

## VIRTUE 24

# OVERCOMING FAILURE

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 3:13-14

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

—1 John 1:9

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

—Lamentations 3:22-23

**O**vercoming failure means getting back up after getting knocked down. It means pushing through a difficult and trying circumstance and not giving up.

Most movies about knights show the gallantry *and* pride of knights as they move from one victorious battle to another victorious battle. But that's not the way of a knight—not then and not now. True knights are familiar with both victory *and* defeat. No matter

how hard you train, how much you practice, and how much you prepare, there will always be one better. The knights of old knew this, primarily through their experience in tournaments and not necessarily through their experience in battle.

Tournaments involved swordplay and jousting, two sports that could be incredibly hard on the body. Swordplay (even while armored), led to broken and bruised fingers, hands, and wrists. Jousting (where two opponents charged each other on horseback with pointed lances) led to broken bones and broken egos, as it is easy for both of these to break when being knocked clear off the backside of your horse! In fact, jousting led to so many injuries that King Henry II (1154-1189) forbid the sport to preserve the well-being of his highly trained knights.

Back then, it took a lot of self will and faith in God to get up and face the crowd after being knocked off one's horse by an opponent or being beat down by another during a sword duel that was viewed by peers and relatives. But this is precisely how a knight defeats one of his own worst enemies: pride. In fact, experiencing personal defeat is one of the surest and fastest ways to destroy this key opponent. And in this way, we can grow tremendously through our defeats.

Remember—God is more willing to raise up the humble than he is the proud (1 Peter 5:5-6). If we respond to life's failures with humility toward both God and man and allow our lowly spirit to be corrected, God raises us back to stability and security: "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast" (1 Peter 5:10).

Without properly handling defeat, there is no real success. Success by the nature of our failures embodies a determined spirit to overcome defeat and failure. But we cannot do this on our own. We need God's grace both in discovering our subtle sins and in making appropriate changes.

**REFLECT**

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

—2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

—Hebrews 12:7

**RESPOND**

1. What is the most challenging failure you have experienced? How did you overcome?
2. How does our view of eternity impact how we go through daily challenges?
3. How can God use our failures to build our lives?
4. Sometimes we decide how we will handle our failures even seconds after making them. How can we choose wisely?
5. How does our perspective of the failure impact how we respond to the failure (see Hebrews 12:7)?