

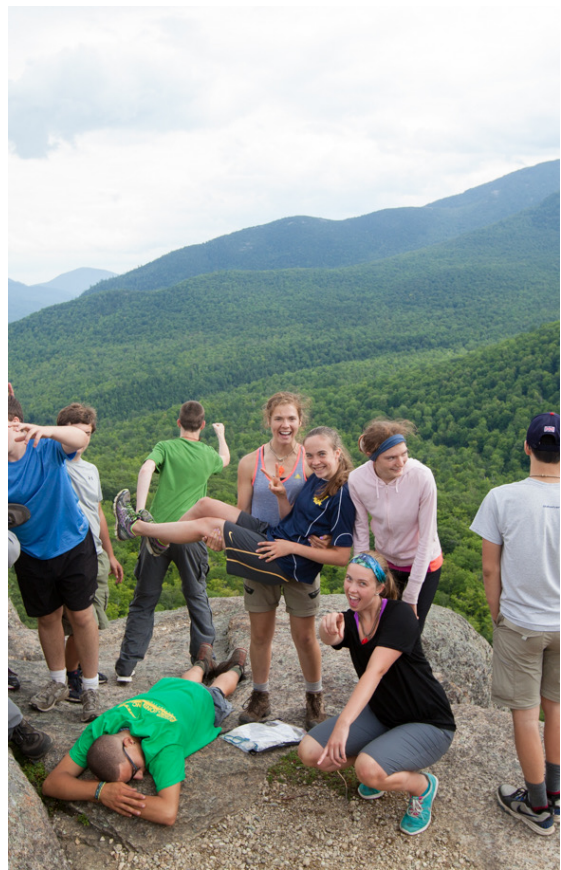
Leading Outside your Comfort Zone

Your comfort zone is an area of your life where you relax and don't need to change anything. This could be sitting at home, or being with friends who understand you, reading a book, or watching TV. Though you might be comfortable in this place, you often cannot grow when you don't face challenges.

As a leader, you will need to step out of your comfort zone to care for other people and guide them well. What does it look like to step outside of your comfort zone? What if you don't know what will happen? What if it doesn't make sense? Read below to see how Peter was called to step outside of his comfort zone of the boat and called to walk on water. If this sounds crazy, that's because it is. But what other incredible things are we missing out on because we don't have the courage to take a step of faith and leave what is comfortable?

Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!"



But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here"

Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." **"Yes, come,"** Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed.

Matthew 14:22-26 (NLT)



I have not ceased
being fearful, but I
have ceased to
let fear control
me.

Erica Young

The Tightrope Walker

There was this tightrope walker, who did incredible aerial feats. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at tremendously scary heights. Then he had succeeding acts: he would do it blindfolded, then he would go across the tightrope, blind-pushing a wheelbarrow.

An American promoter read about this in the papers and wrote a letter to the tightrope walker, saying "Tightrope, I don't believe you can do it. But I'm willing to make you an offer. I will give you a lot of money if you are able to do your act over Niagara Falls." Now, Tightrope wrote back, "Sir, although I've never been to America and seen the Falls, I'd love to come."

Well, after a lot of promotion and setting the whole thing up, many people came to see the event. Tightrope was to start on the Canadian side and come to the American side. Drums roll, and he comes across the rope that is suspended over the treacherous part of the falls—blindfolded! Then, not finished yet, he goes back across the tightrope pushing a wheelbarrow, blindfolded! And he makes it across easily... the crowd goes wild.

He comes up to the promoter and says, "Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?" "Well, sure I do. I mean, I just saw you do it!" "No," said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?" "Well, of course I do. You just did it!" "No, no, no" said Tightrope, "Do you believe I can do it?" "Yes!" said Mr. Promoter, "I believe you can do it." "Good," said Tightrope, "Then you get in the wheelbarrow."

The word "Believe", in Greek, means "To live by. To commit to." How often do we tell Christ that we believe Him, yet refuse to get into the wheelbarrow?

Where are you most comfortable?

Leading Outside your Comfort Zone

Who are the people you are most comfortable with?

What is out of your comfort zone?



Redefine Success

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At some point you will come face to face with a mistake you've made. You might have hurt someone's feelings either by accident or intentionally. You might have led the group down a trail that seemed right but ended up being the wrong direction.

Well, there's good news and bad news. Bad news: you will probably "fail" again. It happens to all of us. Good news: failure gives you a chance to learn something you wouldn't know otherwise.

Read below to see what God promises to us. "Failure" may seem like a scary word to us. Adults, teenagers, kids, all know the feeling and want to avoid it. But God sees it as a chance to care for his people. The prophet Isaiah wrote this to the people of Israel, but the promises are true for us today as well.

"But now, God's Message, the God who made you in the first place, Jacob, the One who got you started, Israel: "Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end—Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Isaiah 43: 1-4 (The Message)





That's what wilderness does for you: It lets you make all the mistakes you need in order to get where you're really going.

Gary Snyder



Backpacking with the Saints

There are times on the trail when you have to turn back. Nothing is more discouraging. Maybe you've done something stupid, like losing the map. Changing weather conditions may have made it dangerous or foolhardy to go any further. Maybe your gear is soaking wet or the black flies have become unbearable. Sometimes you simply don't have it in you to go on. Whatever brings you to that point, you admit defeat and grudgingly head back toward the trailhead...

The trail we took up Mt. Whitney, peaking at 14,505 feet, was a grueling one. The average elevation gain is 550 feet a mile, though the altitude makes it seem twice that. But the beauty is incredible. Hidden lakes appear and disappear on the winding trail. Wind-blown firs and deep grass at Bighorn Meadow are overshadowed by towering granite cliffs with snowfields plunging a thousand feet down. The sky is as close as you'll ever get to flying. It's a landscape that hangs from the roof of the world.

It's also a place where things can go wrong... For duffers like myself, the mountain affords a narrow window of opportunity, fraught with the unexpected. There are risks of dehydration, twisted ankles, and altitude sickness, sunburn and frostbite can threaten on the same day, not to mention quickly rising storms and the onslaught of galloping fear.

It was early June that summer when Eric and I camped at the trailhead for a day or so to get acclimated. We set out from Whitney Portal on the eastern side of the mountain, hiking past Lone Pine Lake and establishing our base camp near timberline at Mirror Lake. I knew nothing about hiking in snow and ice at the time, and a recent storm had left more of both on the trail than we expected. We had started earlier in the summer than was wise that year, hadn't checked on recent weather conditions, and had arrived without all the equipment we needed...We didn't know how the world changes at two and a half miles above sea level. I felt the full weight of my inexperience.

The trail became increasingly hard as we made our way up the ninety-nine switchbacks between Trail Camp and Trail Crest (at 12,777 feet). This is a two-mile section of the trail that hikers remember most. The higher you go the more you're taken by the desolate beauty of gray granite, white snow, and blue sky. But the desolation works its way into the soul as well. This was ultimately where I had to turn back, some 1,700 vertical feet from the summit.

Stumbling off the path at one point, clinging to a rock over a steep precipice, I felt the numbing terror of heights for the first time in my life. Worse yet, a cloud suddenly moved in, bringing fog so thick I could hardly see beyond my feet. I was scared to death. When we later came to a place that required my stepping over what seemed a sheer drop into an abyss below, I couldn't do it. Eric went on without me, returning to report how close I'd come to the stunning view of the Sierras to the west and the final route to the peak. Yet nothing could have enticed me to go any further at the time.



Backpacking with the Saints

Later that night, as we returned in exhaustion to our campsite, a group of Boy Scouts passed through, coming back down from the peak. I asked them how far they'd gotten thinking they wouldn't have made it much beyond the switchbacks. To my chagrin, they announced that they'd all reached the top, even the youngest of them, who was twelve years old. I was blown away. Failure felt like an indictment of my worth as a person, confirmation of a deeper defect in character.

Not making it to the summit of Mt. Whitney has become over the years a metaphor for something profoundly important in my life. The unclimbed mountain is often the most beautiful. Its capacity to teach is supreme. What we can't attain at times proves more powerful than anything within our reach. The most important "mountain" in one's life offers no pride of accomplishment, only the unwelcome gifts of inadequacy and incompleteness.

Whether you face a physical inability to make it to the end of the trail, a failure in meeting the expectations of others, or a realization that you've betrayed someone you love, whatever it is... you learn over time that it isn't the end. Every failure is an invitation to growth. Mistakes are occasions for grace, opportunities to choose a different path. They make forgiveness possible. **Only in the absence of success can you know yourself to be loved without cause.**

Belden Lane, Backpacking with the Saints

Are there times on this trip that you felt like you didn't succeed? What was that like?



Redefine Success

What helps you deal with "failure" in your life?