

THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS NETWORK

Practicing Christian Community in the Marketplace

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The Role of Wisdom in Lasting Success

Introduction: A peak into my journey of striving for success

"Anything worth doing, is worth doing well."

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

"I used to think a great deal about running the race. Now I think most about finishing well."

Observation #1: In 21st century western Christianity, there exists a tremendous disconnect between the teachings of Scripture and the issues of everyday life! We have been allowed to believe or duped into believing that the Word of God is IRRELEVANT in the world of man - especially in business life.

Observation #2: The truths of Scripture have become a series of PLATITUDES, rather than the very bedrock and foundation upon which we build anything of lasting value for God.

Platitudes - Remarks or statements that may be true, but are boring and meaningless because they have been said so many times before. [Cambridge International Dictionary]

Observation #3: Wisdom found in the Word of God is being increasingly replaced by "wisdom" found in the world of men.

Assessment Questions:

1. What do I value as a business person?
Revenue & Profit / Prosperity & Success / Increase in Productivity / Return on Investment / Growth & Development / Leads & Referrals / Rewards & Recognition
2. What else *should* I value as a Christian business person?
Integrity / Honesty / Accountability / Authenticity / Dependability / a Good Name
3. What do my values lead me to desire?
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)
4. What do my desires lead me to pursue?
We ultimately pursue what we believe is most important.
Our Values determine our Desires, and our Desires determine our Pursuits!
5. What is my ultimate motive in my quest for success?
Is my quest for success primarily to enjoy the blessing or to bring joy to the Blessor?

6. How do I go about apprehending success?
7. What am I willing to do, and sacrifice if necessary, to apprehend success?
8. Does God want me to succeed?
9. Does God want me to have lasting success?
10. Has God made provision for me to gain a measure of lasting success?

SUCCESS - Who understands what it means?

A. Epigrams

The secret of success is to do the common things uncommonly well.
[John D. Rockefeller, Jr.]

Success is getting what you want out of life without violating the rights of others.

One of the most important lessons of life is that success must continually be won and is never finally achieved. [Charles Evans Hughes]

The secret of success is to be like a duck—smooth and unruffled on top, but paddling furiously underneath. [Arnold Glasgow]

The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places.

I would rather fail in the cause that someday will triumph than triumph in a cause that someday will fail. [Woodrow Wilson]

B. What do we mean by success?

- The avoidance of failure
- The achievement of something planned or attempted
- The accomplishment of a significant aim or purpose
- The attainment of fame, power, or social status
- The apprehension of great prosperity

C. How does the world view success?

- Bill Gates - the richest person in the world from 1995 to 2007, worth \$56 billion.
- Warren Buffett - the Nation's most beloved investor worth \$52 billion.
- Yahoo - The global network of Yahoo! websites received 3.4 billion page views per day on average as of 2005, making it one of the most visited U.S. websites.

- Google - Now widely recognized as the world's largest search engine. Google's shares have now topped the \$500 per share mark. This makes Google worth around \$154 billion, as compared to Yahoo which is around \$34 billion.
- Britney Spears / Paris Hilton / Howard Stern / Hugh Heffner

D. How do you define success?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| • A prosperous career? | • Winning the game |
| • A series of job promotions? | • Climbing the ladder |
| • Victory over your opponents? | • Achieving the goal |
| • Plenty of money in the bank? | • Conquering the enemy |
| • Notoriety in the Christian community? | • Building the practice |

E. How does God define success?

A Working Definition: Success is the pleasure and the approval of God gained by our faith in His character and our faithful stewardship of our God-given potential.

[The Kingdom of heaven] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability... The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' (Matthew 25:14 ff)

Principle: SUCCESS is ultimately defined by who awards what rewards.

SUCCESS - How much should we care about it?

A. How passionate are you about succeeding?

My wrestling story

B. Did the saints of old care much about succeeding?

Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested. (1 Chronicles 4:10)

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from

Zion. May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. (Psalm 20:1-4)

This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered. (2 Chronicles 31:20-21)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24)

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

C. Did Jesus Christ care much about succeeding?

Did you not see and know that it is my necessary duty to be in My Father's house and occupied by My Father's business? (Luke 2:49) [Amplified Bible]

Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. "Father, glorify Your name." (John 12:27-28)

I glorified You on the earth having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. (John 17:4)

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased". (Matthew 17:5)

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

D. Does God care much about us succeeding?

The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered ... the LORD gave Joseph success in everything he did. (Genesis 39:2-3)

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate

on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:7-8)

In everything David did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. (1 Samuel 18:14)

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. (Psalm 37:3-6)

It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it. (Proverbs 10:22)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

SUCCESS - What standards do we use to measure it?

A. There are plenty erroneous and unreliable standards

- The standard of our own expectations

The Jews of Jesus' day concluded that Jesus was a failure because they erroneously believed that His mission was to restore the kingdom to Israel rather than to restore Israel to the King. Even immediately prior to Christ's ascension, His disciples still believed that this was His mission: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

- The apparent success of our peers
- The apparent success of others we observe
- The apparent success of others we admire
- The apparent success of others we emulate
- The apparent success of others we envy

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. (Jeremiah 17:5-6)

B. But there is only one accurate and reliable Standard

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (Psalm 1)

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:7-11)

But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

- C. Principle: God absolutely wants you to be a success in business, so long as business is not the measure of your success.

SUCCESS - How long should it last?

- A. How would you like to see your achievements and success in this life benefit many this side of heaven, outlast you in this life, and reward you for eternity?

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. (John 15:8, 16)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

SUCCESS - So, how do we apprehend it?

- A. Our ability to apprehend personal success is in direct correlation with our commitment and faithfulness to seek the Lord and to obey His Word.

Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. (Proverbs 16:3)

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years... He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success. (2 Chronicles 26:3-6)

This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered. (2 Chronicles 31:20-21)

WISDOM - Who understands what it means?

An Arab Proverb

He that knows not and knows not that he knows not; He is a fool—shun him!

He that knows not and knows that he knows not; He is simple—teach him!

He that knows and knows not that he knows; He is asleep—wake him!

He that knows and knows that he knows; He is a wise man—follow him!

Epigrams

A wise old owl sat in an oak; The more he saw the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he heard; Let's try to imitate that bird.

Knowledge can be memorized. Wisdom must think things through.

The wise carry their knowledge as they do their watches, not for display, but for their own use. [T. Brown]

The older I grow, the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom. [H. L. Mencken]

A Working Definition: Wisdom is the insight, knowledge, and understanding gained from seeing life from God's perspective.

[The Apostle Paul prays] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might. (Ephesians 1:17-19)

WISDOM - How do we get it?

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt,

because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. (James 1:5-8)

WISDOM - Proverbs 8

A. Wisdom is Accessible

Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances...

1. Wisdom is audible, not silent.
2. Wisdom is sufficiently loud, not quiet.
3. Wisdom is obvious, not illusive.
4. Wisdom is always available, and never avoidable.
5. Wisdom positions herself at the seat of commerce and the judicial system.

B. Wisdom brings a Message to ALL Mankind

Exhortation #1: Forsake naivety and foolishness, and strive to obtain Wisdom!

She cries aloud: To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.

Exhortation #2: Listen carefully to what Wisdom has to offer!

Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.

Exhortation #3: Choose Wisdom as your most valuable treasure and possession!

Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

C. Why you should Listen to and Choose Wisdom:

Reason #1: Wisdom possesses attributes of God that Christians should desire.

I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power.

Reason #2: Wisdom is the means by which godly leaders govern well.

By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth.

Reason #3: Wisdom desires to bestow her possessions upon her pursuers.

I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.

D. God's employment of Wisdom in Creation as the Master Craftsman

Wisdom was given birth before Creation

The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world.

Wisdom was employed to design Creation

I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the master craftsman at his side.

Wisdom was rejoicing at the completion of Creation

I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

E. Concluding Exhortation

Now then, my sons, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.

WISDOM - Proverbs 2

A. The Conditions of Apprehending Wisdom

My son, IF you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and IF you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and IF you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, THEN you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the

knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

B. The Promises of Apprehending Wisdom

He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse... It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words... Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it.

WISDOM - Proverbs 3

A. The Conditions and Promises of Longevity and Prosperity

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.

B. The Conditions and Promises of Favor and a Good Name

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

C. The Conditions and Promises of Clear Direction

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

D. The Conditions and Promises of Physical Health

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

E. The Conditions and Promises of a Bountiful Harvest

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

F. The Blessings and Promises of Choosing Wisdom as your Most Valuable Possession

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed. By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble; when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.

WISDOM - Proverbs 4:5-9

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor.

Conclusions:

1. Assess the motives and commitment of your passion to succeed.
2. Evaluate the standards by which you measure success.
3. Pursue wisdom as the most valuable treasure on earth.
4. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and you will succeed.
5. Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) goals for yourself.

What's the role of wisdom in lasting success? **Wisdom is the *sine qua non* of lasting success!**