



## Failure Is A Good Teacher

Do any of you remember McCall's Magazine?

Recently, as I was reading in my living room chair, Lorraine came to me with an old McCall's Magazine she had gifted to her.

"There is an article by Billy Graham in here," she said. "Do you want to read it?"

I never pass up anything written by Billy Graham. Although I have never met him, he has been my mentor for the past 20 years, since God so unexpectedly led me into outreach events.

So I took the magazine that was falling apart, and began reading. Today's popular magazines don't hold a candle to the old ones. Modern magazines are mostly advertising, while older magazines actually have long, comprehensive articles. This one was an autobiography by Billy that seemed as long as a book.

Halfway through, I again read about his first attempt at preaching. He was feeling called to preach the Gospel and when his first opportunity came along, he stayed up the entire night praying and preparing. He had written four sermons, so he had some material. When he stood up to preach to 40 people, he was so nervous, his hands were oozing sweat. He preached all four sermons, and after eight minutes, had nothing left to say, so he sat down.

That encounter was so painful, he was convinced that God couldn't be calling him to preach. Well, you know the rest of the story. Billy Graham, in his lifetime, preached to more people than any man who has ever lived.

Most of you would be totally amazed that when he began, he was just a terrible preacher.

What is the lesson here? Billy was called by God to preach. My former pastor once said to me, "If you can do anything else in life, do it." The inference was that if you're called to the ministry, you can't do anything else."

Such has been my life. My experiences in other professions were always accompanied by the deep down knowledge that I was really supposed to be doing the Lord's work, and I always intended to get there.

When I started the ministry full time, I was 45 years old. It was so difficult that I thought about quitting several times a week. When I would unload all of my frustration on my pastor, he would listen patiently, and when I was done venting, he would say, "Whatever you do, don't quit."

Billy could not avoid the call of the ministry, and though he failed miserably at his first sermon attempt, he eventually became one of the greatest preachers of all time.

There is a second lesson here. When God calls a person to His work, he wants that person to learn to rely totally on Him. If we could do it ourselves, we would probably in a short time be filled with pride. There is nothing so good for our independent human nature as terrible failure. Extreme failure teaches us that success is leaning entirely on God and on his ability to make Himself powerful through us. God wants all of the Glory and recognition.



Well, I had an experience very much like that of Billy Graham, when he preached his first sermon.

A couple years into *Scarlet Circle Ministries*, which was the first name of our ministry, I was asked to hold a workshop for the Wisconsin Youth Alive, an Assemblies of God youth ministry.

I was assigned a room, and the name of my workshop was published in the program.

The time came, I waited in my room and watched many students, pause, look into the room and then walk by. No one came to my workshop.

### *Talk about failure! Ouch!*

A year later, I was again asked to speak at the Minnesota Youth Alive. This time my topic was *How to Pray a Friend into the Kingdom*.

I was evidently the last workshop to be signed up, because at the retreat center, I was assigned the oldest building on the campus. To get there one had to slosh through the melting snow and mud (it was April) to the edge of the campus. Twenty-eight students showed up and I cut loose on my message. At the end I made a call to those who wanted to pray a friend into the kingdom. Eight young people came forward and I began praying for them. When I got to the middle of the line, two girls were weeping. I said, "You are weeping for your friends, aren't you?" They nodded. I prayed that they would see their friends come to Christ in two weeks' time.

A couple weeks later, a letter came in the mail from one of the two girls. She explained that she and her friend had each seen a friend come to Christ. I burst into tears and wept for some time. This was some of the very first fruit of our ministry since launching full time.

The next year I was again asked to speak at the Minnesota Youth Alive. I spoke on the same topic, and this time was given a room in the main building. The room filled up, so that they had to pull back the room divider to make two rooms into one. Eighty kids packed into that room. When I gave the invitation to come forward if you wanted to pray a friend into the kingdom, I said, "Don't you dare come forward, unless you are totally serious about this commitment." Every student in the room came forward. How was I going to pray for 80 kids?

Fortunately, a youth pastor, who I had worked with in an event, was present. Between the two of us we prayed for all 80 kids.

*When God calls you to his work,  
He will confirm it. A terrible failure at the beginning may only be a test He is giving you to see if you are going to be faithful.*

At the time of my first workshop, when nobody came, we had seen very little fruit in the ministry, but in a few years, our events had reached a total audience of over 40,000. If someone had told me this was going to happen, I wouldn't have believed them.

What has God asked you to do?  
Whatever it is, do it? You don't know what your obedience will produce.



## **Firestorm By George Halama**

*Firestorm is here! This last week, two boxes appeared on our doorstep from UPS filled with books. The good news to all of you, is that you get one free! We will be mailing them out, so one day you will find **Firestorm** in your mailbox.*

*You will be inspired, I promise. We invite your feedback.*

*Firestorm is Chapter Three of the larger book, **The Eye of the Storm**, which has 12 Chapters. It is written, and ready for proofreading. We anticipate releasing it soon. Watch for it on our Web Site.*

In His Service,

*George and Lorraine  
Halama*

George and Lorraine Halama

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scarlet circle

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