

I never did a day's work in my life; it was all fun.—Thomas Edison

Failure? No Such Thing.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF THOMAS EDISON
(1847–1931)

When a reporter asked Thomas Edison how it felt to have failed 25,000 times in his effort to create a simple storage battery, his reply was, “I don’t know why you are calling it a failure. Today I know 25,000 ways not to make a battery. What do you know?”

Thomas Edison was probably the greatest inventor in American history. When he first attended school in Port Huron, Michigan, his teachers complained that he was “too slow” and hard to handle. As a result, Edison’s mother decided to take her son out of school and teach him at home.

The young Edison was fascinated by science. At the age of 10 he had already set up his first chemistry laboratory. Edison’s inexhaustible energy and genius (which he reportedly defined as “1 percent inspiration and 99 percent

perspiration”) eventually produced in his lifetime more than 1,300 inventions.

When Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, he tried over 2,000 experiments before he got it to work. A young reporter asked him how it felt to fail so many times. He said, “I never failed once. I invented the light bulb. It just happened to be a 2,000-step process.”

Thomas Edison’s laboratory was virtually destroyed by fire in December 1914. Although the damage exceeded 2 million dollars, the buildings were only insured for \$238,000 because they were made of concrete and thought to be fireproof. Much of Edison’s life’s work went up in spectacular flames that December night.

At the height of the fire, Edison’s 24-year-old son, Charles,

frantically searched for his father among the smoke and debris. He finally found him, calmly watching the scene, his face glowing in the reflection, his white hair blowing in the wind.

“My heart ached for him,” said Charles. “He was 67—no longer a young man—and everything was going up in flames. When he saw me, he shouted, ‘Charles, where’s your mother?’ When I told him I didn’t know, he said, ‘Find her. Bring her here. She will never see anything like this as long as she lives.’”

The next morning, Edison looked at the ruins and said, “There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew.”

Three weeks after the fire, Edison managed to deliver his first phonograph.

—*The Sower’s Seeds*

What is defeat? Nothing but education, nothing but the first step to something better.—Wendell Phillips

Remember, “Failure is an event—not a person!”—Dick Innes

God has a purpose in everything, even if it is only to force us to exercise our faith and demonstrate it for the encouragement of others, to inspire their faith and encourage them to trust in the Lord too.—David Brandt Berg