at a life-altering crossroad with a broken heart, have come to a far different conclusion about the motive of God. One songwriter summed up human existence with this rather bleak assessment: "Life sucks, and then you die." How heartwarming! Though this statement may contain a small measure of truth, it by no means accurately portrays what life is about. God is not some cosmic killjoy getting His jollies out of pulling the wings off of helpless humans. In fact, quite the opposite is true. It is impossible for a blameless God to do anything but good.

When I was about ten years old, one of my great adventures in life was catching large bullfrogs. I loved the thrill of sneaking up behind them and then, moving at light-speed, plucking them out of the water with one fell swoop. Their skin felt so funny; so rubbery and slippery, covered with strange bumps. But, however long the hunt took, my exploits with bullfrogs always came down to catch and release.

Except on one tragic occasion.

One day, when I caught a really big bullfrog, I had the bizarre thought that it would be fun to methodically peel off his skin and see what was underneath. Everything seemed to go fine until I dropped the skinless frog back onto the hot sand. Only then did I fully realize the tragic mistake I had made. In horror I stared at the hapless victim now shrouded in sand. His life was soon over. I had, for all intents and purposes, killed him.

What started out as a neat idea turned into an ordeal I desperately wanted to reverse. Incapable of devising a plan to get his skin back on, I could only watch the doomed frog writhe in pain. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, I walked away feeling terribly sick inside. Forty-five years later I'm still embarrassed over what I did to that poor little frog.

Life is full of situations we wish never happened; setbacks and failures are as common to each of us as hiccups and headaches. Many of them are self-inflicted, while others are part of the script we have been given. Only with God's help can we properly respond to them, living—and eventually dying—in peace. Fortunately, God seems to take special pleasure in showing His power through our mistakes and weakness. The greatest lessons in life are primarily the result of learning to respond properly to what we perceive as failure or loss. Looking back now, I wouldn't change a thing, even though my perceived

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failure was so devastating at the time. I see now that God is able to use even failure for my good as I continue to trust Him.

LOUSY TIMING, PERFECT MOMENT

When my wife, Suzie, and I had been married for just nine months, I went to Montreal, Quebec to film during the 1976 Olympics. A small film crew and I traveled from California to film Christians publicly sharing their faith outside Olympic venues. God had provided thousands of dollars and the right personnel for the project.

The day before the Olympics were to begin, I called home to share with my wife how well everything seemed to be coming together. Suzie, who was three months pregnant, had visited the doctor that day and had been told, based on the physiological symptoms occurring in her body, she was probably having a miscarriage. The news was jarring. We prayed and I offered to take the next plane back to California, but she insisted I stay. My courageous wife, knowing how important the filming was to me, was resolute that I did not need to return home and that she would be fine.

Hanging up the phone, I prayed with the other members of our film crew for God's direction. I am so grateful that at such a critical moment godly men surrounded me. After much prayer and discussion, it was obvious to everyone that my priority was to catch the next plane home to be with my wife.

On the day the Olympics started and filming began, after months of grueling preparation, I found myself boarding a plane—doing the right thing—but hating every minute of it. I was mad. I loved my wife, and wanted to be there for her, but why did God have to pick one of the most important events in my young Christian life to ask for my obedience? His timing seemed, to say the least, really lousy!

Trying to keep a positive attitude as the other passengers were boarding the plane, I mechanically opened my Bible and began to read. It was a struggle, but I knew it was exactly what I needed, especially at that moment.

Suddenly, a deep male voice interrupted my train of thought, "Excuse me!" I looked up to see a large, distinguished, middle-aged black man, dressed in an African shirt and hat. After an ever-so-brief greeting, he slid past me and sat in the window seat. I returned to reading my Bible.

Shortly after takeoff, he turned to me and inquired, “So you’re reading the Bible, huh?” At that moment I barely felt emotionally stable enough to read the Bible, much less carry on a conversation about it. I shot back a lifeless, “Yeah,” and immediately put my head back down, hoping he would not have a follow-up question.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of leading many people to Jesus on airplanes, but that morning I was depressed and struggling to keep my heart in a healthy place. Normally, I would have welcomed a conversation, especially one about the Bible, but I was in the process of experiencing two of the biggest setbacks of my Christian life, and the last thing I felt like doing was chatting with a stranger.

The man, much to my immediate displeasure, didn’t seem to notice my reluctance. Instead, he asked another question about the Bible. It seemed inevitable—I was headed for a conversation about God whether I felt like it or not. At first we began to talk rather haltingly, but he was genuinely interested and soon we were in the middle of a deep discussion. I shared what Jesus had done in my life and I could see he was being impacted. He told me his name was Archie Moore. Two hours into our conversation, I moved over to the middle seat. Archie expressed a sincere desire to receive Jesus, and so I led him in a prayer as the plane was touching down in Chicago.

Though my knowledge of him was sketchy at the time, I found out later he had been the former Light Heavyweight Boxing Champion of the world who holds the all-time knockout record. He even fought, and almost defeated, the legendary Rocky Marciano for the Heavyweight title. “Archie Moore was the oldest boxer to win the world’s Light Heavyweight crown, and is believed to be the only boxer to have boxed professionally in the eras of Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano and Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali. He was one of a handful of boxers whose careers spanned four decades, and he had a final record of 186 wins, with 145 official knockout wins.”³

Once inside the airport terminal, I gave Archie a hug and said goodbye. He had just left when a young woman approached. She identified herself as a Christian who had formerly been a nightclub singer. She exclaimed that when Archie first walked on the plane she had recognized him and believed that God had providentially seated her directly behind me. Throughout the entire flight she had been fervently interceding for us and wondered why I had moved over to the seat next to Archie. As I told her he had prayed to receive Jesus, we rejoiced together in the airport. It was a wonderful moment.

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How ironic! Having just been knocked out of filming at the Olympics, I just had the privilege of leading to Christ a future Hall of Fame boxer with the most knockouts in history.

I left the plane more at peace than I had been in the previous 24 hours; humbled that, even in the middle of my struggle for understanding, God could still use me to impact the life of this man. It had been less than three hours since I boarded the plane discouraged and dejected. Now, halfway home, I was flying high, having obeyed God and seen almost immediate fruit. There was life after failure!

On my second flight from Chicago to Sacramento, the Lord once again providentially sat me across from a wise and insightful nurse. For the next three hours I was able to ask her medical questions and learn more about the implications of a miscarriage. Though I was still somewhat bewildered and lacking in understanding, God had anticipated my every need! He did not forsake me, reject me, nor abandon me, but rather guided me to a new level of establishing priorities that would provide a healthy foundation for the rest of my life and marriage.

Because I was away filming the day after Suzie's disconcerting doctor's appointment, she had gone to stay with her parents for emotional support. I knew she was not expecting me to return so soon. I decided not to call, but to surprise her. A friend picked me up at the airport and drove me out to her folk's cattle ranch. She was totally shocked to see me standing there with flowers. Bursting into tears, we hugged and cried. It was a very moving moment. Even her dad, an atheist who rarely showed emotion, choked up when he greeted me and, looking into my eyes said, "Son, you did the right thing!"

I have no doubt, many years later, when Dad finally gave his heart to Jesus, that some of the first seeds of trust were sown on that fateful day. As her father, he didn't care if a video of the Olympics was made or not. But what he did care about, and what he did see, was that his daughter's husband was willing to give up even the most important thing he was doing to come to her aid. People will see far more of God in us by how we respond to failure, than to success.

Suzie had the miscarriage. It was a sad and painful loss, but a gigantic statement had been made. A pillar was put in place that remains steadfast throughout over 30 years of marriage. Wherever I am in the world, whatever work I am doing, if Suzie needs me, I will

drop everything else and come to her side. One year later, God graciously gave us two beautiful, identical twin daughters. For God so loved... He gave....

The lowest moment in my early Christian life now stands as a signpost pointing to a better future. So too, for all of us, if we will obey God at these pivotal moments when we don't understand, He will give us "...beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that [*we*]...may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."⁴

WHY GOD?

Whenever you find yourself wondering why something is happening, realize it is never a coincidence. It is invariably God working in you, giving you the desire to obey Him and the power to do what pleases Him.⁵ Actually, *why* is typically the wrong question; *what* is the word we should be asking. "God, what are you trying to show me in this situation?" The situation, no matter how bleak, is not a mere accident; it is God at work, even using what Satan meant for evil. If we love Him and are committed to doing His will, He promises us that all things that happen will work for our good either on earth or in Heaven.⁶

At times, even those who felt called into full-time ministry have encountered impenetrable walls and were forced to detour from their original objectives. Sometimes these barricades can be from the devil. Paul, the apostle, wrote, "We wanted very much to come, and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan prevented us."⁷ But more often than not, they are divine diversions; in-flight adjustments by our Commander-in-Chief.

A young married couple felt called to the mission field yet encountered a similar wall. Having been accepted by a mission organization, they just needed to pass a medical exam to be on their way. But, to their great dismay, the young wife was found to be physically unfit for the African climate. Heartbroken, they returned home and asked God for understanding in the matter. After much prayer, they resolved that if they could not go overseas themselves, they would make as much money as possible in America to spread the gospel elsewhere.

With missionary hearts, the young couple took over a small side business from the husband's father, making unfermented wine for communion services, turning it into a tremendous success. During their lifetime they gave vast sums of money to mission fields around the world. Their last name, by the way, was Welch, of Welch's Grape Juice fame.

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THE ROAD TO HOPE

The words of the Apostle Paul have helped me on many occasions during my times of setback and failure. “We rejoice in our sufferings,” he writes, “because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”⁸ Working this spiritual equation backwards we find that if we lack hope, it is because we lack character; if we lack character, it is because we lack perseverance; and if we lack perseverance, it is because we have not responded properly to the trials and tribulations that face us. You don’t get character by sitting in a hot tub eating ice cream. Character is only developed through struggles. Shakings are essential to life. We must go through them in order to experience “the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.”⁹

It has been rightly said, “God always gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him.” If we remain steadfast, confidently embracing God’s providential plan, the final chapter of our lives will reveal His infinite wisdom and matchless destiny. Only He can take a shattered dream and multiply its potential a hundredfold.

IN CASE OF FAILURE, READ THIS!

Failure is an inevitable part of life, but we still have a choice as to how we will respond to it. We can choose to hide our failures and weaknesses from others out of embarrassment and fear, or we can choose to view these times as opportunities to see the areas in our lives that still need work. Embarrassment alone isn’t enough to drive us to change. It is not until we get truly desperate that we will be sufficiently motivated to pursue changing our lives.

Embarrassment is merely the first stage of conviction. When we see areas in our lives that are out of control we feel embarrassed, but that is only the beginning of the sufficient provocation needed for change. Embarrassment is a junior stage of conviction—actually a baby step. People live and die embarrassed, but never really change. Expressions such as, “I know I shouldn’t do it, but I do!” or “It’s a horrible habit” merely gloss over an underlying lack of dedication to change. In Luke 9:45, the disciples “...were embarrassed to ask him [*Jesus*] what He meant.”¹⁰ Embarrassment brought about no eternal change. They were not yet ready.

The next stage of conviction is being fed up. When we are fed up, we no longer try to hide our failures; we attempt to fix them ourselves. Here again, though a person may be sick

and tired of acting a certain way, being fed up will only produce depression or anger, but not a lasting change in behavior. A disciple is a whole-hearted follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus affirmed this when He challenged, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”¹¹ Partial commitments produce insufficient results.

What is needed is a departure from conventional wisdom. We can live and die both embarrassed and fed up, and still see no tangible alteration of our behavior. Until we see our departure from sin as a life and death issue, requiring a desperate response, we will never rise to the level of concern that facilitates personal transformation. It isn’t until we reach the final stage of conviction—desperation—that we will see the change in our lives we truly desire. We have to be desperate for God in order to be yielded to Him. The psalmist cried out, “I’m in trouble. I cry to God, desperate for an answer....”¹²

Without embracing God’s perspective, we will eventually fall into deception. God’s not trying to change our circumstances; He’s trying to change our reaction to them.

If the only way we learn is by making mistakes instead of being dedicated to change, then we are destined to become an ugly mass of scar tissue. The Word and the Spirit of God purpose to guide us into truth and to spare us the heartbreaking anguish of serious failure. If we only learn by being enrolled in the School of Hard Knocks, then we will experience the way of the unfaithful, which is unnecessarily hard.¹³

How does this progression of thought take place? Sin first begins in our thoughts, then thoughts become deeds, deeds become habits, habits form our personality, and

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ultimately, our personality shapes our destiny. In a similar way, if we don't stop evil desires in the thought stage, eventually they will manifest themselves as deeds, which sooner or later become habits, gradually overtaking our personality until, in the end, they establish our destiny. "Then the evil desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death."¹⁴

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With God's power we can stop thoughts before they become deeds, and deeds before they evolve into habits. By breaking this cycle, we will live life flourishing in the oasis of God's personality and destiny.

Many Christians, leaders included, are paralyzed by fear of failure. They would rather debate and analyze than begin to do something—anything. It can be overwhelming to look at all of the failures in our lives and begin to learn from them. But as Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, said, "I have found that there are three stages in every great work of God. First it is impossible. Then it is difficult. Then it is done." I have been amazed over the years, as I have seen how faithful God has been to bring calm to chaos, and understanding to the devastations of my past.

THE CURE IS IN THE DISEASE

My aged mother often said, "Before you can appreciate the good, you have to experience the bad." Though perhaps imperfect in her theology, this wise lady had tasted enough of life to know something of its sequencing. Just as pride comes before destruction,¹⁵ and humility before honor;¹⁶ so too, we must know we are lost before we can be eternally saved. As with bad and good, failure must be realized before success can be appreciated. In a sense, the cure and the disease are inexorably linked.

Here is a perfect analogy elaborating on this profound principle. In order to provide protection and immunization from certain diseases, vaccines are developed which contain weakened or dead microbes of the kind that actually cause the disease in the first place. These inoculations stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies, which in turn fight the disease.

Jesus became sin for us in order “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”¹⁷ He chose the reproach of failure in order to secure everlasting success for those He loves. He allowed all of the bad that had ever been perpetrated by mankind to not just be placed at His own feet, but to be fully credited to His account. Christ’s lowest moment became the launching point for our highest.

Will you willingly embrace the inevitable challenges of life that are, in fact, divinely prepared appointments with destiny? Will you allow God to renew your mind and heal your misconceptions of all that has transpired thus far? We have all misjudged God and His purpose for us. We have all given up too quickly. Our rescue is at hand. If we will but wait, hope and believe.

TRAGEDIES REDEEMED

A fishing fleet left a small harbor in Newfoundland and was caught in a terrible storm. When night came, the ships were scheduled to return home, yet none of them did.

All night long, the mothers, wives, and children of the fishermen walked the shores looking for some sign of their loved ones, praying tearfully that God would bring them back safely. Adding to their anxieties, one of the homes in the village caught fire in the middle of the night. Since all of the men were gone, it burned to the ground.

But as morning dawned, the entire fleet of ships sailed safely back into the harbor. All of the villagers rejoiced when they saw their men safely home, except the woman whose home had burned down. Approaching her husband with grief written across her face, she cried out, “We are ruined! Our home and everything we had were destroyed by fire.”

Her husband, however, just shook his head. “What are you saying? Thank God for the fire!” he exclaimed. “It was the light of our burning home that guided the whole fleet into port.”

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Yes, in this world we will have tribulation. But Jesus says, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!”¹⁸ He has overcome the disasters of life. He has overcome the sin that infected us; and if we will but trust Him—and Him alone—we are destined to be overcomers as well.

REDEEMING THE UNREDEEMABLE

Looking back over the 23 years of my life before I met Jesus, I see a trail of self-gratifying choices which inflicted much hurt upon many of those around me. I used my God-given gift of persuasion to open the hearts of women, enticing them to give up their sexual purity. I fathered two children, which were later aborted. I persuaded scores of others to enter a bankrupt drug culture, rebel against God, family and society, all as I simultaneously sank into my own caverns of self-deception. How many of those I led astray are still reaping the consequences of my treachery and sin? I am even now saddened to think about it. There was much to be ashamed of, and forgiven for.

But none of my fast talk could prevent me from reaping what I had sown. Breaking innocent hearts was the prelude to my not-so-innocent heart being broken as well. The accumulation of pain I had inflicted upon others came crashing down and nearly took my life during a six-month suicidal meltdown. I was on a collision course with death.

I will always be eternally grateful for a persistent, praying mother trusting in a gracious, merciful God. Even during my pre-Christian years there were a few situations that were miraculously redeemed by God after I became a Christian. There was life after failure.

Six months before I received Jesus, I was hitchhiking in Honolulu, Hawaii. An accountant from New York City and his family picked me up. He had shoulder length hair and was dabbling in smoking pot; a poster child for a counter-culture wannabe. Always ready to convert people to whatever I was into, I had an intense half-hour conversation trying to persuade him to give up his materialistic ways and pursue a more down to earth lifestyle. It was a sincere and meaningful conversation that, frankly, had no eternal value.

A year and a half later, after becoming a Christian, I was driving in New York City. As I was about to enter the busy Long Island Expressway, I saw a hitchhiker on the side of the onramp, whom I decided to pick up. As he got into the car, I instantly recognized him. He was the same accountant who had picked me up a year and a half before in Honolulu. We were both stunned. God's presence filled the vehicle and I was suddenly aware of the fact that Jesus had fully orchestrated this divine appointment.

The man had unfortunately taken some of my misguided advice, and had become a card-carrying member of the hippie subculture. For the next half-hour, talking at New York warp speed, I shared with this now captive audience my complete testimony of God transforming my life, as well as an impassioned overview of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The electricity in the car was palpable. We both knew our impossible rendezvous had been sovereignly ordained.

Though at that moment he did not surrender his heart to Jesus, our lives were both shaken by the magnificent and flawless plan of God. This was one of the few times in my life I was able to impact the life of someone I had previously damaged. I treasure it as a moment when God once again redeemed the unredeemable, allowing failure to be eclipsed by faith.

Over the years, I have now had countless opportunities to help thousands of people who have made many of the same mistakes I once made. There is not a sin I have committed that I have not had the opportunity to tell another person about. There is not a type of person I have deceived, whom I have not had the privilege of guiding into a saving relationship with the loving God of the Universe. There is not only life after failure; there is a redemptive purpose in every sin, every setback, and every heartbreak we have or will ever go through. The life of your dreams is just around the bend, and the fastest way to get there is obeying the will of God no matter how unfulfilling it may seem during the process.

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SUMMARY POINTS

- The greatest lessons in life are primarily the result of learning to respond properly to what we perceive as failure.
- Failure may be an inevitable part of life, but we still have a choice as to how we will respond to it.
- God's not trying to change our circumstances; He's trying to change our reaction to them.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you consider to be your greatest failures in life thus far?
2. Have you seen God use these setbacks to produce His character in your life?
3. In retrospect, in what way did you respond properly to those challenges?
4. In retrospect, how would you respond differently if you were able to do it over?
5. What is your present assessment of the value of failure in your own life?