Intro: Can you remember the last time you were really afraid? I’m not talking about anxiety / stressed / nervous. I’m talking about pure fear! (Alaska bear story) Not all fear is the kind where you are wondering if you might be someone’s next meal. Yet, fear at a variety of levels is a reality in this life. Fear can be one of the most paralyzing, life hindering obstacles in our lives. How can we truly live fearless? How can we live without fear controlling our lives? God wants us to. In fact, He commands us to!

Josh. 1:9 “This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (NLT) Easier said than done!

• In the next 4 weeks we are going to look at how to overcome our fear. Each week we will take one of the most common fears that keep people paralyzed and look at how God’s word can lead us to freedom from that fear. How to live FEARLESS.
• Today, we are going to look at the fear of failure.
• How many things do we simply not even attempt because we are afraid we will fail?
  ▪ Won’t apply for that new job / position
  ▪ Won’t attempt a ministry idea you have
  ▪ Won’t try being the spiritual leader of your family
• The fear of failure can be as paralyzing as a 900 lb Brown Bear. How do we move past it? Let me give you three ways to move past the fear of failure.

I. Be Honest About Your Struggle With This Fear
HOW?
A. Recognize the indicators of the fear of failure
Ps. 26:2 “Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.” (NIV)
Lam. 3:40 “Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the LORD.” (NLT)
• Let’s ask the Lord to help us be honest as we examine ourselves.
  1. How does the fear of failure manifest itself in a person’s life? Let’s diagnose the problem. Let’s identify some basic indicators.
     - refusing to take risks
     - avoiding the unknown
     - controlled by internal guilt over past failures
     - become perfectionist – I won’t fail if it’s perfect. Highly critical of others who fail
     - Refuse to attempt anything. You give up trying to win – I don’t care attitude
     - Refuse any form of accountability. Afraid others may find out you’ve failed.
     - Someone who continually tells themselves; “Oh I could never do that.”
  2. If you could do anything for God with your life and you knew you couldn’t fail, what...
would you do? If you’re not doing it, the fear of failure is controlling your life.
3. How much does this fear keep you from becoming the person God wants you to be?

4. Let’s get honest with this fear in our lives. I remember starting Foothills. I had fear. “What if it doesn’t work?” “What if I fail?” “What if no one shows up?” I had to face this fear or Foothills would never have existed.

B. Acknowledge this fear to yourself and to God
Ps. 51:6 “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.” (NASB) Truth begins internally. Truth begins with ourselves.
1. I think it is essential to call it what it is. Nothing changes in our life without honesty and truth. Sometimes, the person we lie to the most is ourselves! We can live in denial of the very issues that are holding us back.
2. I think men really struggle with being honest with the issue of fear. There’s not a guy on the planet who wants to admit he is afraid of anything! Yet, I think the fear of failure impacts most men. WHY?
3. Because to men, the worst thing on the planet is to be perceived as incompetent. And failure in a man’s mind equals incompetence. Therefore, if we’re not convinced we will succeed at something, we avoid it.
  • We will avoid communication with our wives
  • We will avoid acting like a spiritual leader in our homes
  • We will avoid “honey do” lists
  • We will avoid activities like a worship and prayer event
  • We won’t apply for a new job or position with more responsibility.
4. Now before all the women think that all men are insecure, let me remind you that women are just as susceptible to the fear of failure as men are. It just looks different to you. The key issue is simply truth! God desires truth internally and that begins with ourselves.
5. If you want to move past this fear, it begins by admitting this to yourself and to God. “God, I am being controlled by this fear of failure and I want to be free from it!”

• Secondly, we have to change how we think about failure…

II. Stop Seeing Failure As Defining Your Life But Rather God Refining Your Life
A. Failure is part of our life journey
  • Failure is not the unpardonable sin. It’s simply part of the journey.
  1. Thomas Edison is probably the greatest failure on the planet. You’re thinking, that’s impossible! He is known as a great inventor. World record: 1093 patents. Yet, he also
failed more times than anyone. He’s most famous for the electric light bulb.

- Share quote:
  What made Thomas Edison great was that he was not afraid to fail.

2. Failure is simply part of the life process that God uses to mold us and shape us into the people He wants us to be. It’s how we learn...how we grow...how we become stronger...it’s how we learn to trust God and live by faith.

3. If we are afraid to fail, we run the risk of stagnating in life...no longer growing, No longer developing and maturing into the people God wants us to be.

4. We have been taught by our culture that failure is bad and if you fail YOU are bad. If you fail then YOU are a failure. This is a lie. The fear of failure is rooted in this lie.

5. Even our educational system supports this to some degree. Think about our grading system...what does an “F” stand for? (Now, we have to have a grading system, but you can see how this starts early on)

6. Because we attach our identities to failure, we avoid it like the plague, when in reality, it is the very process that God uses most in our lives. The greatest life lesson you ever learned...where they in times of great success or in times of confusion, pain, and failure?

- Failure doesn’t make you a failure. Failure just makes you human.

Rom. 3:23 “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” (NLT)
We have all failed...we have all fallen short...we are all flawed with sin. Therefore, failure is going to be part of the journey. BUT...

B. Failure is God’s process of refinement

1. Failure does NOT have to define your life. Some of you have allowed it to and that is why you can’t move forward. God knows that we are imperfect people. This means we are going to fail. BUT, God will use it to refine and direct our lives if we let Him.

Rom. 8:28 “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (NLT)

2. God doesn’t say all things are good. He says He will cause all things to work together for good IF, we continue to love Him and continue to follow His purposes for our lives.

3. If we trust God with our failures, He will accomplish good in our lives no matter how bad we fail.

James 1:3-4 “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

4. I know for me failure can sure be a faith test. When we fail, don’t we sometimes question God...question His word...question His way...We can allow failure to define our life and faith or refine our life and faith. Which is it?

- Your bankruptcy does not define your life

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• Your divorce does not define your life
• Your past drug / alcohol addictions do not have to define your life
• Your failed business attempt does not define your life
• Your unsuccessful attempt at school does not define your life
• Your failed relationships or friends who have abandoned you.
• Your physical condition – sickness – disease – chronic pain
  5. Failure is part of life. The difference is what you do with it…or what you allow it to do to you.
• Contrast the difference between how Judas and Peter dealt with failure. Judas’ failure of betraying Jesus so consumed him that He went out and committed suicide. BUT, Peter also was a monumental failure, yet he returned to Jesus and became a pillar of the NT church. His failure did not define him. He let Jesus transform and refine him.
• Which are you doing?

III. Stop Living In The Past by Pressing On To Something New

A. Choose to stop dwelling on your past failures
  1. Often our fear of failure is rooted in our past mistakes and the pain we still feel. If there ever was a guy who could have let his past mistakes and his fear of failure rob Him of his future it was the Apostle Paul. (explain how he persecuted the church)
  • Phil. 3:13-14 “No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” (NLT)
  2. God is asking you to let go of your past…stop allowing it to define you and your future…and He now wants you to look forward to what is ahead and press on. Your failures can’t keep you from God’s plan for your life if you trust Him.
  3. Maybe you’re wondering, “How do I get past my fear of failing again?” I want to move forward…but how? I don’t want to be stuck in the past. I don’t want my fear of failure to control my life.

B. By faith, choose to press on to what lies ahead
  1. We should never wait until the fear goes away before we trust God. Instead, courage is choosing to do the right thing in the face of fear. Faith and courage are inseparable partners. Faith believes that God’s word is true and courage is that quality that helps us live it. Courage is the application of faith!
  2. Therefore, if you want to move past your fear of failure you need to attempt the very thing you are afraid of failing at. Move towards your fear!
  3. If you truly want to see God work in your life you have to quit avoiding the very situations where He wants to show up. God shows up when you are willing to trust Him…not before.
II Cor. 12:9 “Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.” (NLT) The fear of failure makes us all feel weak. Now, move in the direction of that fear and watch God work!

- Men, are you afraid to lead spiritually in your home?
- Are you afraid to attempt that new ministry you’ve thought about?
- Are you afraid to go on that mission trip?
- Are you afraid to lead that home group?
- Are you afraid to apply for that new job or position?
- Are you afraid to pursue that dream you’ve always had?

Trust God and move in that direction!

Some of you are thinking…”What if I fail?” The reality is that you will at some things along the journey. You won’t do everything perfectly. Therefore when you fail…and you will…I leave you with these simple steps.

When you fail next time…

- Don’t make excuses for your failure.
- Admit it to yourself, God, and possibly others how it may have affected them
- Refuse to let your failure define who you are. It’s simply part of the process.
- Ask God what you can learn and how you can grow from your failure.
- Based upon new understanding…Try again. Never allow failure to cause you to give up.

If the fear of failure is impacting your life today, God wants you to move past it. He wants you to live a life that is FEARLESS! Will you trust Him to move past it today?