



Feeling Like a Failure

Failure can hit at the strangest moments.

I began my pursuit of physical and spiritual health weighing 366 pounds. Only one month later, I was down 50 pounds. Simply through hours of exercise and counting calories.

To say I was excited would be putting it mildly. People were complimenting me, I had strangers coming up to me and telling me my hours at the gym were an inspiration, and I was blowing away every goal I had set for myself. Which is why week six of my quest for health seems so strange to those who hear about it.

I got depressed.

Emotionally out of Control

I felt completely and utterly discouraged, overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness and failure. So, during that week I restocked my house with all of my favorite foods. I had a Pringle buffet in the cabinet, a freezer full of ice cream sandwiches and frozen egg rolls, Pop-Tarts, cookies, and nachos. (*Nachos...I'm salivating just typing the word.*)

As it turns out, eating is a coping mechanism I've developed for dealing with out-of-control emotions. When I get bummed, I start craving triple Whoppers. After losing 50 pounds in only a handful of weeks, I honestly believed my dream of someday being physically fit was hopeless. I stood in front of my mirror and pitied myself for being destined to be the fat guy because somehow I'm biologically wired that way—as opposed to my skinny, pizza-scarfing friends.

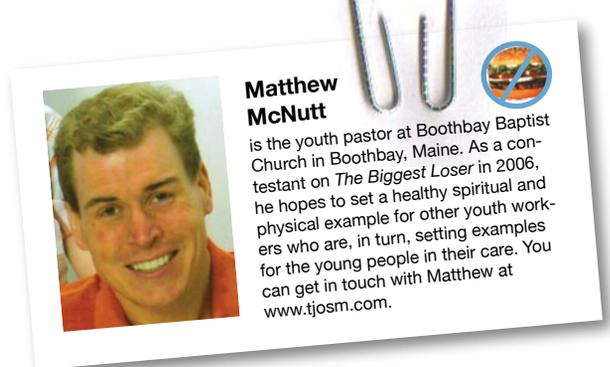
Even now, a year later and having finally reached a healthy weight for someone my age and height, I still endure days filled with frustration and despair; I sense an overwhelming conviction that I'm only kidding myself if I believe I can actually stay healthy. And I still have times of failure when I binge and ignore my workouts.

Part of me feels foolish for even entertaining these thoughts. *How can someone who's managed to achieve his goals in less than a year still feel unable to maintain health?*

It turns out, I'm not as strange as I thought.

In Good Company

Moses, Job, and Jeremiah all prayed for death in their moments of despair! Elijah had the star role in one of the greatest showdowns in history, facing off alone against hundreds of prophets of Baal with the entire nation watching. Then after having undeniably and miraculously defeating them, he begged for God to take his life because one woman, Jezebel, was angry



Matthew McNutt

is the youth pastor at Boothbay Baptist Church in Boothbay, Maine. As a contestant on *The Biggest Loser* in 2006, he hopes to set a healthy spiritual and physical example for other youth workers who are, in turn, setting examples for the young people in their care. You can get in touch with Matthew at www.tjosm.com.

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and wanted him dead. The entire nation had seen God use Elijah in such a dramatic way that thousands of years later we're still talking about it—yet he cowered in the wilderness feeling like a failure!

But the most amazing thing to me is God's response to Elijah. He simply gives him rest and encourages his broken spirit. Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." I find it tremendously comforting to know God isn't surprised by our failures—that God, in fact, lovingly guides us back to a place of joy rather than condemning us.

Which brings us back to physical health. The sad truth is, everyone blows it sooner or later. No one diets or pursues healthy living and succeeds 100 percent of the time. Even with cameras rolling and hundreds of thousands of dollars on the line, people will still blow their diets!

Defined by Response

The key, then, is our response to failure. Those who define themselves and their ability to succeed according to their darkest moments ultimately become what they fear. Those who're able to isolate those times of failure and see them for what they really are—inevitable moments of weakness that *do* pass—are able to forgive themselves and move on.

What's heartbreaking to me is just how many people do define themselves by the letdowns. Almost daily I get e-mails from people around the world telling me they just can't do it—that they eventually cheat, and then the diet is over. They haven't yet realized that the pursuit of health doesn't have to end every time they're not perfect.

For me, confession and forgiveness have been key in moving past my moments of failure and regaining my focus. James 5:16 reads, "Confess to one another therefore your faults and pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored." We gain the strength necessary to push through failure by drawing on the support of others and the strength of God. When I voice my failure to another, failure loses its hold on me; my fear of it being known is removed, and I can finally let it go and allow myself to feel the forgiveness God has already given me. 

