

THE STEPPING STONE

“From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.” —GENESIS 13:3-4

Many people are hesitant to move forward in their walk with God because they have experienced failure, and are glad others are ‘on the job’ for God. But failure is never final. In fact, it is often a stepping stone God will use in moulding and equipping us for His purpose.

With the exception of Jesus, all the leading characters in the Bible, including the disciples, experienced failure at some point. Before Abraham had settled in Canaan after leaving Egypt, he had failed God several times. Each time, he re-established his covenant with God and built an altar for Him. In effect, he is saying, “God, I am sorry I have strayed away.” God does not brush Abraham off or find someone else to father a nation. He upholds His end of the covenant and waits for Abraham to realign himself with His will and purpose.

Through the many years of ups and downs, Abraham invested wisely in his failures, enough to trust God even with the call to sacrifice his son, Isaac. At the last moment, God stops him and says, “...because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendents as numerous as stars in the sky...and through your offspring all nations in the world will be blessed, because you have obeyed me” (Genesis 22:16-18).

In Abraham's building of the altars, he is realigning himself with the purposes of God, and this is something we all need to do. We come back to the altar of our submission to God, and in doing so, realign ourselves with Him. God does not primarily call us to tasks, but He calls us to Himself. It is essential we keep the lines of communication open, and allow God to speak to us about situations we find difficult. Though the road may be rocky, as it was for Abraham, we do not need to wrap ourselves in cotton wool, afraid of failure again. Life includes failures, and we can actually invest and draw interest on them.

Abraham became the father of our faith; Moses, after killing an Egyptian, became the instrument God used to free the people; King David, despite his adultery, was known as 'a man after God's own heart' and became the plumb line for all the kings of Israel. In embracing our failures, we learn humility, obedience and dependence on God, which is often a stepping stone He will use to bring us into conformity with His will and a much deeper knowledge of Him.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to never be discouraged by my failures, but to use them to realign myself with You and your purpose for me. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I bring my failures to God and trust His working in them?