

Exploratory Exercise – success, failure & grace

Sometimes to properly understand failure, we need to look at what we see as success as this can shape our understanding and experience of failure.

Explore an area that you perhaps identify with. How does that feed into your experience of failure?

① **Expectations** – living up to other people’s standards/rules (often parental or church?).

I’ve always been trying to please someone else – my parents, my partner, my children. I need their approval to feel that I have succeeded.

② **Perfectionist** – living to impossibly high personal standards

I cannot settle for anything that is less than the best or my best. It is only when I reach that point that I know that I have succeeded. Anything less than that is failure.

③ **Comparisons** – comparing ourselves to others

I feel that I have failed when I compare myself with others in my family, at work and even church who are clearly more successful or better than I am.

④ **Playing safe** – avoiding challenges in case we fail.

Because of past failures, I avoid challenges and moving outside my comfort zone. I know if I stay there, I am less likely to fail.

⑤ **Performance culture** – often linked to education but also work, high-flier thriving on success.

I have been brought up in a high-performance culture – at school or a results-driven workplace. As such I am very competitive and at times can perhaps be elitest and see failure as weakness.

(After set discussion time) Feed in Philip Yancey quote to each group to consider:

“Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more... And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less... Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love.” — Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*