

Keep Swimming

When hard times hit you, sometimes you feel like you lack faith. Always remember, faith is not the absence of struggles, it's how we hold on to God to walk through the struggles. Some days it may seem like all you have is one little step. But that's the key to victory. Keep moving forward. No matter what. Don't give up on yourself, and don't give up on God. He will never give up on you.

Thomas Edison once said **“Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”** I can identify with this statement. In most of my Christian life I have felt inadequate when it comes to my relationship to God. Constantly I would judge my relationship with God by my failures and struggles. Every single time I would pray to the Lord, I would first have to overcome the distance I felt because of my struggles. I knew He wanted to answer my prayer but I felt that it would only happen after I overcame my weaknesses. Thank God I didn't quit and was able to discover the truth about God and the truth about me!

As I discovered the love that God had for me I quit defining my relationship with Him by my failures and started to define it by His love. It says in Psalm 37:23-24 *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.”* To be honest with you; I truly believe that the only way to distinguish the love of God is to fail miserably in front of Him and see how He does not run away from us. The day we understand God as our Father is the day we will enjoy our relationship with Him for the rest our lives. He isn't waiting until you are perfect before He loves you, that is the reason for His love. Your struggles do not change His love towards you.

When my son was four years old we decided to sign him up for some swimming lessons at our local YMCA center. They had six weeks of lessons, held once a week to help children learn to swim better. Since his young life wasn't typical for a boy his age as he traveled around the country with his family as we preached the gospel, Harrison had not had very much experience in swimming. I did think that he would do well because we had been in quite a few hotel pools throughout the years.

However, when the two of us arrived at the swimming pool for his lesson we both felt a little out of place. He was excited about the water but there were about fifteen other children there who seemed to know what was going on. They jumped into the water and took their places because they'd had lessons there before. Harrison took his skinny little body and found a place along the side of the pool in between two other children.

He was quite the sight with his little swimsuit and great big swimming goggles on. The teacher who was a seventeen year old girl began to yell out commands and it was obvious that my son was the only one who had not had lessons before. She would say, “place your head under the water.” Then Harrison would look at her, saying with a puzzled look on his face, “What and get my eyes wet?” I thought that he would figure out in a moment what his goggles were for.

Command after command she would say and each one was difficult and hard for him to obey. The other kids were far more advanced than him at swimming even though they were the same age. After the class the teacher came to me and suggested that for the class next week that we should place him in the younger aged group. She said that his class called the “minnows” might be too advanced and that he might do better if he joined the three year old “guppy” class. I looked at her in her eyes and said “Little girl, my boy is no guppy. He is at least a minnow and is on the way to being a shark!”

I promised her that next week in her class it would be different. As I watched my son struggle to keep up in the water, I knew exactly what he needed. He needed some time in the pool with his dad, so that’s what we did. The next week I worked it out that my boy and I were in the water for hours. Every command that the teacher yelled out in the previous class, we practiced again and again. He was scared to jump into the deep end of the pool and so I would wade in the water and let him jump to me until it was normal to him.

We practiced holding our breath under water and learned to swim across the whole pool. The next week at the start of class, Harrison jumped into the water with the rest of the kids with a new confidence. As the six weeks of classes went by we would spend hours of extra swimming, just a dad and his son. During the last of the Minnow's class my son was the best of all the kids, I was right. He just needed some time in the pool with his dad!

Hebrews 13:5-6 tells us *“let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I **will never leave you nor forsake you.**” So we may boldly say: “the Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?””*

My view of God used to be as someone who would stand at the edge of the pool with His toes over the edge. He would look down at me as I struggled to catch up and would yell at me to hurry up and get it together. I felt that He was waiting for me to fix my problems and to get over my struggles so that He could be in my life. I was constantly striving for God's approval and the whole time He was waiting for me to ask Him to jump into the pool with me.

I thought that because I struggled in areas of my life that I was a failure but that is not true. At least I was struggling and putting up a fight. Many people don't even attempt to live holy, they just do what their flesh wants and then try to serve God. At least I was fighting back and making my flesh submit to the righteousness on the inside of me. I learned that the fact that I was struggling was all that God needed from me to make Himself available to me, to help me to overcome each area of my life.

God is not afraid of our struggles and He does not run from us when we fail. He does more than just cheer for us from the sidelines. He longs to jump right into the middle of our struggles with us and to walk with us hand in hand until we have victory in our life. You may think you are a failure, but don’t give up because you may not realize just how close you are to success. You are not a failure, you only need a little time in the pool with your dad. Your real Dad!!! KEEP SWIMMING

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