



My Failures Are Not Final

1 John 5

Small Group Plan

One of my favorite quotes by Landon Saunders is:

*It's not inhuman to fail.
It's inhuman to deny that you fail.
That's failing at failure.*

I like it because I know my own failures and I always have a choice as to how I will respond to them. Will I allow them to bring a final, fatal end to my spiritual growth. Or, will I trust in what John says that “we know?” Over 50 times in these 5 short chapters John uses one of two terms for “to know.” If we expand our count to include all of John’s writings the number swells to over 230. As Christians, there are some things that God wants us to “know.” What are they? Let’s explore together.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- When have you been most afraid about the condition of your soul?
- When have you been most confident?
- What was the essential difference between the fear and the confidence?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— PROMISE —

1 John 5:13

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.*

- Verse 13 can be seen as a summary statement for the entire letter.
- Thinking back through the letter, what are the “things” that assure us that we “have eternal life?”

— CONFIDENCE —

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we **know** that he hears us — whatever we ask — we **know** that we have what we asked of him.

- What do you know about God that makes you certain that he hears you?
- What would a confident prayer sound like?

— CHOICE —

1 John 5:16-17

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray, and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. ¹⁷ All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

- When does sin “lead to death?”
- When does sin “not lead to death?”
- What is the difference?

— TRANSFORMATION —

1 John 5:18

We **know** that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.

- What is your motivation to “not continue to sin?”
- How does Jesus — “the one who was born of God” — keep us safe?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- John’s words here in 1 John 5:14-15 sound a lot like the words of Jesus, which John also recorded in his gospel — John 14:7

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

- Is this “ask whatever you wish” a genie in the lamp request?
I was helped by the following comment by Albert Day:

[It] seems at first an unlimited guarantee of an affirmative answer to any desire — “what ye will.” But it is not what anybody wills, that is assured of the answer. It is what is willed by a particular kind of person, one who is abiding in Christ. When a man truly abides in Christ there are many, many things he never wills to ask; he does not want them ... When Christ’s words

are in the soul, a wish that the secular heart grasps after is no longer even interesting!

- What is the spiritual formation process that brings us to the point where desires that we once had are now not even interesting?

- Notice also these words by Howard Macy:

Prayer has less to do with getting things than with knowing God. It is more concerned with loving God than with lists of prayer requests. Asking for assistance and knowing God are related, of course, but coming into intimacy with the Holy One is the principal purpose and context of prayer.

- What gives you the most confidence when you pray?
- Think of a time when you felt forgiven in failure. What were you doing, reading or thinking about that made your forgiveness so very clear?
- Allow the group members a period of silent prayer to bring their own failures before God. Pray for hearts that believe His truth rather than Satan's lies.