

PERMISSION TO FAIL

What if we celebrated the step instead of the outcome?

We say we want people to take steps of faith. We want them to venture into the harvest, try something new, follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit, start a conversation, build a relationship, experiment with a new Kingdom Expression, and go somewhere they haven't gone before.



But there's a problem.

We usually celebrate the experiment only when it works.

Someone tries something new and people show up. We celebrate it.

Someone starts something and it grows. We tell the story.

Someone takes a risk and something amazing happens. We put them on the platform.

But what happens when someone takes the same kind of step and it completely bombs? Usually, not much. We quietly move on.

And people notice.

Without ever saying it out loud, we begin creating a culture where people learn that taking risks is encouraged, as long as those risks succeed. So they become careful. They choose things they already know how to do. They take smaller steps. They stay closer to familiar territory. They call it experimentation, but they instinctively minimize the possibility of failure.

Eventually, even our steps of faith become safe.

That's why I think one of the greatest gifts we can give people who are learning to live in the harvest is something surprisingly simple: **permission to fail**.

Because permission to fail gives people permission to take bigger steps of faith.

Permission to fail isn't permission to be careless. It isn't permission to ignore wisdom, preparation, or responsibility. It is permission to faithfully take a step when you don't know what the outcome will be. It is knowing that if the experiment doesn't work, you haven't disappointed everyone, embarrassed yourself, or lost the opportunity to try again. You are free to learn from what happened and keep moving.

Imagine someone coming back from an experiment and saying, *"I tried something. It completely failed."* And instead of disappointment, the first response is, *"Fantastic. What did you learn?"*

Suddenly, failure is no longer the end of the experiment. It becomes part of the learning. You noticed something. You became curious. You took a step. You tried something. It didn't work. Now you know something about the harvest you didn't know before.

That isn't wasted effort. That's *reconnaissance*.

And now you have something to *assess*, something to *adjust*, and somewhere new to *advance*.

Assess. Adjust. Advance.

This is the rhythm of experimentation.

I wonder what would happen if churches actually started telling stories about things that didn't work. Not as cautionary tales, but as faith stories.

Someone tried starting a dinner and nobody came.

Someone initiated a conversation and it went nowhere.

Someone experimented with a Kingdom Expression and discovered they had completely misunderstood what people needed.

Someone followed a clue into the harvest and reached a dead end.

Celebrate it.

Not because failure itself is the goal, but because they moved. They stepped beyond what they already knew. They entered territory where the outcome wasn't guaranteed. They had enough faith to try. And now they know something they didn't know before.

The greatest failure might actually be never failing. Because if everything we attempt works, we might only be attempting things we already know how to do.

The harvest is too plentiful for that.

We need people willing to explore and experiment. People willing to follow the wind of the Spirit and the current of the harvest into places where there are no guarantees. People willing to ask, "*What if...?*" and then actually try it.

Those people need to know something before they take the first step: if it doesn't work, they're still okay. We'll listen to what they learned. We'll help them assess. We'll adjust together. And then we'll send them back out to advance again.

Because when failure is safe, people become willing to take bigger steps of faith.

And bigger steps of faith take us farther into the harvest.