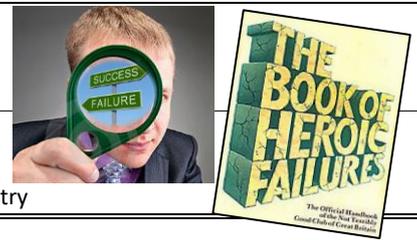


# St Paul's Dorking Small Groups - Sunday 30th October 2016

## Growing confidence – in failure! Mark 9: 14-29



We continue our series on **Growing Confidence**. This week we look at how so-called failure need not be determinative and in fact, can be a springboard to our growth and development as disciples. We will be looking at this with special regard to us stepping into more fruitful and adventurous ministry

### Read Mark 9:14-29

**1) Overview - There is a fine line between success and failure!** Last week we explored the disciples' success in healings and miracles. Now they experience failure: they were powerless to heal the sick boy and his father's faith was limited. But healing depends on the power of God, not on the extent of our faith: Jesus expelled the demon, healed the boy and delivered a valuable lesson on the cost of securing victory over the enemy.

**2) How do we view failure?** Failure can be such a destructive word, feeling or experience. It immediately suggests; fault, failing, fiasco, breakdown or bankruptcy. In our success-driven culture failure is unacceptable. This attitude to failure is summed up in this quote from Abdul Kalum, **"Confidence and hard work is the best medicine to kill the disease called failure. It will make you a successful person."** That is so wrong!

**3) A better way:** The biblical view of failure is quite different, and is summed up before us in this passage. Jesus did not leave the disciples in a place of failure but used it as a springboard to impart a valuable lesson concerning prayer and the power of evil. The disciples were not failures they were followers ... **Not losers but learners!** This leads us to a better definition of failure: **To F.A.I.L. is only the First Attempt In Learning!**

**4) Heroic Failures:** The bible is filled with stories of heroic failures - the stories of ordinary people who discover grace and mercy and make some small contribution to God's purposes and plans in spite of their weakness, failure and uncertainty. Whether it's Moses, David, Peter, Paul, you, or me, God has this wonderful upside-down kingdom of grace whereby it is the poor in spirit who will find God, where it is the weak that will be strong, where the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, where the proud will be resisted and humble given grace, and where trials and tribulations will be our personal trainer to develop our faith and faithfulness and our trust in his plans and purposes.

**5) Looking at success and failure through the right lens:** This Kingdom-centred view enables us to see that it is not what we achieve that counts, but our faithfulness in being followers. **God does not judge us for how we drop the ball but He is concerned with how quickly we pick it up!**

**6) Renewing our minds:** But if we are honest it does not feel like that most of the time! We feel constrained, we feel the fear of failure. We even see little steps as simply steps too far. What so grips us that we are unwilling to try? Why are we so fixed in a mind-set of inertia and fear of failure? Our minds need to be transformed to learn from our experiences: **Ro. 12: 2**

**7) How do you view your failures and setbacks?** Carol Dwek differentiates between the fixed and the growth mindsets:

- Fixed Mindset: 'My abilities are predetermined and unchanging; I don't like challenges so I stick to what I know I can do; I react negatively to feedback or criticism; when I'm frustrated, I give up. When I fail, I am a failure.'
- Growth Mindset: 'Effort and attitude determine my abilities; I like new challenges and find feedback constructive; I'm inspired by the success of others. Failure is an opportunity to grow in experience. When I fail, I am learning.'

**8) How might we apply this to our confidence and stepping into more fruitfulness?**

3 ways we might respond to our study today:

- a) We may need to get our **Heads** right and ask God to renew our **minds** and open our thoughts to new possibilities - to adopt a growth rather than fixed mindset.
- b) We may need to be released from the grip of past failures and setbacks. To have our **Hearts** healed and our inertia released to remove the fear of failure.
- c) We may need to have our **Feet** ignited - to step out of the armchair and step up into a new adventure.



### QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. **Heroic failures!** Share together some of your stories of failure. How did the story end, what did you learn?
2. Why do you think the disciples failed to expel the demon? What may have contributed to this? (See previous chapters for clues.)
3. How do you view failure? What can we learn from **F.A.I.L.**? (First attempts in learning)-How might this impact your approach to stepping out into new fruitfulness and new ministry? (Just try?!)
4. Do you recognise yourself in Carol Dwek's contrasting Growth vs Fixed mind-sets? What is it that stops us from trying? Why do we hold back? What speaks to you in the verse **"Be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how His ways will really satisfy you."** (Romans 12:2 The Living bible)
5. Consider how you need to respond. Share together and pray together- Is God needing to do a work in your head, heart, or feet? Do we need renewal, release and/or ignition?