

## The One Time Jesus Failed

1. Warm-up question: Failure is a universal part of the human experience. Tell us about a recent failure of yours. It can be serious or lighthearted.

2. Here are four notable quotes on failure. Which one most grabs you and why?

J.M. Barrie: “We’re all failures – at least the best of us are.”

John F. Kennedy: “Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly.”

Napoleon Hill: “Most great people have attained their greatest success just one step beyond their greatest failure.”

Anonymous: “The bigger the failure, the greater the lesson.”

3. Jesus launched his public ministry in a town called Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, about 40 miles from his hometown of Nazareth. Somewhere in the middle of his ministry, he decided to make a trip to Nazareth to share his ministry there. Right before going to Nazareth, Jesus raised a dead girl, healed someone who’d been sick for 18 years, and cast demons out of a mad man. Right after Nazareth, Jesus fed 5,000, then walked on water. But while in Nazareth, things were very different. Read Mark 6:1-6.
  - a. As Jesus approached Nazareth, what do you imagine he was feeling, hoping, and envisioning?
  - b. The words spoken in verse 2 appear to have been sarcastic. To get the right tone, put “wisdom” and “deeds of power” in air quotes. In other words, people were questioning both his wisdom and his ability to do miracles. Given what they say in verse 3, what appears to have been the primary reason the people of Nazareth refused to believe God was working through Jesus in extraordinary ways? Psychologically, what was going on here?
  - c. Jeff suggested that the people of Nazareth missed their “God moment” because of a failure of spiritual imagination. They had watched Jesus grow up and knew his family. For years, he’d been their village carpenter. To them, Jesus was ordinary, and they couldn’t imagine God being powerfully present in the ordinary. When Jesus encountered their unbelief, how do you think that made him feel?
  - d. Psychologist Richard Wiseman describes an experiment where participants were asked to watch a 30 second video of two teams playing basketball. Their assignment was to count the number of times the teams passed the ball. Right in the middle of the video a man appeared in a gorilla suit. But most participants were so focused on counting the passes, they didn’t even notice. From this Wiseman concluded: Most people go through life so focused on the immediate task at hand, they miss their “gorilla moments.” What do you think Wiseman means by “gorilla moments”?

- e. Have you ever been so preoccupied with the ordinary tasks of life that you almost missed a “gorilla moment”? What happened?
4. The people of Nazareth missed their “gorilla moment.” They were unable to realize that God was in Jesus in an extraordinary way. As a consequence, the text of our Gospel story says, “Jesus *could not do any miracles there*, except he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he was amazed by their unbelief.” Mark 6:5 (NKJV). Because of their unbelief, Jesus’ mission to Nazareth failed.
- a. Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” Jeff suggested the following definition for faith:
- An awareness of the constant presence of God  
That feeds an active spiritual imagination  
That generates *Possibility Thinking* within us.
- Critique that definition? What do you like or dislike about it?
- b. Jeff said, “Saying ‘all things are possible’ does not mean ‘all things are probable.’ Faith is not a way of forcing God’s hand; it’s a way of releasing God’s hand to do what God chooses.” What do you think that means?
- c. The lesson of our Gospel story can be reduced to a simple equation:
- God’s Presence + our Faith = All Things Possible  
God’s Presence + no Faith = Nothing Possible
- Do you buy the idea that the flow of God’s power through us and around us is squelched without faith? Why or why not? What’s so special about faith?
- d. When have you seen faith make a huge difference for someone?
5. Jesus carried with him into Nazareth the same faith he had when ministering elsewhere, yet he couldn’t do the same miracles in Nazareth as elsewhere. Why? Because of the unbelief of those around him. The lesson is obvious: It’s not just our own personal faith that matters, but the faith (or lack thereof) of people around us. My faith affects you, and your faith affects me.
- a. Why do you think it works that way? Why couldn’t Jesus’ faith override the unbelief of those around him? Why can’t my faith override someone’s unbelief?
- b. Is group faith always stronger than solo faith? Why or why not?
- c. Read Matthew 18:20. Have you ever seen group faith in action? What happened?
- d. In what aspect of your life right now would you like to release even more faith? (In our prayer time tonight, let’s consciously infuse our group faith into each individual situation mentioned.)