



LEARNING FROM MONEY MISTAKES IN THE BIBLE

Financial Failures

How to fail forward

By Peter J. Briscoe

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**Failing forward in your finances.
Learning from financial mistakes in the
Bible.**

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Introduction: Failing Forward

Do you sometimes sigh when you hear all those wonderful success stories? I didn't learn to ride a bike by watching my dad ride. I learned by getting on, having dad push me off, wobbling around, falling off, bruising my knee, scratching the paintwork, denting the mudguard. I only understood what dada said about not going too fast when I rode into a wall.

Failing forward is taking the failures 'on the chin' learning to survive, evaluating what went wrong, being courageous and deciding to do better next time.

Failure is not the opposite of success; it's actually an essential part of it.

Who made these remarks?

"I had failed on an epic scale. An exceptionally short-lived marriage had imploded, and I was jobless, a lone parent, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain, without being homeless. The fears that my parents had had for me, and that I had had for myself, had both come to

pass, and by every usual standard, I was the biggest failure I knew.”

“I didn’t see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me.”

“I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

The first was author J.K. Rowling, the second Steve Jobs and the third, Michael Jordan.

Bill Gates was a Harvard dropout. He co-owned a business called Traf-O-Data, which was a true failure. He later said, “It’s fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure.”

Albert Einstein could not speak fluently until the age of nine. His rebellious nature led to expulsion from school, and he was refused admittance to the Zurich Polytechnic School. He later said, “Success is failure in progress.”

At some point in our lives, we are all tempted to believe we are failures. Yet the great achievers have one thing in common. In the face of adversity, shortcomings, and rejection, they hold onto self-belief and refuse to see themselves as failures. We need to remember that failure is an event, not a person.

Sir James Dyson was the first to invent a vacuum cleaner without a bag. The invention took 15 years and 5,126 failed attempts to finally arrive at the groundbreaking invention. Dyson has since become a vocal advocate for embracing failure, explaining that it was the reason for his success. It's through our failures that we learn to succeed.

Failing forward

The famous saying goes, "It does not matter how many times you fall, but how many times you get up!" The Proverb says, "for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity. (Proverbs 24:15)

In reading about the 'heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, I was struck by the fact that only their victories were mentioned and not their failures. That is because God sees what we will become, not necessarily what we are.

In fact, a lot of people we read about in the Bible messed up. Abraham, the father of faith and of the Jewish people, lied about his wife twice. His son Isaac did the same thing. Sarah, Abraham's wife, laughed at the promise of God and then denied that she laughed.

Jacob lied and connived. Noah got drunk. Samson was immoral. Gideon was fearful. Rahab was a prostitute. David had an affair and then had someone murdered to cover it up. Elijah was deeply depressed and didn't want to live. And Jonah ran from God.

The disciples fell asleep when they should have been praying, and Simon Peter openly denied the Lord.

Then there was Moses, who killed a guy.

All of these heroes failed forward and were able to use their experiences in faith to learn how to serve God.

Failing forward is realising that mistakes are temporary, momentary events and not a life-long sentence.

Failing forward is using failures as steppingstones to help you more forward across the streams of life.

Failing forward is a conscious choice to see beyond the failings. It is having faith in the One who can turn our failings into valuable life lessons, realising that failures can move us into next season of growth and productivity. God is in the recycling business, able to turn the waste products in life into something useful, and indeed beautiful!

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

One of my financial failures was when I received quite a large bonus for my work. It was a lot of money. To this day, I don't know where it went! Well, we spent it, of course, but on what? I don't know. I experienced the Proverb 23:5; “Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.”

The money just flew away. Failing forward, I learned that whenever I received a large tax refund or a bonus, to either save it, or designate a goal for the money. Then it will not ‘fly away!’

In this blog series we will look at Biblical stories of failure from a financial perspective and how this opens up opportunities to serve the Lord with our resources.

The first story will be about Nabal, a rich farmer who was called a fool and failed financially.

Chapter 1: The Fool

Shakespeare famously asked, “What’s in a name?” Well, it seems quite a lot.

The parents named their son Nabal, which means ‘fool! (Well, thanks Mom and Dad!) In this case it turned out to be prophetic.

We can read the story of Nabal, ‘the fool,’ in 2 Samuel 25. *(Extracts from the Bible text in large italics)*

Nabal was a very rich farmer, married to a clever and beautiful wife Abigail. He was known to be a miser, mean and badly behaved! He was a fool. She was the opposite.

“There was a wealthy man from Maon who owned property near the town of Carmel. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats, and it was sheep-shearing time. This man’s name was Nabal, and his wife, Abigail, was a sensible and beautiful woman. But Nabal, a descendant of Caleb, was crude and mean in all his dealings.”

King David was in the desert nearby and heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep. Shearing time for sheep and goats was like harvest time for farmers. This is when they get

paid for the work they've done. They have plenty, they will usually celebrate with a feast, and this is when they are normally most generous.

David sent a small delegation with a polite message to Nabal, asking if they could join the celebrations, and reminding him of the protection David's men had given Nabal's employees. It was a feast day, and traditionally a time when you could share with those in need.

"Peace and prosperity to you, your family, and everything you own! I am told that it is sheep-shearing time. While your shepherds stayed among us near Carmel, we never harmed them, and nothing was ever stolen from them. Ask your own men, and they will tell you this is true. So, would you be kind to us, since we have come at a time of celebration? Please share any provisions you might have on hand with us and with your friend David."

Nabal replied scathingly, "Who does this guy David think he is? Those men he sent are most likely runaway slaves." Nabal will have nothing of it. Not only does he refuse to give David anything for the feast, he insults David publicly, denies knowing him, and calls David's integrity into question, implying he is rebelling against Saul.

"Who is this fellow David?" Nabal sneered to the young men. "Who does this son of Jesse think he is? There are lots of servants these days who run away from their masters. Should I take my bread and my water and my meat that I've slaughtered for my shearers and give it to a band of outlaws who come from who knows where?"

David was angry and out for blood. He sent 400 of his men towards Nabal's farm, armed to the teeth; they were not in a good mood.

One of Nabal's employees, however, was a quick thinker and went to Nabal's wife Abigail and warned her. The employee explained ...

“David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, but he screamed insults at them. These men have been very good to us, and we never suffered any harm from them. Nothing was stolen from us the whole time they were with us. In fact, day and night they were like a wall of protection to us and the sheep. You need to know this and figure out what to do, for there is going to be trouble for our master and his whole family. He's so ill-tempered that no one can even talk to him!”

Abigail wasted no time She quickly gathered a large amount of food, packed it on donkeys and sent them on to meet David. She didn't tell her husband Nabal what she was doing!

She travelled to meet up with David to plead forgiveness for her husband, even taking the blame for the ill-treatment of David's men on herself!

“She fell at his feet and said, “I accept all blame in this matter, my lord. Please listen to what I have to say. I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man; please don't pay

any attention to him. He is a fool, just as his name suggests. But I never even saw the young men you sent.”

The wise Abigail apologised for Nabal’s behaviour. David was thankful to Abigail for what she did, thereby preventing David from shedding blood.

Meanwhile, back at the farmhouse, there was a big party going on and Nabal was as drunk as a lord.

“In the morning when Nabal was sober, his wife told him what had happened. As a result he had a stroke, and he lay paralysed on his bed like a stone. About ten days later, the LORD struck him, and he died”

Nabal was truly a fool for not being generous and not showing the customary hospitality to David. He was only thinking of his own interests. He was more than a fool for not listening to his wife Abigail, who was much wiser than he was!

If David was not taking what he wanted by brute force, how did he support himself and his men? I think the answer lies in what he had done for Nabal up until this point. He protected honest farmers, herders, and villagers from outlaws, and in return they gave him and his men the food they needed. Ever heard of Barzillai? Maybe not. We don’t meet him until the second book of Samuel, but his history with David went back to these same days before he became king.

“He was very old—eighty years of age—and very wealthy. He was the one who had provided food for the king during his stay in Mahanaim. ‘Come across with me and live in Jerusalem,’ the king said to Barzillai. ‘I will take care of you there.’” (2 Sam 19:32)

Barzillai invested in the King. The King invested in him. Nabal did not invest in the King. His end was tragic.

Failing forward?

1. **Show hospitality.** “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2)
2. **Invest in the King.** “But God said to him, ‘**Fool!** This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:20,21)
3. **Listen to your wife!** “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Chapter 2: The Captain

One of the most dramatic incidents in Elisha's exciting life took place during a war between Israel and its neighbour, the kingdom of Syria. The Kings Captain, his chief advisor, made a fatal financial error.

You can read the full story in 2 Kings 6:24 - 7: 20.

The Syrian king Benhadad laid siege to Samaria, Israel's capital. The siege went on for a long time, with Samaria surrounded by a large enemy army and unable to receive any supplies. Conditions became indescribably horrible. Normal sources of food were exhausted. Nobody had any more grain or anything else decent to eat.

Due to the shortages, hyperinflation set in and the economic situation got so bad that head of a donkey was selling in the city for an astronomical price of a kg. of silver. They were even selling seeds that had passed and excreted through pigeons- a 250 ml. cup for 5 shekels or 55 grams.

“And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver.” (2 Kings 6:25)

Things were to get much worse. At the height of the siege a woman approached Joram, the king, with a grievance. She and a friend, desperate for food, had killed her baby and eaten it with the understanding that the next day they would eat the friend's child. But the friend had reneged on the deal. When he heard this appalling story, the king snapped. The mothers' cannibalism was more than he could take, and Joram was filled with blinding rage - not so much at the women, but at God whom he held responsible for the terrible predicament they were all in. And since he could not attack the Lord directly, he decided to kill the Lord's prophet Elisha. King Joram sent his Captain, his chief advisor, to seize Elisha and cut off his head.

Elisha remained calm, knowing that the Lord would perform an economic miracle.

He passed on a word from God to the Captain., saying that God would turn the economy of the city around.

But Elisha said, “Listen to this message from the LORD! This is what the LORD says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, six quarts of choice flour will cost only one piece of silver, and twelve quarts of barley grain will cost only one piece of silver.”

The Captain was having none of it and was thoroughly dismissive at such a thought that God could change an economic situation overnight!

He was not challenging Elisha ... he was challenging God. The officer said cynically, *“look, even if God should make windows in heaven, this would still not happen!”*

In other words, even if manna, quail and all the other foods that God brought down from heaven to the children of Israel in the wilderness were brought down now, it would not help their situation. Their situation was too difficult for God to handle. He didn't believe that God could take Samaria from starvation, where food was so expensive and rare that people were succumbing to cannibalism, to a situation where barley and wheat would be cheap and easy to find within 24 hours.

Elisa said to the Captain, “You will see it happen with your own eyes, but you won't be able to eat any of it!”

That night, after Elisha had told his wonderful prophecy, a strange thing happened. God made the Syrians hear the sound of rolling chariots, charging cavalry and rushing troops, whereupon terrible fear came into their hearts. They thought that the king of Israel had hired the kings of the Hittites and Egyptians to drive off the Syrians, and so they fled for their lives, leaving everything behind.

Four lepers arrived at the camp and found no-one, but food, wine, silver, gold and clothes. They went back to the

city and told the gatekeepers who passed the news on to the king and his Captain.

Many people, eager to enjoy the bounty of the Syrian army, rushed out of the city and the Captain was told to control the stampeding traffic at the gate. It got so bad that he was trampled to death by the crowd.

“So everything happened exactly as the man of God had predicted when the king came to his house. The man of God had said to the king, “By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, six quarts of choice flour will cost one piece of silver, and twelve quarts of barley grain will cost one piece of silver.” (2 Kings 7:18)

The Captain of the king’s guard would not believe that God could change economic circumstances. His unbelief shone through. Because of his unbelief, he saw others enjoy God’s provision but he did not.

First, he doubted the *power* of God. If God willed it, He certainly could open windows in heaven and drop down food from the sky for the hungry, besieged city of Samaria.

Second, he doubted the *creativity* of God. He had no idea that God could bring provision in a completely unexpected way.

Third, he doubted the *messenger* of God. Though the promise was admittedly hard to believe, the king’s officer could have and should have believed it because it came

from Elisha, a man with an established track record of reliability.

Failing Forward

Failing forward is believing that God **can** change your economic circumstances and provide for you in ways you cannot imagine. It is believing and acting on the fact that God can do anything He pleases. It is trusting God through extremely tough times, knowing He **will** provide a way out.

“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27)

Chapter 3: The corrupt couple ... problems with power and possessions

She is the Lady Macbeth of Hebrew history. Probably the most powerful female character in the Bible. In our minds she is the ultimate example of an evil woman. Shakespeare has Lady Macbeth praying, “Come, you spirits, that tend on mortal thoughts ... fill me from the crown to the toe, full of direst cruelty.”

This could have been the prayer of Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, promoter of the worship of false gods, who harassed and killed God’s prophets, and arranged for an innocent businessman to be falsely charged and executed for economic gain.

She possessed an extraordinary force of character, intellect and will, unrestrained by conscience and employed her talents for the advancement of evil.

The tragedy of Naboth and his vineyard describes just how evil she was.

Naboth owned a vineyard in Jezreel, which had been in the family for years. It happened to be right next to the palace of King Ahab. Ahab wanted the vineyard to expand

his palace with vegetable gardens. He made what seemed, on the face of it, to be a very reasonable proposal.

“Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money.” (2 Kings 21:2)

Wine production in Naboth’s days was important business. Wine was a major component of military supplies and in big demand. I cannot imagine that Ahab wanted to destroy the vines and plant vegetables instead. I think he wanted to profit from the wine trade, extend the vineyards, with the excuse of needing to grow veggies for the palace. Vineyards fell under the category of private property and required major investments in resources. The Swiss theologian Philippe Guillame, suggests that “Naboth would have been just as rich as the king, ‘nouveau riche,’ as it were and his refusal to sell would cause offence to the king.”

Naboth could sell his vineyard if he wanted to, but he realised that he was just a steward of the property, taking care of the land and protecting it for the next generation. He realised that he was merely a chain in the link of God’s blessing for his family. He refused the king’s offer on the basis of the fact that, according to the Bible, the king was forbidden to buy the inheritance of the people. (Ezekiel 46:18, Numbers 36:7)

He said, “No deal!” For Naboth, obedience to God’s word was more important than money!

“Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.” (1 Kings 21:3)

Ahab went home, angered and depressed at Naboth’s rejection, and lay down in bed, sulking after not getting his own way. I wish that was the end of the story, but his wife Jezebel came into the bedroom and asked why he was so depressed. Naboth could have left it there, and if he was a mature man, believing the Scriptures, he should have moved on.

However, we read about Ahab, “There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited.” (1 Kings 21:27)

Jezebel said to him, ““Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” (1 Kings 21:7) She proceeded to write to all the leaders in Jezreel, with the king’s authority, inviting them to a banquet with Naboth as the guest of honour. She paid two corrupt guests to accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king, demanding that Naboth be stoned to death. They took the money, did what they were told and Ahab took over Naboth’s vineyard.

Elijah heard of the tragedy and God sent him to Ahab with a prophecy of a horrible death for himself, his

children and his wife, “because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD.” (1 Kings 21:20)

We all too often sell ourselves on the altar of ambitions and materialism. I remember, that as a young CEO of a chemical company, aged 30, I was a success in business but a failure in life. My success came with a heavy price, of marriage tensions, health problems and a lack of any faith in God. At that time, a penetrating question from Jesus came to me. “And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?” (Matthew 24:16). This was a wake-up call to choose the right priorities, to focus on God and my family and re-evaluate my ambitions.

Ahab and Jezebel sold themselves and chose power and possessions above God.

Failing forward

Failing forward for Ahab would mean obeying God's Word, even when we are offered what looks like a good financial deal, but which would lead us astray from His revealed will. It would mean respecting the property of others, even rejoicing in their success.

Failing forward for Ahab would mean leading his wife, encouraging her to follow God's ways.

Failing forward for Ahab would mean to tame his selfish ambition. Wanting to expand and grow your business or

advance your career is, of course, good. However, this must never be at the cost of people. To be ambitious, in the worldly sense, is essentially to be determined to have more than your neighbour.

Realise that promotion and advancement is from the Lord and not from our manipulative efforts.

“Wealth and honour come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength.” (1 Chronicles 29;12)

Ahab was cursed with an undisciplined desire for more. Failing forward would mean to answer the question, together with God, “How much is enough for my needs at this time for the responsibilities I have?” Answering the question brings contentment, rest and peace.

Failing forward would mean to recognise his covetousness, trusting the Lord for His provision.

Naboth was manipulated by Jezebel in a terrible way. Failing forward for her would mean to learn to means to put people over possessions. An application for the commandment “You shall not kill” means to respecting life - to seek the best for your neighbour, promote their welfare and to love him or her ‘as yourself’

Jezebel dominated her husband, and Ahab was like a puppet in the hands of his overpowering wife.

Failing forward for Jezebel would mean to follow the Biblical roles for husbands and wives. Ephesians 5:33 says

that “the wife must respect her husband,” meaning valuing their leadership role, encouraging him gently to follow God’s ways and helping him to be a man of God.

Their end was tragic, they would not follow the Lord, but chose to follow the spirit of mammon, the power behind materialism and money.

Chapter 4: The Troublemaker

Israel was about to take the first city in the land God had promised them - Jericho. No rockets, no artillery, the sound of praise, amplified by God's voice, caused the city walls to fall down flat! After walking round the city seven times, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city. And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction." (Joshua 6:16,17)

The victors were not allowed to take anything for themselves. "But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them, you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it." (Joshua 6:18)

Achan, however, "took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel." (Joshua 7:1)

It is significant that Achan is described as the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, and the son of Jerah. Most likely Achan, and certainly his dad Carmi, must have experienced the Lord's provision of manna and quail as they travelled through the desert. Carmi was kept alive by the water that flowed out of the rock. When Achan was a little boy, the brazen serpent was set up high on a pole and when he and his family looked at it all those poisoned by the serpents' venom were spared. They looked and lived.

His granddad and great-grandfather must have told them how the Lord delivered them from Egypt, taking with them great riches.

These are the stories Achan's family told him. Achan himself witnessed how Israel walked right across the Jordan River with dry feet! You would have thought he experiences enough of the Lord's power and provision for him to trust God completely!

But no. Entering a house, he opened a locked cupboard and saw a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels. Achan coveted these precious objects, and he slyly took them and hid them under his tent. Achan saw the gown, which was associated with an idol, he touched it, coveted it, and just had to have it for himself.

Achan admitted, "when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (Joshua 7:25)

Paul calls covetousness, ‘idolatry,’ because the things you crave become your gods and they can take over your life. He weighed the gold and silver in his hands thinking he could trust in these for his future needs, not knowing they would destroy his future.

There was a proud spirit of unbelief in Achan, that he knew better than God. He thought he could do this, and God would never know. He thought life would be made better through having nice clothes, money in a safe spot. God was far less interesting and desirable than a wedge of gold and beautiful clothes.

He involved the whole nation in guilt, and caused its defeat in the battle of Ai, in which thirty-six Israelis were killed. To assuage the wrath of the Lord against the people, the twelve tribes were assembled according to their clans and households, and the sacred lot was cast in order to discover the guilty family that had come under the ban. Achan was singled out and confessed that he had stolen silver and gold and a costly Babylonian mantle, and had hidden them in his tent. The stolen things were immediately sent for and laid before the Lord, and Achan and his family, his cattle, his asses, his sheep, and all his belongings were brought to the valley afterward called the ‘Valley of Achor,’ (‘Trouble’) and destroyed.

Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.” (Joshua 7:25)

Failing Forward

Achan's sins were disobedience and covetousness.

All the spoils of Jericho were to be dedicated to the Lord, burned with fire in a huge bonfire except for the gold and silver which was to be taken to the tabernacle - one day a great temple would be built in the land of Canaan! The people were to make no profit from this victory; it was wholly through the Lord and for the Lord.

Joshua said about Jericho, "*And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction.*" (Joshua 6:17) The Hebrew word is '*cherem*.' It means to be cut off from common use. Jericho was a 'first-fruit' city, and the first fruit belongs to the Lord and devoted to him.

I believe this corresponds to the tithe, which is the first fruit of all our endeavour. This is '*cherem*' or 'devoted to the Lord for destruction.' (See also Leviticus 27:27)

Achan could have recognised that the first fruit belongs to the Lord. If we are not returning the tithe to the Lord, then we do not get to use the fruit of it - it is 'for destruction.' Failing forward means to faithfully dedicate your tithe to the Lord.

Achan could have realised from his family's history that the Lord can deliver from any tough situation and can provide in tough times. Failing forward is to start trusting in the Lord for Him to provide, to follow His ways, and not taking matters into your own hands!

Failing forward for Achan would be to learn to "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Chapter 5: The broke and frustrated

Jesus invited many times for us to “come!” ‘Come to me all who are weary and carry heavy burdens; Let the children come to me ... Come after me and I will make you fishers of men... Come to me and I will never cast you out; I am the Bread of Life whoever comes to me shall not hunger ...”

What a wonderful series of invitations! There is another “Come” which to me is a beautiful expression of the economy of the Kingdom. This can be found in Isaiah 55:1-2.

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,

And let your soul delight itself in abundance.”

There are two kinds of people who are invited. People who either suffering from the lack of money and people who are suffering because they have spent it and not been satisfied.

The first people are broke; they have no money and are hungry and thirsty. They are poor. They are suffering and life has not been kind to them. The Lord s saying to them, ‘Come!’ You’re just the candidate I am after: Come, everyone who thirsts and has no money – no resources, no bargaining position, no track record, no power, no prestige, little hope and at the end of their tether. God is inviting you to enjoy the banquet of His provision.

The second people are not broke, but frustrated. They have money and can spend it on whatever they like. However, they look back at what they have spent their money on and conclude that their purchases did not bring what they were looking for and they were dissatisfied. He’s not like the other guy – at the end of his rope. He is still spending and working, dreaming, chasing, searching, experimenting – different job, different city, different car, different house, different wife, new computer, new boat, new books, new bike, new grill, new season tickets, new diet, new looks ...

So, two kinds of people are invited by the Lord: the thirsty who are broke and cannot pay, and the thirsty who think they can pay and work their way to satisfaction.

I think most people reading this would have to admit to being in one of those two groups, if we were honest with ourselves.

The Benefits

The offer is to be able to drink at the waters, to buy wine and milk, even if you've no money! These three beverages correspond to deep needs that every one of us has.

Water corresponds to the need for refreshment. When you are most thirsty and most desperate, most dehydrated, it's water that you want, and nothing else.

Milk corresponds to the need for ongoing nourishment. When someone is gasping for life, you give them water. But when you want a little baby to grow day after day, you give him milk again and again.

Wine corresponds to joy and abundance. It is a luxury and the Lord wants us to enjoy all the good things in life which He wants to give us..

The Lord meets us in the desert with the miracle of his water; and make us strong and healthy and stable with the miracle of his milk; and then give us endless and ever-fresh joy with the miracle of his wine.

The Jewish commentators Hitzig and Knobel understand by water, wine, and milk, to be the rich material blessings which awaited the exiles on their return to their fatherland, whereas they were now paying tribute and performing service in Babylon without receiving anything in return. But the prophet Isaiah was acquainted with something higher

than either natural water or natural wine. He knew of an eating and drinking which reached beyond the mere material enjoyment.

More importantly, when we respond to the invitation to “Come,” we meet the Lord Himself, with all the spiritual blessings He wants to bestow on us. Forgiveness, restoration, fulfilment and joy. “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11)

You can buy this - without money! The best things in life are free!

Failing Forward

Failing forward means to ‘Come’ to the Lord with our helplessness and our frustrations.

Those without money should come to the Lord and trust in Him to provide all we need. “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. I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.” (Psalm 37:23-25)

Those with money should evaluate their spending, prayerfully, with the Lord and make a spending plan, according to His ways. ““Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:25)

All have to “listen carefully to me and eat what is good.” They must listen to the Word of God, study what the Bible has to say about managing your finances and be obedient to His ways.

Failing forward is to get to know how God’s economy works. Read my book “The Flow” which explains many features of the economy of the Kingdom and compares these with the economy of the world.

Chapter 6: The Choices: Finance or family? Prosperity or promise?

We all face decisive moments in our lives, which have important consequences. There are minutes in which destiny is determined, as one take this road or the other at some crossroad in life. These are the times in which we make choices on which our future lives depend.

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I chose the one less travelled by.
And that has made all the difference.”

These immortal words by Robert Frost in his poem *The Road Less Travelled* could have been pulled straight from Genesis 13. In this chapter, we have two men and a fork in the road. These two men had travelled together down a long and dusty road, and now choose to take separate paths. One chose the well-travelled road to the cities of Zoar. The other went to the lonely countryside of Canaan. The first ends up losing his possessions and family. The other realises God’s promise and blessing. What was the difference? It was all in the roads they chose to travel.

The two men are, of course, Abram and Lot. They have travelled together since Ur. They went to Haran together. They left ‘the fleshpots of Egypt’ together and came to Canaan together where both men had to make choices.

Finance or Family?

Genesis 13:6-7. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

The land around Bethel and Ai did not contain enough water and vegetation to feed all the animals they had. The situation was getting so bad, that the herdsmen were even beginning to quarrel with one another; and when allies quarrel, enemies like the Canaanites and Perizzites take notice. Abram and Lot realise that rather than fight against one another, it would be better for them to go separate ways. Here is Abram’s choice. God has promised all the land to him. He hasn’t actually acquired any of it yet, but in order to maintain peace with his nephew, Abram is going to have to let Lot live on the land.

That’s the first choice. It’s a choice between finances or family. Is money, and land and what belongs to him more important than his family? Is he willing to forsake his finances to benefit his family? Is he going to continue to provide for his relative or isn’t he? Abram of course wants to provide for Lot. Abram decides that even though all the

land has been promised to him, he is going to let Lot stay on it.

Abram made Lot a priority. He decided to sacrifice some of his own land that had been promised to Him by God and give a portion to Lot for his own flocks and herds. Abram did not want his wealth to cause friction and strife in his family.

Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.” (Genesis 13:8-9)

Here they are - at a fork in the road. They cannot both take the same path. They must separate. Abram decides to let Lot choose where he will go. This was again another wise decision by Abram. His actions avoid further misunderstandings and disagreements.

Prosperity or Promise?

“Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar.” (Genesis 13:10)

He chose what, on the face of it, seemed to be the best. He chose prosperity over Gods promise. Zoar was a city at the southeast end of the Dead Sea grouped with Sodom and Gomorrah; in those days it looked like the Garden of Eden, but like the original Garden, it became a place of

disobedience. This looked like the best choice ... but it was not God's best.

After they split up, God confirmed his promise to Abram., "for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever."

Failing Forward

Failing forward is not to look first to what is the greatest advantage for yourself. Lot abandoned the good things God had offered to choose something that at first glance seemed better. But while it was attractive on the surface, underneath its appearances, it was a place of sin and rebellion.

Failing forward means looking to the Lord when making choices and not 'the land.'

The man who leaves out God's purpose and God's calling for us, is never wise and never comes to true prosperity. The man who makes his decisions on the mere ground of worldly advantage is never sure and never safe. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

Failing forward means to have an eternal, and not an earthy perspective. Religious and money mad. The clearer we can see God's eternal plans, the better choices we can make today.

Living in the light of eternity will make us more effective and fruitful for Christ in this world. I love this quote from C.S. Lewis from his book "Mere Christianity."

“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next... It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in,’ aim at earth and you will get neither.”

Chapter 7: Prophet or profit?

This story, showing clearly God's sense of humour, and seeming more like one of Aesop's fables than biblical history, is about the prophet Balaam and his talking donkey. It can be read in Numbers 22-24 and tells us that Balaam got paid for foretelling the future and the manipulation of people for profit. His heart was taken over by thoughts of the profit he could make in the land of Moab. His story shows the deception of pretending to be pious and spiritual while inwardly living a corrupt life. This mixture of wicked motives, pursuit of gain, amorality, and power combined with an outward appearance of the spiritual life ultimately led to his death.

Peter warned against false prophets. "Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness." (2 Peter 2:15,16)

God sent an angel to warn him that his strategy was totally wrong. His donkey could see the angel on the road but was invisible to Balaam. The donkey would go no further. Balaam hit the donkey three times! Later on, the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her” (Num. 22:32-33).

I think the three warnings that came directly from the donkey’s mouth also have to do with three important aspects of business life: money, sex, and power.

These three themes were also dealt with by Dostoyevsky in his wonderful book ‘The Idiot.’ Prince Myskin, whom Dostoyevsky portrayed as Christlike, was plunged into the depths of a culture obsessed with money, sex, and power. People could not fathom what was wrong with the prince, who showed absolutely no vanity, greed, lust, envy, or fear whatsoever. They admired his innocence, but his behaviour was so abnormal that they called him the “idiot.” Living a Christian life today is just not normal anymore!

Money

Balaam, the owner of the donkey, who ‘fell in love with the money he could earn by doing wrong,’ was very much influenced by his desire for money at all costs. Jude verse 11 refers to Balaam, who would “do anything for money.” He served the wrong master!

Sex

Balaam misused this force toward his own ends, and his talking donkey tried to restrain him from it. In his ambition to put his stamp on society, Balaam enticed the children of Israel to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual sin. (Revelation 2:14) Sexuality is irrevocably combined with worship; when we get married, we promise to honour one another physically - “With my body, I thee worship.”

In their immorality the Israelites started to “indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods” (Num. 25:1-2). Balaam used unnatural sexuality as a method to get the people back into slavery again. “And the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey” (Num. 22:28).

Power

The third reason for the donkey contradicting Balaam, is the misuse of spirituality, “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5).

In Numbers 22-24, Balaam demonstrates how well he, as a prophet, could appraise trends and predict the future. He even predicted the star of Bethlehem (see Num. 24:17). He would have been a very popular guy at the annual meetings

of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. He would have had the gift of getting insight into God's handling of the world.

Balaam impressed the local king very much with his insights. He had a spiritual gift, but he could not bear spiritual fruit! This king knew what he wanted to hear from Balaam, so he made Balaam a proposal he could not refuse. Balaam misused his power.

Failing Forward

The first warning came when the donkey saw the angel and turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her in an attempt to get her back on track. He knew his enterprise was not on the right track. Are you not on the right track? Are the outcomes of your financial decisions not what they should be? Listen to what God is trying to tell you, through tough circumstances.

The second warning came on a narrow track in between the vineyards, with a wall on both sides. The donkey was afraid when he saw the angel and pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. That must have hurt! Balaam's enterprise was painful for him. Are your finances hurting you? Physically maybe? Headaches, high blood pressure, too much stress, burnout? Frustrations because of conflicts and lack of motivation? Could this be a warning from God? Turn back to His ways!

The third warning came because the angel stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn at all, either to the right or to the left. The donkey lay down, with Balaam still on her back, wouldn't go any further and Balaam beat her again. There was no way at all for Balaam's enterprise to go. He was at his wits' end and took his sword to kill the animal. Have your finances come to a deadlock? No more cash? Are your creditors on your back, demanding payment? Do you see no way out? Stop, ask the Lord for help in turning your finances around.

Failing forward means to develop a spiritual antenna to pick up the Lord's guidance.

Failing forward means to maintain integrity; that your financial decisions reflect obedience to Gods' directives.

Failing forward is to learn to say 'no' to financial temptations to stray off course from God's ways.

Failing forward is to trust God for a way out when your back is against the wall and life is hurting.

Failing forward means realising that God allows certain incidents to happen in our lives to warn us. It seems as if the circumstances are saying, "Stop!" What is it that the Lord wants to tell you? Are you willing to listen?

Read my book "Donkey Business," in which I use the donkey as a metaphor for our assets. I explain how the Lord can use our assets to His glory. Available from Amazon, or your local online seller - or from our Compass Europe shop.

Chapter 8: When nothing goes right ...

Have you experienced times in your life where you can't feel God's presence?

When the tragedy happens in your life, while we do our best to cling to our faith, it's easy to question God. Where is He when all your labour is in vain? Where is God when all around you seems to be falling apart?

These are age-old questions humans have struggled with for centuries, and questions we can easily ask today. It seems as if our world is on the brink of disaster, so we are left searching for God through all of it. God, where are you when it all goes wrong?

Habakkuk provides us one of the most remarkable sections in all of Scripture, as it contains an extended dialogue between Habakkuk and God. He initiated this conversation based on his distress about how he perceived God's 'inactivity' in the world. He wanted to see God do more, to act particularly in economic and social justice.

Habakkuk pictures a land that is nothing like the prosperous **breadbasket** which Judah and Israel were under King Solomon. Instead, they became a **basket case**,

in bondage to ruthless enemies, marked by frustration, failure and famine.

Habakkuk wrestled with the same questions we face today. Although Habakkuk's message is deeply rooted in Judah 600AD, it has timeless value for God's people in every generation. Like Habakkuk, we also live in a world where things have gone horribly wrong.

In a very honest way, he expressed two complaints about God not hearing his cry for help. He complained, "O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?" (1:1) Then he protested, "Why do you remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? (1:13)

He lamented at unjust economics, corrupt leadership, slave labour, irresponsible leaders, and widespread idolatry. He saw economic life grinding to a halt as a result of outside forces from Babylon, which God was allowing to bring people to slavery. Babylon is a symbol of a wicked economy which rings throughout the whole Bible.

Then Habakkuk says, "I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint." (2:1) In the midst of impending disaster, he actively looked to God for answers.

The Lord's answer? Don't worry about anyone else - don't worry about what people are doing to you - don't worry

- When you lose your job and have no income
- When your customers are not buying any more
- When there is no justice
- When you are subjected to ill treatment
- When your creditors pressure you ...

The Lord is saying through Habakkuk, "I will take care of the proud oppressors, those who get rich through dishonesty, manipulation, and extortion. "The righteous shall live by faith." (2:4)

Habakkuk then prayed and recognised the awesome power of God, and saw God moving through eyes of faith. "I have heard all about you, LORD. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by. And in your anger, remember your mercy." (3:2)

Habakkuk lived in a day of uncertainty, much like we do. For all the questions that were raised in his lifetime about the future, his response remained simple, "*yet I will rejoice in the Lord*".

This was the prophet's response to uncertainty. Can we also respond as Habakkuk did? Can we trust the hand of God in the face of uncertain times, even when we don't know His plans?

Habakkuk made one of the most wonderful statements of faith that I can find in the Bible. (3:17-19) In the midst of abject failure, he declares...

“Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.”

Despite all the manifold problems, Habakkuk ends his oracle on a note of confidence and joy. **We cannot base our joy on the circumstances that surround our lives. Circumstances should not dictate whether we are joyful.** Habakkuk's confident declaration and prayer of encouragement form a beautiful demonstration of his faith in God. He knew this world was not His home. He trusted the steadfast love and faithfulness of his Saviour even when he didn't understand God's plan.

Failing forward

Failing forward means to live by faith.

- It means trusting in God's promises. “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for

he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
(Hebrews 13:5)

- It means waiting patiently for Him to act. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! (Psalm 37:7)

- It means expectantly praying for God’s activity, for Him to intervene in your circumstances. “But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” (John 5:17)

- It means being joyful while waiting, knowing He will act in His timing. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

- It means receiving strength to endure difficult periods. “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

- It means giving thanks to God, no matter what circumstances we are in. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Giving thanks and rejoicing in tough circumstances opens a door for the Lord’s activity in helping us cope with difficulties and provide a way out of our troubles. “The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!” (Psalm 50:23)

Chapter 9: The Shipwreck - good people making bad decisions

Gold! It was to be Jehoshaphat's great enterprise - a large fleet of ocean-going ships to bring back the gold of Ophir, just as Solomon had done a century before.

The fleet set out from Eziongeber, the port where they were built, bound for Tarshish. As soon as they sailed out, they were broken to pieces against the rocks near the harbour, 'which stood up like a man's backbone.'

So why the disaster? His enterprise was shattered due to an unholy alliance with the wicked King Ahaziah.

"After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish." (2 Chronicles 20:35-37)

After the wreckage, it appears as though Ahaziah wanted to get the project going again, but Jehoshaphat would not (1 Kings 22:49) The prophet Eliezer had told the king that God had destroyed the ships because of his alliance with Ahaziah. It often takes the direct intervention by God into our lives to get our attention. His decision to partnership with Ahaziah was not wise.

Jehoshaphat made an unholy alliance with Ahaziah's very wicked father Ahab, when he "had riches and honour in abundance." (2 Chronicles 18.1) Perhaps Jehoshaphat's wealth went to his head, eroding his determination to remain distinct from the northern kingdom, so leading to his alliance with Ahab through the marriage of his son, Jehoram, to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. (2 Chronicles 21.6; 22.2)

I wrote about Ahab and his wife Jezebel, in an earlier blog in this series.

Jehoshaphat seemed to want an insurance policy in case the Lord failed him. While marriage alliances were a common way to forge peace between countries at odds with each other, this pact was an unholy union. Ahab and Jezebel were evil. They practiced paganism, flooded the land with Baal worship, and almost obliterated the worship of Jehovah from Israel.

Jehoshaphat should have known better. He made the monumental error of relying on the world's wisdom instead of God's. Years later, Athaliah usurped the throne of Judah and murdered all the heirs to the throne but one, almost annihilating the messianic line, before being killed herself.

In another monumental error, Jehoshaphat agreed to join Ahab in battle against Ramoth Gilead. When he sought counsel as to how the battle would go, Ahab produced 400 “prophets,” all of whom probably served Baal and all of whom promised victory. (you can read the story in 1 Kings 22)

The 400 prophets predict that they should go out to war for they will be successful

Recognizing these men did not serve the living God, Jehoshaphat did well by asking, “Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of Him?” Ahab grudgingly mentioned Micaiah, adding, “but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” Micaiah predicted that Ahab would be killed.

Jehoshaphat goes forward with the plan, despite the advice of the man of God. After all it was 400 to 1! He went into battle. The enemy all came after Jehoshaphat, and he barely escaped death. God intervened to help him. Ahab, just as Micaiah had prophesied, was killed.

Finally, Jehoshaphat slinked back to Jerusalem, humiliated by his bad decision.

Failing forward

1. Listen to godly advice

Worldly advice will pressure us to conform, like Ahab did by bring out overwhelming odds of 400 to 1. Peer

pressure is strong and will push us to stay in line. When the one adviser is brought to you by God, then 1 plus God is an overwhelming majority!

A godly counsellor loves the Lord, knows the Scriptures and the importance of prayer. The Proverbs are filled with the importance of counsel, such as; “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” (Proverbs 12:15) “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22

2. Do not enter into unequal partnerships

The great danger is the temptation to compromise your faith, like Jehoshaphat did with Ahab. Jehoshaphat did not learn from his disastrous alliance with Ahab or from his father’s alliance with Aram (2 Chronicles 16:2-9). The partnership stood on unequal footing because one man served the Lord and the other worshiped idols. We court disaster when we enter a partnership with unbelievers because our very foundations differ. While one serves the Lord, the other does not recognise God’s authority. Inevitably, the one who serves God is faced with the temptation to compromise values. When that happens, spiritual disaster results.

Paul urges believers to not form partnerships with unbelievers because this might weaken their Christian commitment, integrity, or standards. It would be a mismatch. (2 Corinthians 6:15) Earlier, Paul had explained that this did not mean isolating oneself from unbelievers (1 Corinthians 5:9, 10). He wanted believers to be active in their witness for Christ to unbelievers but

not lock themselves into personal or business relationships that could cause them to compromise their faith. Believers should do everything in their power to avoid situations that could force them to divide their loyalties.

3. Be aware of the dangers of the world's temptations

The gold of Ophir was very tempting, but Jehoshaphat was rich already. He was tempted into a fatal expedition because he could not determine what was enough for him. He had to have more.

King Jehoshaphat walked in God's ways and was generally seen as a faithful King. "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments. . . His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 17:3-6.) He seemed to be really blessed by God. However, this good King made bad alliances.

Chapter 10: The Sale

Juda was the fourth son in a large family, managing quite a large livestock business. It was not easy working under a father who lived up to the name he was given; ‘deceiver.’ He had a 17-year-old young brother, Joseph, a dad’s favourite who was privileged by father but hated by his other brothers for his perceived arrogance.

The younger brother was sent by Dad to find the rest of the brothers, who were herding their flocks near Shechem, and report back on how they were doing. The brothers were jealous of their younger sibling and conspired to kill him. “They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.” The eldest, Ruben, tried to stop the brothers killing Joseph and came up with an idea. “Throw him in a pit.” The brothers tore off his coat of many colours that Dad had given to Joseph and threw him in a pit. Ruben wanted to release Joseph later. And take him back to Dad.

Judah came up with another idea. He saw a caravan of traders passing by on their way to Egypt. He said, “there’s no profit in this if we kill him. Let’s sell him!” They took him back out of the pit and sold him to traders for 20 silver shekels. The traders took him to Egypt to sell him on as a slave. You can read this story in Genesis 38.

Judah also had problems during his marriage. He left his father’s home to marry a girl from Canaan, a girl not from his own faith, which God had forbidden. He lost his eldest son because the boy was so sinful. Judah also had problems with his second son, who did not want to obey him, and so he lost him too. Once, he thought he was sharing his bed with a prostitute, but it turned out to be his daughter-in-law, Tamar. His family was all misery.

Through the years, Judah’s family prospers. However, severe famine strikes the land of Israel. God was with Judah’s brother Joseph in Egypt, elevating Joseph to a place of power second only the Pharaoh himself (Genesis 41:39-40). Joseph had interpreted the king’s dream warning of famine, and Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of gathering grain to store for the lean years. Under Joseph’s supervision, a large amount of grain was set aside (verse 49). When the great famine came upon the land, it affected even Canaan. Judah and his brothers travelled from Canaan to Egypt to buy some of the surplus food.

In Egypt, Joseph recognised the brothers, but they did not recognise him, having become a high Egyptian official.

The brothers were accused to be spies, and Benjamin was framed for an imaginary crime and claimed as a slave in recompense. When they were released, they bought the grain the family needed and proceeded to return home to Canaan. To their astonishment, they found the money they had paid for the grain had been put back in the donkey's saddlebags!

In their return to Egypt, Judah was converted; he confessed his guilt to Joseph and received forgiveness from Joseph for all the wrongdoings he and his brothers had committed.

He exhibited unexpected compassion in telling of the family's heart-wrenching experience of starvation, of his father's undying love for Benjamin, and of Judah's own promise to his father that he would bring Benjamin back home, lest Jacob literally die from grief. Then, in an ultimate expression of compassion, Judah offered to substitute *himself* in place of Benjamin! He proposed that he be retained in Egypt for the rest of his life as the governor's slave if only the governor would let Benjamin go home to his father. You can read this in Genesis 43 - 45.

Seeing the change in Judah, Joseph was able to bless the family as God intended. God can easily bestow His blessings on flawed people; but we must be willing to change our ways, repent of our wrongdoings.

Joseph sent Judah on his way with a new commission. "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load

your animals and return to the land of Canaan and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.” (Gen. 45:17-18). Also, Joseph gave his brothers gifts for their father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. (Gen. 45:23)

Likewise, when God sends us on our way with a new commission, he also supplies us liberally with all we need to do the job He has given us!

God chose Judah and his descendants for a special place in His plan through the ages. The prophecy God gave to Jacob at the end of his life concerning his sons’ descendants reveals a special blessing for the tribe of Judah. Out of his descendants came David and ultimately, Jesus who is called “The Lion of Judah.” (Revelation 5:5)

Joseph is seen in the Bible as a type of Christ. Both were beloved sons, both were rejected, tempted, and finally exalted.

Much later, history repeated itself. The namesake of Judah - Judas - did a little better in his selling. Judah got only 20 pieces of silver for the sale. The going rate for a slave was 30. Judas got 30. In the case of Joseph, it was a brother who sold him; in the case of Christ, it was His own friend in whom He trusted. In both cases it was covetousness which prompted the betrayer to the dark deed of treachery.

As I read the Bible, I find myself periodically identifying with the life or behaviour of a specific Bible character;

David, Moses, Joseph, Paul - heroes of the faith. Sometimes, I identify with their good qualities and sometimes with their bad ones. However, until challenged one day, Judas was never one of them. Yet, in reflection, I discovered that there is more of Judas and Judah in me than I would ever like to admit.

While attending a conference, one of the main speakers made a passing comment in his presentation that sent shivers down my spine. The speaker said, “Judas betrayed Jesus for money.”

For the first time in my entire life, I found myself painfully identifying with Judas, the betrayer. I asked myself, “Has my life or my behaviour ever turned Jesus over to be mocked or ridiculed, by another because of my hypocritical, uncontrolled, self-centred life?”

In business, I have, to my shame, done things which did not bring honour to God, because of a more urgent need for money, and was a traitor to God. I hate to think what others would think about the Jesus I serve. None of us would like to think of ourselves as traitors to Christ. But think about it. Have you ever been inconsistent in a duty or an obligation to Christ because his will and yours didn't align? Have you ever abandoned His business for your own because your business looked more profitable? Have you ever been guilty of dereliction of duty to him in your financial dealings with others? These sobering questions may bring to mind some instances in which you have indeed been a traitor to him.

Failing forward

Judah failed forward and finished well.

Failing Forward means to repent when we have done something wrong and ask for forgiveness. As Judah was forgiven, so are we when we confess our sins.

Failing Forward means to take responsibility, as Judah did with Benjamin. He laid his life on the line in order to set Benjamin free.

Failing Forward means to out people before profit!

Failing Forward means trusting the Lord in times of famine, or severe need. His provision can be surprising as Judah discovered.

About the Author



Peter Briscoe (1950), has been in International business all his life, first in industrial chemicals, then in consulting and coaching, and finally leading a space projects business. He is founding member of the International Association for the Advancement of Space Safety, Europartners - a European association of Christians in business, and the European Economic Summit. As a follower of Jesus, he has been especially interested in discovering, applying and teaching what the Bible has to say about business and finance. He is a founder of Compass - finances God's way in Europe. At home he is married for 49 years with Didie and have three married daughters and six grandchildren.

About Compass

Compass - finances God's way is a global, non-denominational movement teaching financial discipleship and generosity.

The purpose is to serve churches, businesses, ministries, schools and other organisations by providing biblically based solutions on handling money and possessions.

Compass' mission is to help people everywhere to learn, apply and teach Gods financial and business principles. We are looking for three major outcomes.

1. To know Christ more intimately as we trust and obey Him, experiencing Christ at work.
2. To become free from worry, fear, stress and anxiety and then be free to serve and love the Lord and our neighbours.
3. To contribute to fulfilling the Great Commission by passing on what we have learned to others and making 'financial disciples.'

Compass has developed a wide range of resources in a wide variety of formats, such as workshops, small group studies, e-books and online learning.

There are teaching resources for all ages, from small children through students to adults; with application to areas of life such as business, church, marriage and family.

To see our resources, please visit the European shop at www.compass1.eu/shop

COMPASS[®]
-finances God's way

A FINANCIAL DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY™