

Your Limitation is Your Invitation

In a culture that places such a high premium on success, strength and personal power it is difficult for most of us to deal with our limitations. With 24 hour campaign coverage and sports center highlights glorifying achievement through winning at the highest level, we are continually reminded that the strong are rewarded and the weak go home.

Consequently, we are taught to hide our weaknesses, conditioned to ignore our struggles.

Rarely are we encouraged to celebrate our limitations.

But celebrate limitation, is exactly what Paul did.

“And He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

While meditating on this passage recently, I sensed the Holy Spirit speak to my heart, “Your limitations are my invitation.”

As I began to meditate on this statement I began to think about times in my life when I had failed. Early on in my walk with God these failures paralyzed me. Over time I have seen that some of the greatest discoveries in my life have come out of seasons of failure.

I believe that God could be giving us one of three invitations during seasons of personal failure. Our ability to perceive the precise nature of His invitation and our response to it determines our future.

1. Failure at a task could be an invitation to development

Have you ever attempted to step out and do something that you knew you were called to do, only to end up a miserable failure? Of course. We all have. The important thing is not whether you fail or not, but how you respond to it.

Jesus told Peter to step out and walk on water. There were no instructional books on water walking available for him to consult. Somehow, he had missed the seminar. The only thing Peter could do was to take Jesus at His word and step out! So he did.

After a few steps of success, he began to feel pretty good about himself. That’s when the wind hit.

You talk about the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. One moment he is the man!. He can hear the amazed cheers from the boat, “He’s doing it!” He looks at Jesus face. The Lord is beaming with pride.

And then it happens. A sharp gust of wind, a cold shot of fear and Peter – the rock - sinks like a rock.

Have you ever started well? Starting well is probably an indication of a gift. It is most likely evidence of a divine call. But starting well usually doesn't end well – at least not the first or second or twentieth time we attempt something for God.

What is the message of Peter's failure to walk on water? Nobody walks on water perfectly the first time! The fact that you fail isn't necessarily an invitation to quit, it could be an invitation to development within your calling, so that you can experience greater success next time around.

2. Failure at a task could be an invitation "to wait."

Sometimes failure at a task is evidence of being "out of step" with the timing of God.

Moses was called to deliver the people of Israel. His calling would take 80 years to fully mature to a place where he could begin. At around the age of 40 he murdered an Egyptian who had attacked an Israelite and got himself into some serious trouble.

Right calling – wrong timing.

Failure could mean that you are too early. Don't give up. Stay on the potter's wheel and allow God to sharpen your ability to hear His voice, releasing you in His timing.

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven..."
Ecclesiastes 3:1

3. Failure at a task could be an invitation to "focus elsewhere."

Finally, failure at a task could be an invitation to focus our energies elsewhere.

Next to finding Christ, the greatest discovery you will ever make in life is discovering who you are. Sometimes the path to discovering who you are is discovering who you are not.

In my life, I have made some great discoveries about Matt Rice. Many of these discoveries did not occur at the moment of great victory. Many of these defining moments occurred in moments of failure.

At the wise age of eleven I was convinced that I had been placed on this earth to be a professional football player. My heart told me that this was my purpose in life. Everything in my genetic code screamed otherwise.

My heart caught up with my genetic code on a cold November evening in Carroll, Ohio. It was the final play of the game against the Eastland Vikings when 240 pounds of combined defensive weight crushed my 60 pound frame to the ground, tearing my leg muscle from the bone. The next morning I awakened with a new revelation... I had been placed on this earth to be an astronaut.

Isn't it amazing how failure can assist us in the journey of self discovery?

One of the characteristics of maturity is the ability to be brutally honest with ourselves. Sometimes our goals are not God's purpose for our lives. Failure could be the only means God has left to get through to us that there is something else He has called us to do.

The key to discovery is asking God for discernment in our failure. Keep an open and surrendered heart that God can speak to. Whatever you do, guard your heart against bitterness and resentment – a powerful enemy during times of struggle. One thing is for sure – whatever God has called you to will be the most satisfying thing you could ever do in this life.

Don't miss God's best by refusing to let go of something you were never called to do. Choose to believe that God has a purpose that fits you perfectly, and that a moment of failure is not the end, but another step forward in the discovery of your uniqueness in Christ.

"eye hath not seen, no ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

So, How Do I Discern Which Invitation God is Giving To Me?

This is the big question, isn't it? The fact is, there is not an easy answer to this question, because the nature of self discovery is so personal. It is a journey characterized by unique dealings specific to our personal relationship with God. That being said, there are some basic scriptural principles that all of us can apply as we seek to discern the precise nature of God's invitation.

- **Look for the Fruit!** - When seeking to clarify God's invitation to us in seasons of discovery the first test we should apply is the "fruit test." Is there any fruit in what I am doing? If I am called to a certain area of service there will be at least some fruit – even in the beginning stages. While the crop might be small, the fact that there are some tangible results from my efforts is usually a good indication that I am on the right path, and my temporary failure is an invitation to development. Remember, before Peter sunk, he walked.
- **Continually Develop Your Spiritual Hearing** - Build your ability to hear from God through spending time in the Word, prayer and waiting before Him. Expect Him to develop your ability to hear from Him. He will increase your capacity to hear and discern His voice.
- **Listen to your Mentors** – God develops us through mentoring relationships. The scripture tells us there is "wisdom in a multitude of council." All of us need the objective voices of people who care enough about us to "speak the truth in love" – encouraging us to persist when we are in a season of development, to wait on God when the timing doesn't seem right or having the boldness to suggest a change of direction when we are headed down a wrong path.
- **Make it your highest goal to serve others** – Keeping your heart right is the probably the quickest path to discernment. Jesus promised that the "pure in heart will see God." When our greatest desire in life is to serve, God can more easily direct us in seasons of discovery because our motive is not merely to

survive, but to find the place of greatest effectiveness for the sake of God and others.

- **Exercise your faith** – Trust God to give you discernment and to speak to your heart. Confess His faithfulness and care for you over your life. He will respond to faith and give you the specific insight you need. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith...: James 1:5-6*
- **Refuse to Become Bitter** – After the great passage on mountain moving faith in Mark 11:22-24 Jesus instructed his disciples to *“forgive, if you have ought against any so that your Father in heaven may forgive you.”* Nothing clouds are perspective, short circuits our faith and closes the heavens like unforgiveness. In seasons of failure and disappointment the battle for our heart is never more intense. Determine that bitterness will not have you. It will not define you. Walk in love and watch your discernment grow.
- **Find Your Joy and Security in Christ Alone** - Most importantly, remember that your joy in life should flow from who you are in Christ, not from what you do for Him. While there is great satisfaction in fulfilling the will of God, we should never allow that satisfaction to replace the joy of simply belonging to Christ. It is this joy that centers us in seasons of failure, giving us the ability to truly discern His voice. The fact that I am His child strengthens me during frustrating times, granting me the ability to properly view my limitations as an invitation for His power. Always remember this – if you never do anything of significance for Him, He still loves you. You are still His child – secure in His grace. It is this “freedom to fail” that gives us the foundation to step out, knowing that God can transform our weakness into a stronghold of Divine power.

Accept The Invitation!

Whether God is using circumstances to develop you, teach you his timing or clarify your calling, remember this, He always has your best interest in heart. His power is made perfect in our weakness as His grace fills the void created by our limitation.

Make the decision today that failure will not be something that paralyzes you. Rather, see it for what it is – a divine invitation calling you to deeper fellowship with Christ, sharper discernment and unlimited opportunities within your call.