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Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure

By J.R. Briggs



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Editorial Review

Review

"Here is a theology of failure to go with Jesus' sacrament of failure ('shake the dust off your feet and move on'). Find out why the best fail the most, and how the 'great cloud of witnesses' in Hebrews 11 is a cumulonimbus cloud haloing a rogues' gallery. Briggs's solution to a failure of nerve?the nerve of failure?deserves wide reading." (Leonard Sweet, bestselling author; professor, Drew University, George Fox University; chief contributor to sermons.com)

"Fear of failure is a power that holds many church leaders in a death grip. In this important book, J.R. Briggs boldly speaks from his own experience and that of others, reminding us that failure is inevitable, but the crucial question is how we find grace and eventually recovery in the aftermath of failure. The gospel that we encounter in *Fail* is undoubtedly good news, true liberation for our fearful, weary and broken selves. May we heed its call!" (C. Christopher Smith, coauthor, *Slow Church*, and founding editor of *The Englewood Review of Books*)

"In *Fail* J.R. Briggs succeeds in shining a light on an often taboo subject in modern-day ministry. Through the lens of the gospel, Briggs provides a vision to see failure as an invitation to grow in the grace and knowledge of God. If you are a minister, a former pastor, a fallen pastor or a struggling believer, *Fail* will encourage, strengthen and instruct you in the freedom offered at the cross. For 'by his wounds, we are healed.'" (Ed Stetzer, author, *Subversive Kingdom*)

"J.R. Briggs has something to say to pastors about our American obsession with 'success.' He holds to the Jesus-endorsed notion that those in ministry are called to faithfulness, not success, and that sometimes faithfulness takes the peculiar form of failure. *Fail* dares to tell the truth and will bring much-needed clarity and comfort to a multitude of ministers who, though faithful, have drunk from the bitter cup of failure." (Brian Zahnd, pastor, Word of Life Church, St. Joseph, Missouri; author, *A Farewell To Mars*)

"Someone needed to write a book that would cast vision for the transformational possibilities contained within experiences of failure. J.R. Briggs has done just that! In a voice that is honest, winsome and hopeful, he offers hard-won wisdom for leaning into God's gracious purposes even in the most painful experiences leaders face. Thanks be to God!" (Ruth Haley Barton, founder of the Transforming Center and author of *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*)

"J.R. Briggs offers a sobering look at the pain, loneliness and shame we pastors regularly face. Like the apostle Paul, he understands that the best ministry happens when we allow it to flow through our own weakness and failure. Reading this book was like 'a kiss from God on my bruises.'" (Aaron Graham, lead pastor, The District Church, Washington D.C.)

"J.R. Briggs goes beyond giving us a robust theology of failure; he opens his veins and shares his life. He calls us to be faithful not efficient, to live vulnerably without shame. He gives us grace-filled opportunities to be our true selves. If you are a pastor, you need this book!" (JR Woodward, national director of church planting for V3, author of *Creating a Missional Culture*)

"*Fail* is like a barn for a tired, overburdened mule. That mule is us: preachers, pastors, leaders in the church. The wonderful gift we are given here is a re-yoking, where we come into that barn and have our yokes

removed?which are of impossible weight to carry and manage?and slip into the yoke of Jesus, who carries all the burden of ministry and lets us join him, side by side, on the journey." (Lance Ford, author of *UnLeader* and coauthor of *The Missional Quest*)

"If you are struggling in ministry, this book will be like sitting down with a good friend who knows and understands what you are enduring. No quick fixes. No pat answers. No formulas. No judgment. Just gentle wisdom laced with grace to help you continue in God's calling." (Ruth Graham, author of *In Every Pew Sits a Broken Heart*)

"J.R. Briggs captures the struggle of pastors in his new book *Fail*. The fear of failure is enough to freeze us in our path to ministry. J.R. not only shows the facts as to how this is affecting ministers across every denomination but also points toward solutions for pastors to find their way out in the midst of failure. Pastors often find themselves incapable, inadequate and even incompetent in the task that God has placed before them. J.R. reminds them that the only hope they have to complete the mission God has placed on their calling is to rely on the Holy Spirit." (Maurice Graham, executive director, Shepherd's Staff Ministry, Inc.)

"With *Fail*, J.R. Briggs has captured a truth we all crave but fear to articulate. There is not merely grace for the burning- or burnt-out, there is the very life of Christ: full of honesty, meaning and sharp joy. Beyond platitudes or Twitter-quote pep talks, J.R. offers peace, real encouragement, and a better definition of success for Christian ministry. This is the next best thing to sharing the body and blood with people who understand. Failures large and small, visible and invisible, will stand up and shout for J.R.'s wisdom, wit and honesty. I know that I do." (Paul Pastor, associate editor of *Christianity Today's Leadership Journal* and PARSE)

"God is allowing thousands of men and women to fail. Isn't that wonderful? It is if you can see it from God's perspective. I believe that God, although hurting with you through your pain and loss, is also delighted in your failure. Why? Because he wants so much more for you! J.R. Briggs will give you language for what you're going through, help you find healing where you are and provide you with some handles for the journey ahead. As a man who has experienced his share of failure, I am so glad someone finally had the courage *and* hopefulness to write a book like this one. You'll be glad, too!" (Kevin Colón, neighborhood lead pastor at LifeBridge Christian Church, missional-incarnational coach & consultant at Missio)

"This book is CPR. *Fail* has given me breath for years to come. Within, Briggs offers an engaging, appealing and learned description of the *failed* life, invoking his readers to see afresh the breathtaking journey of all the landmarks along the way. Briggs reminds us that half of resurrection is death. And that, to truly live, we *must* fail. Jesus breathed his Spirit over a group of failed disciples from his cross. That same kind of thing seems to be going on in this book." (A. J. Swoboda, PhD, professor, pastor and author of *Messy*)

"I think Briggs is on to something. The life of the Christian is a constant oscillation between cross and resurrection. For pastors, that back-and-forth is more fraught than for others. People cast their stuff on us, whether they hate us or worship us as heroes. We see the stories in the Bible and expect miracles, and when they don't come we settle. We end up drawing on whatever charisma we may have instead of on what we know to be true about Jesus. . . . Briggs is right to notice that the moniker loser is the most crushing epithet our clever culture has yet devised. But it's not what God wants. God wants faithfulness. There is an irony in a book on failure becoming the next 'it' book on the Christian publishing scene, just as there is to a conference called Epic Fail being marketed with QR codes. But it smells a lot more like Jesus than most of what's on offer out there." (Jason Byassee, *The Christian Century*, October 15, 2014)

About the Author

J.R. Briggs has served in ministry for over a decade in mega-churches, house churches, and church plants.

His books include *Fail, Eldership and the Mission of God*, *When God Says Jump*, and *Redefining Life for Men*, and he coauthored *The Message // Remix: Solo* with Eugene Peterson. J.R. is the founder of Kairos Partnerships, walking alongside and encouraging pastors and leaders in order to better equip them for God-honoring ministry. He also serves as the director of leadership and congregational formation with The Ecclesia Network and is on staff with Fresh Expressions U.S. He was the creator and curator of the Epic Fail Pastors Conferences, and he is cultural cultivator of The Renew Community, a faith community for the hurting and the hungry in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife and two sons. J.R. earned degrees in biblical literature and Christian education from Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. He also studied abroad at Jerusalem University College and holds a masters degree in missional theology from Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania.

Peterson, now retired, was for many years James M. Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He also served as founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland. In addition to his widely acclaimed paraphrase of the Bible, *The Message* (NavPress), he has written many other books.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ariane Gray:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are reading whatever they get because their hobby is reading a book. What about the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, individual feel need book whenever they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you will need this Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure.

Robert Olsen:

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