

"I TRY, I FAIL; I TRUST, HE SUCCEEDS"

(Acts 1:15-26)

(Chuck Swindoll)

In his penetrating book *Your Churning Place*, Robert Wise tells the story of how Burt Lancaster, one of Hollywood's biggest stars of yesteryear, got into show business. Most people don't know he began as a circus performer.

[At an audition] he was asked to perform on the parallel bars, so he leaped on the bars and began his routine. Because he was nervous, his timing was off, and he spun over the bar, falling flat on his face some ten feet below. He was so humiliated that he immediately leaped back on the bar. As he spun again at the same point, he flipped off and smashed to the ground once more!

Burt's tights were torn, he was cut and bleeding, and he was fiercely upset! He leaped back again, but the third time was even worse, for this time he fell on his back. The agent came over, picked him up, and said, "Son, if you won't do that again, you've got the job!"¹

I think that's exactly the way we approach the Christian life. We start out determined to do it, even if it kills us. We keep trying and trying in our own strength, throwing ourselves at the task with ruthless abandon, often landing flat on our backs, over and over again. We try. We fail.

Perhaps that's you. You've given your best routine time after time, and you keep coming back bloodied and torn and bruised and broken.

You might be encouraged to know that the people described in the first chapter of Acts had abysmal track records: broken people, imperfect people, bruised, failing, unsuccessful, weak, fearful, insecure men and women secretly cowering in an upper room, hoping to escape the notice of their enemies. They had done their routine, and God said, "You stay right there. Don't do any more. Stop trying. Start trusting." As they continued to trust and wait, he would do something marvelous: He would send His Spirit to dwell within them.

Let me draw two principles from this portrait of helpless believers.

First, *the people God chooses to empower are not perfect performers but dependent followers*. Isn't that a relief? If you learn anything from this passage, I hope you discover that God isn't looking for perfect performers to execute flawless routines in their own strength. These men and women had faulty and frayed track records.

Our world, however, wants you to believe that it's wrong to ever be wrong and inexcusable to ever fail. We're living under an incredible man-made standard



¹ Robert L. Wise, *Your Churning Place* (Glendale, Ca: Regal Books, 1977), 66.

called "perfection"! While we say we embrace grace, in practice we *really* uphold a performance-based standard of worth in the Christian life. The fact is, however, that you don't always have to be right. You don't need to be a "tryer"; you need to be a "truster."

Second, *the plan God honors is not complicated but simple*. Essentially, He commands His followers, "Go to Jerusalem and wait." They went to Jerusalem and waited. And He basically assured them, "Trust Me to send the power." They trusted Him to send the power. And He did just that! But we don't like plans that require us to release control. We don't operate like that.

We ask God, "What is your plan for me?"

God says, "Plan A." And He unveils a plan that requires trust and obedience.

We say, "Do You have a Plan B?"

Why? Because Plan A reminds us that we are helpless? Plan A requires trusting in God, and let's face it—we don't always want to trust God!

So, what's the solution? It comes down to a decision based on the realization that when I try, I fail, but when I trust, He succeeds. The solution is simple—not at all easy, but uncomplicated: *Stop trying; start trusting.*