



Discussion Questions: “How Much is Too Much (Failure)?”

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED... TRY, TRY AGAIN?

Describe a time when you have failed.

- What subject or concept did you have the hardest time learning in grade school? What eventually helped you to learn it?
- One month ago today was January 1 - and many of us were waking up with our New Year's Resolutions fresh in our minds. How are you tracking with your resolutions - have you failed at keeping any of them yet? Any surprises? Any repeat resolutions (and why do you think it's human nature to repeat resolutions that we continually fail to keep?)
- How do you know if you've failed at something? Is the concept of "failure" the same for each person?

How does the possibility of failure affect your willingness to try things?

- What's something you've never tried because you're too scared of failing at it? Or something that you tried once but gave up because you felt you'd never get the hang of it?
- What's something you've tried and regretted? What's something you **haven't** tried and regretted **not** trying? What was it held you back at the time from that experience/situation?
- Are there circumstances where you're not afraid to fail?

WHAT FAILING FEELS LIKE

How should we feel and react when we fail? How do you actually feel and react?

- Can you feel like a failure even if things seem to be going well for you?
- Share a time where you felt like you had failed at something. How did you react? How were you treated? How did you wish you were treated? If you could go back to that point in your life and give yourself some advice, what would you say?

How do we deal with failure if it is in front of other people, or affects other people?

- It seems that every few days there's a story in the news about the latest "epic fail" - whether it's a wardrobe malfunction, a political gaffe - more so than ever, it seems that eyes are everywhere. It seems like it's human nature to find some enjoyment in watching other people fail - from Funniest Home Videos to the latest YouTube hit. Making failure funny - is this helpful or harmful, and what's the difference?

- Do your failures ever only affect you? Which do you feel worse about: failing yourself or failing the people around you?
- Failing at school or university is quite objective - there are criteria, you meet them or you don't. There's a bell curve, you're above the average or below the average. How does that definition of passing/failing change as you grow up? Who determines what failure is?

A SPACE TO FAIL

How do we judge other people who fail?

- Roy quoted Proverbs 24:16 – "The difference between the righteous and the wicked is that the righteous get back up after falling. The common denominator between the righteous and the wicked is failure." Do you think Christians and non-Christians are held to the same standards? Why or why not?
- Are Christians hypocrites if they fail?
- If the church were a place where it was safe to express failure, would the secular view of Christians as hypocrites change in time? Is the issue that Christians fail, or that they claim to succeed?
- What happens when you think that someone else has failed, but they don't think they have?

How can we make our church or community a safe environment for failure and learning?

- Who do you feel most comfortable sharing your failings with? Why?
- How do we construct a safe environment for failure? Is it harder to deal with your own failure, or with the failings of those around you? What would it require of you to provide an environment for other people's failures?
- Do we risk normalising moral indiscretions by being open about failure (If everyone is messing up, then it's not that big of a deal)?
- If there is harm caused within the community as a result of a member's failure (e.g. adultery), how should the community balance the demonstration of restorative love and forgiveness, while still enforcing clear consequences and protecting the innocent?

FAILING LIVES; UNFAILING LOVE

If we will never be perfect, should we even try? Is there purpose in failure?

- How do reconcile a desire to do what's right with a tendency to sin ... why should we keep trying if we know we will never be perfect?

- Is there purpose in failure? Do you really think it's possible to learn from every failure, or is that just a platitude?
- List some Bible characters that failed, and what that failure led to - both good outcomes and bad outcomes. Are there any common threads between these stories? Did those moments of failure define them - why/why not?

How do you think God defines failure?

- How does humility fit into the idea of failure? How about humanity?
- God is described in the Bible as 'unfailing love' - what does that mean to you? How can that help you face your own failings and accept and support imperfections in others?