

Finding Success in Total Dependence

584 Words

This post is adapted from Kathy Howard's new devotional "Deep-Rooted: Growing through the Gospel of Mark."

I've experienced plenty of failure in my lifetime. You probably have too. We are imperfect people living in a broken world. Much of my failure has resulted from refusing to admit when I needed help, pridefully overestimating my own ability. And have you noticed? Simple defeat isn't bad enough; failure always seems to draw a crowd. Why is that? Seriously, where are all those looky-loos when we succeed?

The ninth chapter of Mark's Gospel records a big fail for some of Jesus' disciples. When Jesus and His three closest disciples descended from the mount of transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13) the fallout of failure welcomed them. An eager crowd and a desperate father with a sick, demon-possessed son, looked on as the other nine frustrated disciples argued with some opportunistic scribes. The scene quickly dampened the spiritual high of the mountain-top experience.

Maybe this scene feels familiar. You returned home after a peaceful time of rest or some special time with the Lord and walked into a storm at home. Chaos chewed up calm. Discord displaced peace. This is what Jesus encountered.

The nine disciples had tried to heal the boy and failed. But, why? With the authority of Jesus, they had exorcised demons during their recent mission trip (Mark 6:13). So why did they fail now? The passage indicates not only insufficient faith, but also misplaced faith. When they were alone, Jesus blamed a lack of prayer (Mark 9:29). Prayer fosters dependence on God and His power. Lack of prayer reveals an attitude of self-sufficiency. Perhaps their past "success" had fostered pride, which caused them to battle the demon under their own power. And they lost the fight.

In contrast, the father was helpless and he knew it. Although he confessed weak faith, he humbly asked Jesus to strengthen it, to ease his doubts. The father brought everything to Jesus. He brought his sick son. He brought his hopelessness. He brought his fledgling faith. He even brought his doubts.

But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can't! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" Mark 9:22b-24, ESV

Jesus encouraged the father to embrace faith. "All things are possible for one who believes" (vs 23). "Possible" does not mean that we can dictate God's work through our "faith." Just because God can do something doesn't mean He will. It does mean that God is able. Our desire for an outcome, no matter how much we believe, will not override God's plans and purposes. But, we

can rest in the truth that God's work does not depend on the size of our faith, but on His power and grace.

Faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). We can either weaken it by independence and self-reliance or we can strengthen it through use. Let's ask God for opportunities to build our faith. And when they come, may we exercise dependence on the One who is always able.

Have you been trying to undertake some ministry or work for God under your own strength? If so, confess your independence to God and submit to total dependence on Him.

Lord God, I confess feelings of independence and self-sufficiency. All things are possible only because You hold all power and authority. Help me depend fully on You at all times. Strengthen my faith where it is weak. In Jesus' name, amen.

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A former "cultural Christian," Kathy Howard now has a passion for God's Word that's contagious. With more than 30 years of experience, Kathy has taught in dozens of states, internationally, and in a wide range of venues including multi-church conferences and large online events. She has a Masters of Christian Education from the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary. Kathy is the author of 10 books, including the new "meaty" devotional *Deep-Rooted: Growing through the Gospel of Mark*. She writes for multiple online magazines and devotional sites. Kathy and her husband live in the Dallas/Ft Worth area near family. They have three married children, five grandchildren, and two accidental dogs. Kathy provides free discipleship resources and blogs regularly at www.KathyHoward.org. She also connects with women at [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#), and [Instagram](#).