

The logo for "Cross Currents" features a stylized orange cross symbol to the left of the text. "Cross" is written in a bold, dark brown font, and "Currents" is written below it in a similar bold, dark brown font.

The Wrong Way to Do It

In her daily “Welcome Pardner” e-blast last fall, my friend DJ Stubben told us she was reading Steve Harvey’s book *Act Like a Success, Think Like a Success*.

I haven’t seen a copy of that book, but I trust DJ’s take on it. She was intrigued by Harvey’s statement that financial wizard Warren Buffett won’t consider doing business with anyone unless they have failed at least twice in business. Harvey says, “This is how we learn.”

What an interesting hoop to jump through! Have you ever considered failure to be a positive way to learn?

As I pondered this idea, I started realizing that Buffett may not be its strongest endorser. This insight pops up over and over in the Bible.

Take the apostle Paul, for instance. Would he ever have become the Bible’s strongest advocate for grace if he had not begun as “the chief of sinners”? His atrocious mistakes switched on a bright light he might never have seen without them.

Ditto for the apostle Peter. Instead of shutting down his career as chief spokesman for Jesus, his profane denials of the Lord taught him—as nothing else could—that “Christ died for sinners.”

I don’t know enough about Warren Buffet to know if he reads and believes the Bible. If he does, he could find an impressive list of examples to make his point about the benefits of failure.

Surely he would include King David. After that usually wise ruler got into bed with his neighbor’s wife, he would later tell the whole world, “My sin is always before me.” What do you think? Did his public disgrace finally make him a wiser, kinder king?

Moses had to become a murderer and spend four decades as a fugitive in the desert before he was ready to lead God’s people to the Promised Land.

Most of us have heard the probably spurious tale about the frustration Thomas Edison’s wife voiced when his two hundredth attempt to produce an incandescent light bulb didn’t work. She fussed at him for wasting his time. “It’s not wasted, dear,” he is said to have replied. “Now I know two hundred ways not to do it.”

Most of us can recall our worst mistakes. We’d give anything to take back a word, to remake a choice, to un-do a deed. Instead of wallowing in regret, maybe we need to adopt Buffett’s and Edison’s view. Now we know how not to do it.

By Gene Shelburne