

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## LEARN FROM FAILURE

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09 APRIL 2021

In a few days I will at last be able to get my boat wet and will be able to go sailing on the sea, off Anglesey. I look forward to this point in time with great eagerness, but the scenario is nearly always the same each year...

First of all, I have to check that the boat is seaworthy before venturing on to the sea and that all the parts are sound and where they should be. I'm pretty good at this, but I wasn't at first. I remember in my eagerness to get on the water one year. I simply put the sail up, stuck the tiller on the back and pushed off from the beach and out to sea.

It was OK at first, but the boat felt heavy and un-responding. It was only when I looked over the back that I saw the drain plug bobbing about behind the boat on the string that attached it to the hull! I probably don't need to tell you that the bung should have been in its hole doing the job of stopping the sea transferring into my boat! Thankfully I had enough speed to keep the hull above the water and head for the beach from where I had started. Once back though, I had to get the boat hauled up to get the water out, so that I could refit the bung and get out for the sail I intended. All this can be very embarrassing if done in front of others. It isn't something you do very often!

The other thing I have to learn, is actually how to sail again! I know it sounds silly, but after a few months off the water, there are certain things that I need to be re-acquainted with – the balance point of the boat, the effect of sidewinds and tides and even becoming familiar again with where certain rocks are at certain times between tides!

Time away from most things means that we have to spend some time relearning and getting back to where we were. Hopefully, in the case of sailing, I manage to improve year on year, but the start is always a relearning exercise.

I'm sure I don't need to let you know where I am heading with this beacon – the more we put something aside, either by being lazy or undisciplined, the harder it is to get going again.

The Bible tells us over and over again to keep going, keep fighting, keep the faith, keep growing, become mature. It is a process which involves commitment and discipline. Effort to attain a goal:

Romans 12 v 1-2

***I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.***

As a Christian, or follower of Jesus, it is my goal to be transformed into His likeness. To have the same attitude and display the same character as Jesus. Sometimes this is easier than at other times, but it is always a determined effort.

I'm a keen swimmer and managed to attain a high standard through much training and sacrifice. Every night, most mornings and every weekend, slogging it up and down swimming pools, either for Reddish swimming club, Greater Manchester Swimming Club, or Cheshire and even National and International levels. It was my life, my dedication. There was not much time for anything else.

Many years later, I can convince myself that I can still swim to the same level, however this would be my mind running away with itself! If I got in the water and tried to replicate what I used to be able to do, then suddenly my larger body mass, weaker muscle mass and reduced lung capacity would soon persuade me of the true state of affairs! There is no doubt that if I began to train again at the right levels, some of the muscle

memory and lung capacity would return, but my body is a different shape, size and bulk! It wouldn't be able to cut through the water like a knife anymore, more like slam through it like a cargo laden super-tanker!

Now, some people out there may not be able to swim, and even the most persuasive argument to convince you that you will naturally float if you can learn to trust, will be to no avail. It will still take some time to persuade the head of its natural compulsion to put feet on the floor or grab the swimming pool side or cling to the person trying to help you swim. As a swimming instructor I have seen all of these reactions at one time or another. It is almost impossible to persuade the brain that you will float – it goes against the natural instincts.

How do you learn to trust? How do you fight the disorientation, the weirdness of being counter intuitive? Bit by bit. Maybe its lifting one foot at a time off the floor. Maybe its learning to trust the person holding you up, but in reality, it is the same as anything else. We learn little by little and often failure is the way in which we teach ourselves how to succeed. As soon as the mind is convinced that the opposite of what it thought is possible, the more this becomes the accepted reality. We retrain or renew our mind.

This may not happen overnight, in fact, I would suggest that as far as becoming like Jesus is concerned, we can spend a lifetime renewing our minds – and sometimes we may be minded to give up. Hebrews 12 however, tells us that we have a huge crowd of witnesses who have gone before us cheering us on, encouraging us to finish the race, to reach maturity in Jesus.

Often, we will face failure in our efforts. I had to be beaten into second place in the pool over and over again before I physically matured and mentally got to a place where I could accelerate past and finally win. Once I had done that, there was no going back (until I was physically unable to maintain the standard). Don't be surprised by failure. It is a natural occurrence. It is designed to help us get stronger and more determined. We win by learning how to fail less.

Learning to live by the Bible's standards may seem like an impossibility (spoiler alert: it largely is!), however, we are not left to our own devices to achieve anything which approaches God's standard.

I was once told that we have everything we need in scripture. We need nothing else. I don't agree.

**Now before I get strung up for being a heretic, let me explain by way of an example:**

If I was navigating an international city on the continent, on the wrong side of the road in an unfamiliar vehicle, and I had a map, I might be able to work out where to go with some effort, but if suddenly I encountered roadworks and some closed roads (perhaps something not covered in detail on my map), I would soon find that the map had its limitations. If I stopped and asked someone to help, they may be able to offer assistance in broken English to help me find a suitable way around the closed road to my destination, but how much better if they offered to get into the car and direct me from within! I am sure I would get to my destination safely and in good time.

The truth is, the Bible reveals God's character and standard for our lives, but it sometimes seems silent on some of the obstacles or difficulties that we might face in today's life. This is where the Holy Spirit steps in. As a believer, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us perceive and adhere to God's character and standards in all situations. We might not get things right every time, but, with the Holy Spirit's help, we will learn from our mistakes, realise that God is helping us in our quest to renew our minds.

One thing I will say though, is this:

I WON'T IMPROVE MY SAILING IF I NEVER GET IN THE BOAT.

I WOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE OLYMPICS IF I HADN'T TRAINED – FAILURE AND EFFORT BECOMES THE ROUTE TO SUCCESS

So, don't be afraid of making mistakes. I am sure that God would rather us try and fail than stand still and remain the same?

Fair well until next time my friends, I trust that you will become stronger by learning that failure is not the end, but could well be the beginning. Learn to fail well.



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