

Pathways Church,

We wanted to address a question that often arises in our faith journey: Can someone who has struggled with sin and overcome spiritual battles by God's grace be a good role model? This question is important because it sets the baseline for the actions the Elder Board has taken over the past several months. The Pathways Church Elder Board believes the answer is a very confident "yes." In fact, there are many examples of this in the Bible. The stories of individuals who faced their own spiritual battles, yet through God's grace, emerged as powerful witnesses and role models for us all. Here are some of those names...

- Moses - One of the most prominent figures in the Old Testament, Moses initially had doubts and weaknesses. He struggled with his temper and made major mistakes, but God used him to lead the Israelites to freedom from Egypt.
- King David - Known for his failures and mistakes, David repented and sought God's forgiveness. Despite his many sins, he is referred to as a "man after God's own heart" and played a significant role in Israel's history.
- Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus) - Saul persecuted early Christians, but after a life-changing encounter with Jesus, he became the Apostle Paul, spreading the teachings of Christ throughout the world. His transformation is a testament to God's grace.
- Solomon - Although Solomon had moral failures, including worshiping foreign gods, God used him as the author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon to provide wisdom and guidance to the Bible.
- Peter - Despite denying Jesus three times during His arrest, Jesus said to Peter; Feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep. This is referred to as the restoration of Peter who became a prominent leader in the early Christian church and played a significant role in spreading the gospel.

These examples illustrate that God's grace and forgiveness can transform individuals, even when they have sinned or made mistakes.

God uses people who have sinned to create transformative power through faith, repentance, and God's grace. God's primary concern is the condition of a person's heart and the sincerity of one's relationship with Him. Whether sins are public or hidden, God invites individuals to repent, seek forgiveness, and strive to be in unity with Him and we, as Christ followers need to live out examples of this in our own lives. Christ followers are encouraged to show love, compassion, and forgiveness to those who confess and seek to turn away from their sins. As seen here, the Bible is filled with stories of people who faced struggles, made mistakes, and yet found redemption and restoration through their faith in God. These people were living testimonies to the transformative power of God's grace. Their experiences teach us that those who have walked through the darkness are often the ones best equipped to guide others towards the light.

We are reminded in the Scriptures that "judgment is mine, says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). We must recognize that none of us is above reproach, and we all have our own battles and shortcomings. As we repent and seek forgiveness, we are assured that God's grace is sufficient to cover our sins.

Pathways Church is more than just a gathering; it is a family, and like any family, we will face difficult times and challenges as we commit ourselves to God's plan for us. Difficult times are not a reason to leave your family; they are a call to lean in, to support one another, and to draw closer to each other. It is in the moments of challenge that we need one another the most.

- **John 15:18-20** - If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.
- **2 Timothy 3:12** - In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
- **Ephesians 6:12** - For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
- **James 1:2-3** - Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
- **Galatians 6:1-10** - 1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. 4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load. 6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

These verses highlight that following Christ can involve persecution, spiritual warfare, and trials. They also explain the need for believers to remain vigilant, persevere, and find joy in the midst of challenges, knowing that they are not alone in their struggles. Most importantly, they say that we need to restore people gently and we need to do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

As church leaders, we are following the path that God has laid before us. We must remember that the enemy doesn't waste time attacking churches that teach "another gospel" because they are already doing the enemy's work. Instead, the enemy sets his sights on churches that are saving souls. This should serve as a powerful reminder of the significance of our mission and the impact of our work.

So, let us embrace those who have overcome their spiritual battles, for they are living proof of God's transformative love. Let us support one another as a family, knowing that others are in the battle now and need our gentle healing and example of Christ-like love. Our unity is a source of strength, and we must remain steadfast in our mission to save souls, no matter the challenges that may come our way.

We look forward to seeing you this evening, at 7PM, to discuss the questions that you have been submitting. Pray for discernment, pray for peace, and pray that we can unite as a church against the enemy.

Pathways Church Elder Board