

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The last few weeks have been nothing less than surreal. In the coming weeks we will prepare issues of LINC that address these seismic shifts to daily life, but unfortunately even our short production window falls slightly behind these real-time events. Thank you for your patience while we adjust to these new realities as quickly as possible.

In addition to several upcoming topics that address issues related to the spread of COVID-19 and how it has affected our collective lives, we will tailor our upcoming content to be more useful for your new digital gathering space.

If you're lost for how to move forward with your group, we recommend digital conferencing services like Zoom. These type of services will come in handy for both you and others for the foreseeable future.

More than anything, we want you to know that you're on our hearts and minds constantly. We're praying for you and we want to do everything we can to work together and provide you with the resources to be the church wherever you are and through whatever methods are available to you. Thank you for all you do in the lives of youth everywhere and know that you're not alone.

Peace,  
Kevin

**Note:** Next week's issue will reflect some format changes but, in the meantime, following are a few video-conferencing spins on the activities in this week's issue.

### Talk Topic 1

**Middle School:** This activity works as it is.

**High School:** For "random objects in the room," use items you can see in the background of the rooms wherever your youth are gathered.

### Talk Topic 2

**Middle/High School:** Both activities work as is if you can see one another.

### Talk Topic 3

Email Youth Page 6 of this issue to your youth, or share with youth via your online meeting method, if possible.



## Attention Leaders!

## WHY EVEN BOTHER TRYING

The following words were shared by Elizabeth Warren to her supporters as part of her concession speech, officially suspending her presidential campaign: “We didn’t reach our goal, but what we have done together—what you have done—has made a lasting difference.”

More than twenty candidates representing their respective parties have dropped out of the presidential race since late 2019, leaving only a few remaining contenders. Closer to home, thousands of people spent countless hours and dollars campaigning for local and state government positions only to lose to other contenders.

### What Now?

Election seasons come and go, and many losing candidates simply return to their previous occupations. Yet for others, losing an election only spurs them on to accomplish their goals through other means. After losing the 1940 presidential election, Wendell Willkie continued acting as an early pioneer for civil rights and is ultimately remembered for his fight to integrate the military and schools. Al Gore, after losing the 2000 presidential election, went on to win the Nobel Prize for his work in climate-change study and prevention.

### Facing Failure

So often, we face both inward and outward problems that seem so overwhelming that failure appears inevitable. In those moments, we are tempted to listen to our doubts and fears by listing excuses or by simply giving up. Yet, we can look to the Bible and find examples of people who faced challenges that, on the surface, seemed impossible to overcome. What we find is that God uses what we offer up and makes the miraculous happen. Sacrifice and faith are what God asks from us because God knows this is all we are capable of offering. Sometimes, the victory we achieve is exactly what we were hoping for! Other times, the victory is found within our failures. So, encourage your teens to take heart and pursue God’s calling on their lives, to fight for the victory of truth and justice, and to trust in God’s great power!



FAILURE  
IS SUCCESS  
IN PROGRESS

### TIP FOR THIS ISSUE

Check out this article from *Psychology Today* found at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/surviving-your-childs-adolescence/201902/talking-about-failure-your-adolescent>. Take time to review the list of ways teenagers may fail and consider your own personal accomplishments and failures. How have those moments shaped you? What have you learned from both? Be prepared to share your personal truth about accepting and embracing failure!

## EMBRACING FAILURE

**Question of the Day:** When is a time you failed?

**Purpose:** To help teens understand and embrace failure.

**Cultural Connection:** Presidential Nominee Dropouts

**Topic:** Resilience

### WHEN WE FAIL GOD

**Romans 5:1-5**

*But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This hope doesn't put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. —Romans 5:3-5*

**Commentary:**

Problems and failures are difficult to admit, much less embrace! Yet, in his letter to the Romans, Paul encouraged his readers to take pride in their adversities because of what can be gained through them. From a practical angle, Paul wrote that only through failure can we ever develop endurance or character. Yet from a spiritual perspective, Paul taught that only through problems can we ever experience the hope that is born out of faithfulness in God. However, this hope is not something we can create. It is a product of our faith in God who makes us righteousness through God's faith in us!

**Questions to think about:**

- ▶ When is a time you've personally experienced failure or adversity?
- ▶ In hindsight, what was gained emotionally and spiritually in managing the failure?

### WHEN WE FAIL ONE ANOTHER

**John 21:15-19**

*He asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" He replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." —John 21:17*



When is a time you've personally experienced failure or adversity?

**Commentary:**

Perhaps the only task more difficult than accepting one's failure against us is admitting to our personal failures against another. This picture is made clear in the scene between Jesus and Peter following Jesus' resurrection. In that moment, both had options in responding to Peter's failure of denying Jesus. Jesus could have publicly denied Peter's discipleship in front of the other followers. Peter could have walked away silent, ashamed, and unwilling to seek forgiveness. Yet, both responded to his failure just as God intends. When someone fails us, we are called to forgive. When we fail others, we are called to ask for forgiveness. Both are difficult tasks, but failure is inevitable for all of us. God gives us free grace, and we are called to offer the same.

**Questions to think about:**

- ▶ Who in your life fails you most often? How does this person(s) fail you?
- ▶ Whom do you fail most often?
- ▶ Which is more difficult: offering or accepting forgiveness?

### WHEN FAILURE SEEMS INEVITABLE

**John 6:1-14**

*Philip replied, "More than a half year's salary worth of food wouldn't be enough for each person to have even a little bit." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "A youth here has five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that for a crowd like this?" —John 6:7-9*

**Commentary:**

How awkward it must have been for the young boy with the fish and loaves to approach the disciples. Knowing what he

# TEACHER BIBLE PREP

could offer was grossly inadequate to feed a crowd of five thousand, he still chose to present to Jesus exactly what he had. Yet, as it turned out, that's all Jesus needed: sacrifice and faith. Too often in life, we face daunting tasks that leave us feeling just as the disciples did. But this miracle reminds us that giving all we can is all Jesus needs from us. So face the problems, personal and global! Then give what you can and trust that Jesus can and will make his presence known.

## Questions to think about:

- ▶ When have you personally faced a daunting or overwhelming task?
- ▶ In your opinion, what are today's overwhelming societal problems?
- ▶ How does this Scripture passage provide you hope?



I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 3:13b-14

## DEVOTION: PRESSING ON

*Take a few minutes and read Philippians 3:1-16.*

If ever there were someone who had reason to let his past control his present or define his future, it would be the apostle Paul. He lived much of his life condemning the movement for which he would ultimately become an advocate and a leader. As a young Pharisee, Paul was considered the most fervent and feared persecutor by those who followed Jesus. Yet, after encountering Jesus personally, his zeal for Christ switched directions. Instead of persecuting believers, he began preaching in favor of the gospel message.

Along his journey, Paul encountered people from his past who questioned his heart and motives. They wondered how someone could ever shift his purpose and identity so drastically. Yet, Paul's message to the Philippians reminds us that we do not have to be defined by our past mistakes, sins, and failures. Our identity is found in the One who calls us to turn away from our past and toward the prize. Wherever you may be in life, know that God forgives our failures and calls us to move onward and upward!



**NEXT WEEK:** Our world has abruptly changed and will no doubt have changed even more by the time you read this. The coronavirus is the globe's primary concern, and we'll use the next issue of LINC to process this crisis through a Christian worldview.

LINC: Living in Christ is an official resource of The United Methodist Church approved by Discipleship Ministries and published by Youth Ministry Partners and Cokesbury: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2222 Rosa L. Parks Blvd., Nashville, TN 37228-1306.

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Available by e-mail subscription by calling toll free: 800-672-1789. Also available for download from <https://www.cokesbury.com/linc#>.

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**LINC**  
LIVING IN CHRIST

# FAILURE AND FORGIVENESS

**Getting Ready:** You will need copies of Youth Page 6, pens or pencils, and Bibles.

## OPEN F-A-I-L-U-R-E (5–10 minutes)

Hand out copies of Youth Page 6 and form teams of two to three people each. Say: “The theme of today’s lesson is failure. Take a moment and think about all the ways a person can fail.” Point out the word FAILURE printed vertically on Youth Page 6 and ask each team to work together and write one way a person can fail using each letter of the word *failure* (for example, **F** = Forget parent’s birthday, **A** = Agreed to cheat, and so on). Allow three minutes for teams to work. Share answers as time allows.

Following the word game, say: “Today, we’ll discuss the painful and hopeful truths of failing ourselves, others, and God.”

## EXPLORE

### Talk Topic 1: When We Fail Ourselves (10–15 minutes)

#### Middle School Option

Announce that teens will play a game called “One Thing Leads to Another.” Explain that everyone begins the game with two points. Teens will then play multiple rounds of Paper, Rock, Scissors in hopes of gaining five points. If a student wins a round, he or she gains one point. If a student loses a round, she or he loses one point. If a student ever reaches zero, she or he is out of play. The first four students to reach five points will play against one another to determine the ultimate winner. Following the game, ask:

- ▶ In life, we often say that problems only lead to more what? (*problems*)



- ▶ Do you believe that saying to be true? Why either way?

Ask students to turn to Romans 5 and say: “The apostle Paul certainly understood the pain that failure places on us personally. But listen to his wisdom and encouragement for when we face challenges.”

Read aloud Romans 5:1-5, then ask and talk about the following:

- ▶ How can problems lead to endurance?
- ▶ How can endurance lead to character?
- ▶ How can character lead to hope?
- ▶ Where exactly does Paul call us to put our hope when we face problems?
- ▶ Have you experienced this truth in life? If so, how?

#### High School Option

Introduce a logic game called the “Blender Game” during which teens will attempt to figure out the one rule of play. Each answer will be the name of a person playing. Also, explain that students can learn the rule at any time by asking to read the secret rule from the teacher’s lesson (see below).

To begin, the teacher chooses three random objects in the room (chair, someone’s glasses, ceiling), then says: “We blend those objects . . . and who comes out?”

(*Secret rule:* The first person to speak is the answer each time.)

Play the game for three to five minutes. Periodically ask if any students would like to come forward and read the secret rule rather than trying to figure it out.

Following the game, ask:

- ▶ In what life situations would you rather not ask for help? Why?
- ▶ Who do you ask to help you with problems involving schoolwork? big decisions? sinful habits?

Ask students to turn to Romans 5:1-5 in their Bibles and say, “Let’s read what the apostle Paul wrote about problems and how God calls on us to dependently approach them.”

After reading the Scripture, ask:

- ▶ Do you believe problems can ultimately lead to hope? If so, how?
- ▶ What do our verses say about failing at being righteous?
- ▶ Is it difficult or comforting for you to accept righteousness by faith?

#### BONUS SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Say: “It’s tempting to write off certain people in our lives as failures. Let’s watch this video about an elderly woman who visits prisons to help inmates reclaim an identity of **4**

# FAILURE AND FORGIVENESS



success and strength” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M--W16B00tc>). Following the video, ask students to read Proverbs 19:4 and challenge them to think about people who have been labeled failures and ways they can reach out and encourage them.

## Talk Topic 2: When We Fail One Another (10 minutes)

### Middle School Option

Say, “It’s one thing to fail God or ourselves, but think about how you feel when you fail another person.”

Allow teens to play the role of parent for the following scenarios. Instruct them to raise the number of fingers they believe represent a fair number of weeks to ground teens as punishment. If they believe no punishment is necessary, no fingers should be raised.

- Break curfew by 35 minutes and 28 seconds
- Lie about where you’re hanging out for the night
- Bring home a failing progress report card in three subjects
- Run away from home

Ask students to turn to John 21 in their Bibles, then say: “Following Jesus’ resurrection, he speaks with Peter one final time. As we read the Scripture, think about how forgiveness is both offered and accepted. Read aloud John 21:15-19, then ask and talk about the following:

- ▶ What has Peter done to Jesus that demands forgiveness?
- ▶ Without saying “I forgive you,” how does Jesus display forgiveness to Peter?
- ▶ Who do you think has failed you most often in life?
- ▶ What does someone learn about his or her self when choosing to forgive another? What does the other person learn?

### High School Option

Say, “Failing ourselves or God prompts its own set of emotions, but failing one another can result in guilt that ultimately prevents us from moving on from failure.”

By raising fingers 1 to 10, how guilty would you feel if you failed people in the following scenarios?

- Missing curfew by thirty minutes
- Forgetting a parent’s birthday
- Running into a friend out and about after saying you were too busy to hang out
- Crossing the line while publicly making a joke at a friend’s expense
- Lying to a stranger when you say you have no money to give

As students turn to John 21 in their Bibles, ask, “Would you say you struggle with managing personal guilt?” Explain that this conversation occurred after Jesus’ resurrection (and Peter’s denial of Christ). Say, “As we read the following conversation, consider the guilt Peter must have felt and how Jesus offered resolution to that guilt.” Read aloud John 21:15-21, then ask the following:

- ▶ Why do you think Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times?
- ▶ Do you think Jesus intended Peter to feel guilty?
- ▶ Do you think guilt is an important feeling?
- ▶ When can guilt become unhealthy?
- ▶ Keeping this story in mind, what can you learn about guilt? about forgiveness?

## Talk Topic 3: When Failure Seems Inevitable (10 minutes)

### Combined Middle School and High School Option

Hand out copies of Youth Page 6 and direct students’ attention to the “That’s a Problem” activity. Allow two to three minutes for teens to write over or around the sad earth image what they believe are the top five problems we face as a global society. Offer a few suggestions if teens need help getting started: drug/alcohol abuse, coronavirus, texting and driving, bullying, gun control). (Explain to younger students as needed.)

Now, ask and talk about the following:

- ▶ In your mind, what is the biggest problem?
- ▶ Why do you find it so overwhelming?
- ▶ As one person, what do you believe you can do to help fix this problem?

Ask students to turn to John 6:1-14 in their Bibles. Choose students to read as narrator, Jesus, Phillip, and Andrew. Say: “The disciples constantly faced overwhelming problems and challenges. Listen for ways you relate to this familiar story.” Then ask:

- ▶ When have you recently faced a seemingly overwhelming task? How did you handle it?
- ▶ What do you find admirable about the boy who gave away his loaves and fish?
- ▶ What legitimate excuses could the boy have offered for keeping his bread and fish?
- ▶ What does this story share about solving the overwhelming problems and failures on earth?

### TAKE AWAY

Read aloud the commentary in Talk Topic 3 before praying: “God, we lift up these problems to you...” (allow students to call out problems). Close by praying, “God, we can’t give enough to solve these problems, but we pray to give what we can. We trust that you can and will take care of the rest. Amen.”

# WORKING IT OUT

## THAT'S A PROBLEM

Write over or around the sad earth image what you believe are the top five problems we face as a global society.



Using each letter of the word *failure*, write one way a person can fail (such as, F = Forget a parent's birthday).

**F** \_\_\_\_\_

**A** \_\_\_\_\_

**I** \_\_\_\_\_

**L** \_\_\_\_\_

**U** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_

**E** \_\_\_\_\_

## In the Bible: Readings for the Week

**MONDAY:** Read Jonah 1:1-3.

In what places of life does fear of failure hold you back?

**TUESDAY:** Read Exodus 3:1-17.

Do you struggle to trust God to help you overcome personal limitations?

**WEDNESDAY:** Read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10.

Do you intentionally turn your weaknesses over to God?

**THURSDAY:** Read Lamentations 3:19-27.

Where do you find hope in times of trial?

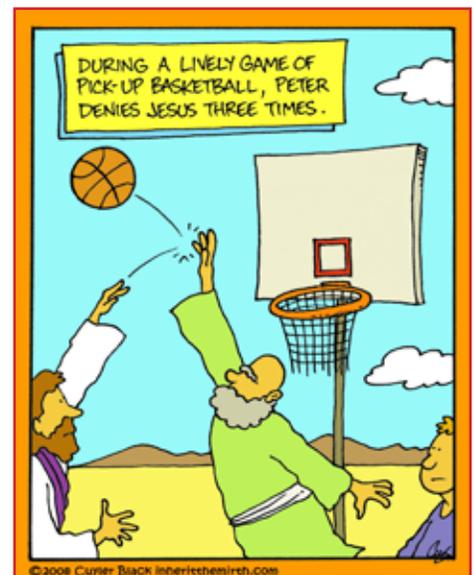
**FRIDAY:** Read Philippians 3:4-14.

Do you let your past failures define your future?

**SATURDAY:** Read Psalm 73:21-26.

Find hope in knowing God protects our souls even as our bodies fail.

## Inherit the Mirth



## WHAT'S TRENDING?

When have you had to overcome a difficult loss? Tweet or post your response with the hashtag #facingfailure on Twitter to @YMPartners or on facebook.com/youthministrypartners