

Working Hard to Fail?

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 23 January 2018 20:19

One thing I gathered when working with neurotics, and many psychotics, was that they WANTED to suffer and did not want, or expect, relief. Indeed, they worked very hard to suffer. Indeed, it was their only comfort and, in some cases, enjoyment. I have noted this peculiar tendency since the early 1970s when I began training in psychiatry. I have also noted this tendency in many who might not officially be called 'neurotic'. Most begin their psychiatric 'career' by seeing their doctor, who will maintain them on drugs or brief chats. If that does not work, they are sent for assessment. That is when they become 'professional' patients. (Please understand, that psychiatric maladies are not true illnesses. See my other articles).

These folks will work hard for a short while, to get to their goal (education, work, social, professional, religious, etc.). But, then, suddenly, they fail to get there and no-one can figure out why. Perhaps you will recognise this syndrome (because that is what it is) in students who appear to work very hard to pass their course or degree. Then, literally a month or two, or even less, before they are due to take their exams, they walk out, with any number of excuses.

Some even use the excuse that 'God' called them to do something else! (I heard one such person claim God had called them to Christian service/missionary work! Did I believe it? No, I did not). In reality, they worked hard to fail. They give up just before they had to prove themselves. For them, to fail would be dishonourable, or embarrassing. It's a bit twisted but that's what happens; they walk out with lame excuses so as to avoid what they think will be criticism for failing. Make no mistake, this is a mental imbalance showing an error in thinking and application. It strongly affects emotions, too, and if not corrected, the emotions take over and rule every decision and action.

University students are partly chosen on their exam grades, which help to imply an intellect high enough to take on advanced education and training. If a student works hard and THEN fails, well, that is life, though it would be indicative of slackness in study. And knowing how thousands of students act, it would not surprise me! On the other hand, when one works hard, this attitude and knowledge will likely lead to a good pass rate. But, when a person does not put the work in, he is likely to fail. So, by leaving just before an exam, they leave the conclusion up in the air.

So, rather than officially fail, the barriers go up and they plead some 'honourable' course of action secretly taken by them to avoid failing. They don't get to the end because they fear failing. But, all they do is fail anyway, leaving everyone intrigued and mystified. Onlookers will usually not understand and accept the excuses for failure. Which is a mistake – the student needs to face the fear and be told what it is.

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(When a young teenager I played this game, but with a slight difference. For example, I began work in a local council office, totting up figures. The office had very high windows and seemed like a dungeon. So, when I went out for lunch on the first day I never returned! In another job, part-time as a waiter with bow-tie, I got bored cleaning cutlery and started to play the latest musical score of 'From Russia with Love' on the piano. Others gathered around me, but then came the boss, who told me off. There, too, I went out for lunch and walked all the way home, never to return. In both I did not do what was expected of me, and had my parents' home to go back to. They kept me going, so I had no wish to carry on. It is very easy to give up and fail when there is no financial ruin or 'come-back', and you have a home. My attitude changed radically after getting married – it made me work and made me stick at it, no matter what! This lax attitude also prevented me from gaining more passes in what was then GCE examinations. I was later ashamed of this refusal to do the work, because my parents knew I could do better).

What all this does is to reinforce a pattern of failure. It is a self-imposed system of fear, no different from any other neurosis or psychosis, but it is usually unrecognised by those around them. Another reason for failing is mentioned above – a person cannot be bothered to put in the necessary work to ensure success. Some even turn to petty crime and unemployment. Whether failure is caused by laziness or by deliberate avoidance of testing, the result is the same – an increasing attitude of anxiety when given such responsibility. Only after I gained a wife and children did my attitude change dramatically, and I stuck to my responsibilities no matter HOW I felt. When I was in my parents' home I did not bother, especially as they added some money for spending. Of course, I did not think of it much at the time. Only later did I come to realise how I had acted. This is why a good 'kick in the pants' is necessary at times, and a frank telling of the truth. Sympathy only makes things worse!

Many people are serial failures; it is a lifelong habit. They go so far and then give up, because they feel inadequate or highly anxious. This is a self-awarded situation, because no-one bothers to tell them off or to hold them to account. Rather than fail 'officially' they give up – so they fail anyway. And when this is the pattern, sticking at something will not be an option, because failure is already the desired end result. They think it lets them off the hook in people's eyes, and onlookers will accept the excuses, because they know no better. And so this, too, reinforces the reasons to fail. If not dealt with swiftly at the start it turns into neurosis. (Of course, this does not take into account the rarer situation of genuine inability; that is, with an actual physical cause affecting thought processes, etc.).

I have witnessed it too many times. The only answer is to reverse the tendency, but the longer the failing continues the harder it gets, and with every new failure comes a different excuse. It doesn't matter what it is, so long as working hard to win is put out of the question. For Christians

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this rejection of responsibility is a sin and guarantees future multiple fails at everything the person does. It is habitual and not inevitable.

Behind it all is an earlier fear of being found out, of doing what is necessary and REALLY failing. And behind this is usually some incident that caused them to feel bad about themselves. They don't tell anyone about this, so the original reasons are hidden with time. There may even be a reliance on psychosomatic illnesses, which, given the right fostering, can become real ailments. Even so, the REAL answer is to reverse the attitude that WANTS to fail. Of course, being brought up in a bad home, where perhaps parents are also lazy or do not take responsibility is a handicap, but it can be turned around when the person becomes old enough to do something about it. Though misled by his or her background, it cannot be allowed as an excuse for life. There is also the element of a sinful rejection of God-given talents and skills, which is never acceptable in a Christian.

Even in Christian lives this can rule a person to distraction. He or she will not speak about it because to do so might bring a genuine answer that requires action on their part! I know of some Christians who have refused to speak with me about this or that problem because they feared the direct and unswerving nature of my responses. They even avoid meeting with me! Why? Because they would need to rectify their failure and prove themselves before God. They never realise that their attitude of failing dishonours the Lord. The longer they continue their failing, the deeper they get into a spiritual mess, with increasing blindness. There comes a point when ANYTHING is quoted as the 'cause' of their failures... but they never accept responsibility as a person. So, rather than sort this out, they just avoid me. Simple! But, this kind of avoidance of truth has bad consequences as time slips by seemingly faster and faster, and those who really need this kind of reality check grow older and more useless as they get older. To cover-up their sin they quote their excuses and convince themselves they are not at fault. Some may even develop psychosomatic 'illnesses' as a partner-in-crime.

Furthermore, they will erect many defences to stop questions being asked. They will even convince themselves that their ailments and problems are true. Well, they would, because they refuse to deal with them! Perhaps you are now admitting that you know people like this. This might be true – but be careful you haven't got a fir tree stuck in your eye! The majority of Christians refuse to listen to genuine counsel or to real biblical truth. They prefer their failing beliefs to hard-core Bible doctrine. This, friends, is just as bad as the man or woman who deliberately fails at the point of proving themselves.

The local churches, then, are filled with folks who WANT to win spiritually, but whose refusal to listen or to change will drag them along a path of spiritual failure. I see so many of these every

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day. I receive letters and emails from them. I read material they write, that is so obviously free of hard work guided by the Holy Spirit.

This is an important matter, but, reader, do you care? It is about YOU and your beliefs, which affect how you see the Lord. If you are not truly following the Lord then your failure is a rip-roaring success!

Note: What I have shown above is not isolated. It is commonplace. This is shameful for anyone who says they follow Christ. It is also destructive of their lives as they wallow about in resultant self-pity and stasis. Do not get caught by this very common malady... the sooner you give up self the quicker you will grow in strength and ability. Then, when you genuinely fail (as everyone does at times) you will just shrug and say "So?" Got the courage to work at life and say "So?"

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