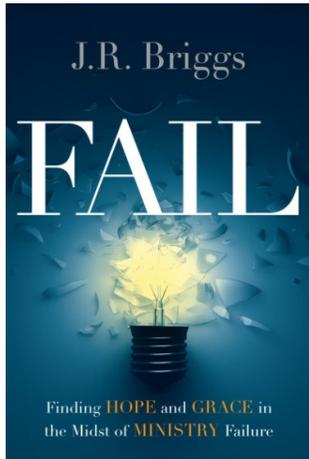




BOOK DETAILS



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

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Finding Freedom Through Failure

Pastor J.R. Briggs had had enough. Enough of the success stories from celebrity pastors. Enough of the megachurches setting the standards for ministry. Enough of everyone feeling alone in their failures. So he wrote a blog post and pondered aloud, “What if there was an Epic Fail Pastors’ Conference?”

Over the next few weeks, Briggs received an astounding response from pastors across the country (and around the world). He decided it was worth the risk to create a time and place for pastors to work through their failures together, and the Epic Fail Conference was born. Held in a failed church turned bar in a gritty Philadelphia suburb, the goals were threefold: celebrate faithfulness in ministry (regardless of outcome), highlight the need for grace, and acknowledge Jesus as the foundation of ministry and life.

“The event touched a nerve and spawned further spaces around the country (Denver, Cincinnati, Portland, Colorado Springs, etc.) to allow pastors the time and opportunity to process, confess, be encouraged and experience healing,” Briggs notes.

For pastors who find themselves in need of a similar space to process and even reframe their failures, Briggs has written *Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure*.

“The elephant in the room for pastors (and most leaders) is this: many of us are afraid of failure, and we don’t feel as though there are many safe spaces to talk openly about it,” Briggs notes. “Statistics continue to show the devastating reality: many pastors are at significant risk. Some pastors have experienced failure in various kinds; others of us fear a significant failure will bring us down. Pastors are in desperate need of developing a biblically rooted and robust theology of failure.”

After sharing some of his own painful ministry experiences, Briggs delves into the typical metrics of success in ministry. Since what constitutes success will determine what constitutes failure, Briggs highlights the necessity of privileging a pastor’s faithfulness to Jesus and the church’s fruitfulness over results like bigger budgets or buildings.

Whether a pastor’s sense of failure comes from a major scandal, a tragic event or slow burnout, pastors must courageously address their wounds so that true healing can occur. Briggs leads readers on a journey out of shame and loneliness into vulnerability and life-giving connection with others.

Yet as Briggs points out, “the spiritual journey, especially in times of failure, is never a direct route.” Thus an exploration of what might be learned from times in the wilderness and what true recovery entails is also necessary. Citing research from former pastor Stephen Burrell,

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J.R. Briggs serves as Cultural Cultivator of The Renew Community, a Jesus community for skeptics and dreamers in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. He also serves as the Director of Leadership & Congregational Formation with the Ecclesia Network and is on staff with Fresh Expressions U.S. He is the creator and curator of the Epic Fail Pastors Conference, giving pastors opportunities to process failure and grow to see failure as an invitation for grace and healing instead of shame.

Briggs outlines what “redemptive recovery patterns” look like. Pastors may not want to make time to lament and go through all the stages of grief, for example, but such practices are essential in confronting and overcoming failure.

“The crisis of failure is a fork in the road: it has the potential to transform or destroy,” Briggs explains. “There is a great need to learn to embrace failure and see it not as a curse, but as a gift that could actually teach me a great deal about grace, God and the unique calling pastors have.”

Replete with hard-won wisdom and practical suggestions, *Fail* reveals the freedom only failure can bring. Along with the creation of healthy rhythms, a sound theology of failure can free pastors from defining themselves by their failures or by their successes.

“Our identity is not wrapped up in what we do, but in who we are – and more importantly, to whom we belong,” Briggs concludes.