

SUCCESS

The world definition of success could be the degree a person's self-realization has penetrated society. You may think of Richard Branson, Kate Moss or Tony Blair. The Christian definition of success depends on how you perceive the Lord Jesus Christ in His mission of redemption.

John 17:4 says it all -

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which you have given Me to do."

The ultimate climax of the work was the Cross - the indescribable hard labour of the travail of His soul. At every stage of the earth walk Jesus was in total dependance to the Father (John 5:19, 8:28). Our success is surely linked to obedience to the Word of God.

Karl Marx, a lifelong spiritualist, said on his deathbed -

"I know I'm going to hell. That is where I want to be.
But I'm glad that I've left behind a system on earth that
will guarantee the majority of mankind will follow me there."

After the Berlin wall, we may have to say a huge minority, perhaps 1 in 3 are still communist. He could be viewed as a successful man with his atheistic ideology. Jesus in His earth walk, in the flesh and under the law can be seen as a failure. Twelve confused recruits who after three years of mobile bible college, failed to replicate the divine life in any great measure, until the Holy Spirit fell upon them at Pentecost. They had slept at the Transfiguration and Gethsemane. They had run away from Calvary. They were slow of heart to believe in the resurrection. BUT IN THE UPPER ROOM GOD put in the 120 disciples a unique characteristic: the divine ability to duplicate the DISPOSITION of JESUS CHRIST.

The level of success is the manifestation of the character of Jesus Christ through the yielded vessel, the determined disciple, the serving son. How much of Jesus is getting through to me and through me to others? But HOW? Here are four steps that should bring success to the praying believer.

(1) Magnify the Lord - Psalm 34:1-3

The Lord God cannot get any bigger.... but our conception of Him should enlarge as we grow in grace. The telescope of praise magnifies the Lord by bringing us nearer to our majestic God who is

more splendid than splendour,
more loving than love,
more discerning than wisdom,
more magnificent than magnificence.

Praise is a duty so our souls get a bigger conception, a greater feeling for, and an energized will for God to manifest to us in the person of His Son. In today's culture this sublimity is substituted by hero-worship. People are co-dependant on heroes in culture, politics, sport etc. The glory that should go exclusively to God goes to man; reducing us and diminishing God. Our souls always need enlarging. The critical aspect is: from what source? Mary's spirit had already rejoiced in God her Saviour and her soul magnified the Lord out of the impetus of the Holy Spirit within her spirit. The unregenerate are unable to do so because there is no indwelling Spirit. The world enlarges its will, stimulates its mind and feels affinity and effecton by hero-worship. Even academics love a previous genius. The believer wants to exalt the name of Jesus and find the Lord enlarging their souls together in His presence. Idols make people idle, diminishing their creativity. The worship of God in spirit and in truth, however, releases individual creativity and purpose.

(2) Mortify the Flesh - Colossians 3:3-6

We inherited flesh life from Adam and it cannot be improved or educated. We must destroy it by neglect, by refusing to satisfy myself. Sin is destroyed by the reality of redemption - the precious blood of our Saviour obliterating the dead works of our sin. The flesh however works connecting my body with external circumstances so that I please self.

It is a revelation to see what Augustine was getting at when he testified he was an abject, helpless, perverted moral failure. He became responsible for his sin, and refused to be a victim desiring pity. This aspect of the gospel is in danger today from some inner healing ministries who emphasize your broken past and hereditary lines beyond the place Scripture speaks of such things. How many sermons on Romans 8 dare to mention and explain verse 13?

"For if you live according to the flesh you will DIE, but if by the Spirit you put to death the DEEDS of the body you will LIVE."

God's weapon of execution is the power and wisdom of God: the Cross, always available to the honest and humble heart. It is there we rid ourselves of all that the fall has infected us. Not that we were responsible for Adam's disobedience, but that seed of rebellion was passed on genetically to all men. All are without exception, sinners who miss the beauty of God's plan. All are without excuse because conscience recognizes the bias of degeneration of sin.

(3) Meditate the Word - Joshua 1:6-8

We find the word 'success' in Joshua 1:8 and it links with meditation and obedience. What we meditate upon we unconsciously or consciously obey. A ruminating cow produces milk from grass by regurgitating the cud thirteen times, chewing some more and swallowing. A process of meditation! We must allow the verse of Scripture to go beyond the membrane of our brain, into our hearts. The anointed word within us can produce whatever it declares because it remains a creative word, able to save our souls, when it is planted. (see James 1:21). It cannot find its home in our hearts if our riotous imagination is feeding on the frivolity or excess of TV.

“Therefore LAY ASIDE all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the IMPLANTED WORD, which is able to save your souls.”

Contrary to ‘pop’ psychology, the negative usually precedes the positive. We mortify the flesh before we can meditate on the word.

A religious sentimentality is in vogue today where feelings have replaced obedience, and if we fail to obey godly impressions the result will be depression or a lower level of reaction. Perhaps coming to the Bible to meditate is very difficult in the restless, stress-filled world you inhabit. Simplify your life - see your relationship with God as top priority. God allows dramatic failures in our lives for the purpose of new priority. Every failure is a broken focus. People want to be entertained today rather than be diligent and concentrated on a pursuit. Budget your time for diligence is a man’s precious possession.

(4) Manifest His love - John 13:34,35

Success in reaching out to the world is the lifestyle of His agape love. We serve our own generation by the will of God, which is manifesting His love. The first time I knew this demonstration was when I was delivered of various demons by a pastor who has remained a personal friend for over 30 years. To experience God’s love personally through intimacy with Jesus or through the body of Christ makes life worth living. The apostle of love, John, says some wonderful things about the very essence of our Christian life. 1 John 4:7,8 says

“Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God for God is love.”

Those who manifest love are born again and know God. Some believers find it hard to develop a lifestyle of laying down their lives for the brethren. Why? because they have not come to know God by experience..... they are still babes with forgiveness and eternal life within them, but have not progressed. Perhaps they have not magnified the Lord with an open heart, have failed to mortify the flesh with a strong will, and have not meditated upon the word with a concentrated mind. Is this why so few Christians can claim to be a success?

A NOTE ON DESIRES

After the new birth God seeds us with clear purpose. He plants the plans of His heart within our spirit. Ask yourself a simple question: “Why am I a Christian?” The answer must be something along the lines of “I’m contented and satisfied doing the thing that I really am by His grace.” Here is another definition of success with respect to our desires being fulfilled. Often God can show us our desires are not His. Check out the children of Israel who wanted a King and received Saul. God had to teach them over half a century that His desire and choice was far better. Most Kings were bad ones and led Israel inexorably to the 70 year exile. God must kill off desires with no eternity in them, for our desires abort His purpose. But does He not give us the desires of our heart? Yes, but with one huge condition....we delight ourselves in the Lord (Psalm 37:4)

That fellowship with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit crucially places the desire, purpose and plans of His heart INTO our new covenant hearts.

The worst fear for a man is not measuring up; for a woman it is abandonment. These failure areas come into our lives when God wants to kill off wrong desire. Only His desires within us can bring success when we obey them. The Lord promises men failure and futility and guarantees women heartache and loneliness when we have not arrived at His purpose for our lives. God limited man's longevity because of wrong desire - and the history of man is the history of judgement. He allows us a journey through a wilderness to test what is in our hearts. (see Deuteronomy 8:2,3). He wants to set our hope on the grace that comes at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)

The success of being like Jesus in our disposition comes at a cost. The price tag is identification with a personal cross, where we see the plague of our own heart and have to die out to self. Then when winter is past and the cold rains over and gone, the flowers of the fruit of the Spirit appear on the earth. In every sunset you can see the garden of Eden returning when the Lord returns, and begins the true new age of the millenium. Our real address is PARADISE. The sum of our obediences go through the custom gates of heaven. There will be reward for our success here on earth. The secret to live successfully?

Jesus gave it to Nicodemus in John 3:13

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son of Man, who IS IN HEAVEN."

Jesus was in two places when He spoke to the religious leader. The Pharisee was not seeing far. Jesus was! From the perspective of presently being in heaven while on earth, Jesus spoke the gracious words. Speaking from heaven guarantees success, whether those on earth receive it or not. The wise believer leaves the results to God.

THE GREATEST SUCCESS

The greatest success of God was His Son entering the world by nine months of pregnancy. The holy seed was placed in chaste Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit. He is how God does a thing on earth. Everything the Holy Spirit accomplishes is 100% successful. The only ones who deter, frustrate and hinder Him are the saints and servants of God.

In Isaiah 55:10,11 we see the foundation of success is the creative word. The sent word is never futile but potent, accomplishing what God sent it for. The invisible seed from heaven produces in the visible earth. Abounding in the gospels are the illustrations of this principle. Jesus received a burst of revelation knowledge in His spirit, obeyed the voice of the Father by speaking out the word, and the supernatural occurred in accordance with that seed.

To the waves - "Peace, be still"
To the centurion - "as you've believed, be it done to you."
To Lazarus - "Come forth!"
To the leper - "It is my will. Be clean!"

He rebuked the fever and cursed the fig tree.
The Word made flesh spoke word and it was so. The Genesis 1 principle is found everywhere in the gospels. God speaks and it just is.

Now in the new covenant we can go a step further: our mouths can speak the word of faith! There are obvious abuses to this extraordinary grace - prosperity teaching based on self getting is an anathema to our Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, the excesses do not invalidate the truth found in Romans 10:8-10, Mark 11:23,24, Philemon 6, Joel 3:10, Hebrews 13:5,6 and countless other verses.

Fully functioning faith fulfills the Scriptures in three ways:

- a) we believe God CAN do a thing!
- b) we believe and know God WILL!
- c) we be and live in what God DOES!

This testimony can be read and meditated in Hebrews 11 and throughout the Bible. Faith is the pivotal piece in the Christian jigsaw. The formation of faith is the inspired word of God that is anointed to us. All experience must be undergirded by the word of God. See how Jesus speaks to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus - we must interpret experience by the solid certainty of Scripture (Luke 24:25-27). Heaven and earth may pass away but not the word of God. Lazarus may leave heaven to warn the rich man's relatives, but it will not bring faith unless they believe the word of God (Luke 16:30,31).

God is a faith God. See His amazing supreme control over history when Isaiah used the past tense in describing an aspect of the atonement:

"and the Lord HAS LAID on Him the iniquity of us all."

God knew 700 years before the Cross the mission of His Son.....and does not use the prophetic will lay on Him but HAS LAID on Him. God knows the future exactly and through prayer desires us the people of God, to come up to the divine level of faith that will declare a thing to be so, even if there is no visible support.

The faith of the Son of God can be seen in two remarkable passages in Hebrews 1:5,6 and Hebrews 10:5-7. In Hebrews 1 we glimpse Jesus hearing in His spirit the voice of the Father at conception:

"You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

and again:

"I will be to Him a Father
And He shall be to Me a Son."

I believe this could have been moments after Mary had submitted to the Holy Spirit, and certainly during her pregnancy. In Hebrews 10 we hear the Son's response:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a BODY You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said "Behold I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God."

He quotes Psalm 40:6-8 by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in His spirit. Although a baby He completely was divine, with a receptive spirit that could hear the Father. Two discoveries were taking place in His spirit in the first thirty years from Bethlehem to Jordan.

- (a) Jesus was equally, essentially, eternally God discovering His humanity, which was received from Mary.
- (b) Jesus was completely man (the Word become flesh) discovering His divinity, which was sealed into Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit.

A unique being had come to earth.....the first Christian who knew about community and family in the Trinity before time began. The incarnation is the greatest success because without it all mankind would be eternally lost.

Mankind's sin as deep as the heart,
as wide as the world,
as old as the race,

could never be forgiven and forgotten unless the Saviour had been born of a virgin. The climax of obedience to the Father's word was the cross. We also need to be receptive to bursts of revelation in our spirit. The word planted there possesses divine power....for a supernatural life that glorifies God and a discipleship that includes the daily cross. Jesus Christ our Lord kept obeying the inner prompting of the Spirit and kept fulfilling the word of God. SO CAN WE!

Luke 4:36 literally says

*"What is this in His mouth?
He has the authority to use the power to command evil spirits
and they come out!"*

So do we! The great thing about the good news is that Jesus never safeguards His greatness, grace or gifts....but gives them away to the sons and daughters. Those who believe shall cast out evil spirits, heal the sick, cleanse lepers and raise the dead. Faith is extending the limits off my life to prove the loyalty of God's Word.

Mark 11:24 says

*"Whatever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them
and you shall have them."*

Receive means receive them then and there and is not pie in the sky in the bye and bye! The creative word that formed billions of galaxies can be released through our mouths IF the word of God is LIVING in our spirits. The same powerful word Father gave Jesus, Jesus gave to disciples says John 17:8.

God didn't make a mistake when you received eternal life. So never doubt the love of God toward you! Faith works through love to build God's kingdom here on earth. We have a tremendous part to play and a huge responsibility to be carriers of the anointed word "that calls things which do not exist as though they did."

MOTIVATORS

To live successfully as believers we must receive the right motivators. Ahab was so evil because his wife stirred him up. Coveting positions of leadership brought Ananias and Sapphira their downfall. Greed led Judas' betrayal and suicide and made Gehazi a leper. Let's check out three great motivators.

(a) The effect of prison on Paul. Philippians 1:12

The dark tomb-like place stench with excrement a foot high. Prisoners asphyxiated and died in this most notorious of prisons. Paul, a Roman citizen, had one privilege - he could write letters. Once a month a guard went down to this festering hell, with a candle in one hand and a writing pad in the other. That's where the apostle wrote the epistle of joy! The most horrid circumstance turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. The Christ IN Paul was motivated, and the church has been blessed by this letter for nearly 2000 years. The palace guard knew his very survival was a miracle in Christ! (Philippians 1:13). Paul refused to live in self-pity chose grit and grace wrote a masterpiece of the Master's peace. Hallelujah, rejoice in the Lord and again I say. rejoice.

(b) the effect of prophecy on Josiah. 1 Kings 13:2

Three hundred years before child king, the man of God declared the devastating truth to Jeroboam when Josiah was 26, Hilkiah found the book of the Law in the house of the Lord, and the king who had already set out various reforms, cried with a rent heart. The prophetic motivation continued the zeal of the Lord through him to remove idolatry and restore worship in spirit and truth.

The word must do a work in us, so we will worship and know the attributes of God, only then can our work be acceptable in His all-seeing sight. No creature or demon is hid from His sight. A simple sum performs God's Kingdom.

TRUE WORSHIP + LIVING WORD = GOD'S WORK.

Only the work of a worshipper who obeys the revelation has eternity in it.

(c) the effect of prayer on our Lord Jesus. John 17

Truly speaking, this is the Lord's prayer. The "Our Father...." is the disciples prayer focussing on our worship and our needs. In the last few verses, spoken just before

the climax of Father's will, the grisly spectacle of the Cross, we sense the Saviour's recollection of eternity past. He strengthens resolve to go through the darkness and abandonment of Calvary by recalling the love and the glory freely exchanged between Father and Son, before the foundation of the world.

Simplify your lifestyle,
Shut yourself away,
Meditate these life-changing verses.
Speak them quietly to your soul.
Enter the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ.

God will work them within your spirit and from there you will know the true motivation of His success.

PRAYER -THE FOUNDATION

Prayer is the foundation of our success, our expertise, our prudent dealings, our wisdom, our guidance and our circumspect intelligence, our ability to make other understand. That collection of words helps us define the Hebrew word, sakal, which the Holy Spirit uses in Joshua 1:8. Knowing and obeying the word of God guarantees success. God's plan for the 21st century is a Joshua generation. We have not passed this way before. On September 11th 2001 the world turned a corner! People still wonder - is Osama bin Laden alive and where is he? There exists a cultural covenant in Afghanistan that is you eat bread and salt with someone they will be your friend til death, never betray you, and even lay down their life for you! Osama has these friends in the mountains of Afghanistan! Missionaries know it, politicians flounder! Prayer that prevails brings revelation --- without true prophets, our politicians will fail.

The problems with Western believers (Americans and Europeans) is we are spoon-fed by the christian TV evangelists. They speak increasingly of money needs and the spell is cast. If I give to so-and-so, I'll be okay with God! This subtle lie is reducing the body of Christ to a pitiful prayerless bunch of priests, who are unable to dig for truth themselves! Again, prayer is the foundation for seeking the living, relevant, up-to-date word of God that is always a SUCCESS! The job of those who bring understanding of the word of God must never be to collect clones of their particular views, but to minister an anointing that causes the sons and daughters of God to discover the unsearchable riches of Christ for themselves. There is yet much truth to break open from the word of God, and much more to be obeyed! The mountain of Mark 11:23 is not merely poverty or sickness. The God channels would have you believe money, tithing and firstfruits etc.is over 50% of the Bible. Those, and related subjects like financial stewardship account for less than 3%. Let's have balance! The mountain is related, of course, to the fig tree without fruit, "nothing but leaves". The church or individual who appears to be fruitful, but is in fact barren, needs to disappear into the sea of forgetfulness. Dry rot must be burned up in the Holy Spirit fire of holiness. Pray for a personal Luke 3:16. Your success depends upon it.

Without it we will be "nothing but leaves". The downside of over-emphasis on prosperity teaching is that this is the very condition that has swept into the church.

The gospel has become self-orientated. The mountain of self has made millions of believers unproductive and without the success that God's heart desires. Only clarity of thinking, produced by repentance will change the coming disaster of a dead orthodoxy among charismatics.