“Success and Scripture”

January 31, 2016

Joshua 1:1-8

Most of us know that Jesus called Twelve Disciples to be His Apostles. But what is not so well-known is that He also called and sent out “The Seventy.” The story is found in the Gospel of Luke in the tenth chapter.

Please open your Bible with me today to Luke 10. Here’s what we read in verse one.

Luke 10:1 *“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. (2) Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

*(3) Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. (4) Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.”*

Now look with me at verse nine. Luke 10:9 *“And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”*

And as soon as they return, here’s what we read, verse seventeen. Luke 10:17 *“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.”*

They had experienced success. They had preached the words of Jesus. People were healed. Demons were cast out. They were used of the LORD to help a lot of people.

Have you ever wondered if Jesus ever said anything about success? Here is the LORD’s comment on their success. He says in Luke 10:20 *“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”*

Their success was really the result of their obedience to the LORD’s sending them out. It was all *His* power at work through them. And so Jesus told them to not rejoice in the outward; but to rejoice that their names were written in Heaven.

Now, I’m sure there’s a lot more to think about here. But today I want to say a word about success. If someone were to come to you today and ask you for *your* definition of success, what would you say? Success. There are literally a hundred definitions for success. Here are just a few. Success is …

1. Achieving wealth.
2. Gaining respect.
3. The correct or desired result.
4. Always doing my best.
5. Setting and attaining good goals.
6. Believing I can do anything.
7. Money, fame, and influence.
8. Loving and being loved.
9. Not giving up.

And here’s how we Americans see success. “Americans tend to define success by money, and by what money can buy. We are known around the world as a rather materialistic country, always striving after things and defining success by the accoutrements that money can buy – such as our snazzy cars, the size of our homes and designer clothes.

And that’s just what we get – more things. This doesn’t mean more fulfillment or contributing to make the world better in some way. It simply means more things. Others define it by the joy they feel when they do the work; the joy they feel when they’ve finished the work; and by the joy that others feel as a result of their work.

If their work doesn’t add to their sense of happiness and joy of themselves and others, then no matter how much money they’ve earned or how many accolades they receive, they don’t feel successful. - See more at: http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/five-ways-define-success#sthash.KR0aiwt1.dpuf- See more at: http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/five-ways-define-success#sthash.KR0aiwt1.dpuf [Found on in an article by Dr. Linda Seger “Five Ways to Define Success”].

As I thought about this topic recently, I wondered if any of the following people would be counted anywhere as a success by you. Job; was he a success? Jeremiah, the Prophet; was he a success? John the Baptist; was he a success? The Apostle Paul; was he as success? Jesus Christ; do you count Him a Success?

Today’s topic, though, is not success. Instead, it’s “Scripture And Success.” Now, please take your Bible with me and open to Joshua chapter one. I’ll be reading Joshua 1:8. *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

There’s that word “success.” Would you pray with me? *“LORD, I pray that your word might be life and truth to my heart today and that I might know you better and live more obediently. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

By the way, some of the people you see as a success had a surprisingly small beginning. Albert Einstein never spoke until he was four. Bill Gates and his financial partner Paul Allen miserably failed at their first business. Ben Franklin dropped out of school at the age of ten. Stephen King’s first novel was rejected thirty times. [Omit - By the way, that first novel is about a Christian. And, according to a lot of people, it’s one of the worst books ever written.]

Thomas Edison failed upwards to ten thousand times before he invented a light bulb that worked. Vincent Van Gogh only sold one painting in his lifetime, which means, maybe, that he wasn’t successful until after he died. Franklin Roosevelt was paralyzed with polio at the age of thirty-nine and became President of the United States at the age of fifty-one. [Found on Renee Jacques “”16 Wildly Successful People” on [www.huffpost.com](http://www.huffpost.com).].

I hope that somewhere in your life, thus far, you’ve begun to memorize Scripture. No doubt, you’ve read and maybe even memorized this passage. Joshua 1:8 *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

Here’s what the LORD says about success.

First, God’s command; actually it’s a three-part command. Just like we found in the NT Gospel of Luke with the Seventy, the LORD is the Only One Who can ensure your success.

But would you look at the method He gives for success. His method is surprising. He commands you to do three things. And they all involve His Word. One, you are commanded to not let it depart out of your mouth. And two, you are commanded to meditate in it day and night. And three, you are to do whatever He says. Speaking, thinking, and doing; three actions you carry on every day of your life.

Before we can ever judge anyone a success, we should seriously consider what the LORD says about it.

How much of the Bible is on the tip of your tongue? You can always have the Bible on the tip of your tongues. How much of your conversation is Bible? How often do you talk about what the Bible says?

The Old English puts it this way. *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth;…”*

At first you might think that you shouldn’t speak the Bible. But that’s not what it means. In Joshua’s day, no one carried a copy of the Bible in his pocket. There were no copies of the Bible for everyone to have their own.

So, the only way to obey this part of the LORD’s command was to learn it and say it and talk about it; discuss it.

There was, I’m sure, a whole raft of things the LORD could have told Joshua since he was the one who replaced Moses and since he was now the General of the Israeli army. The entire book of Joshua is a book describing the battles Israel fought in the land of Palestine.

But what would really ensure his success? And what ensures your success today? I’m quite sure America and the world has lost its way when very rarely do you hear the Bible spoken. I’m sure the same is true for the Church and for you and me.

Folks, it’s not just a blessing to hear your children discussing the things of the LORD. It’s not just a blessing to hear your parents discussing the Bible. It’s a clear command. So, when was the last time you had a “Bible” conversation at your table or in your home or at work?

Can you see what the LORD was instructing Joshua to do? He was to speak and teach and discuss and use the Bible in his everyday conversations. He was to discuss with his wife and children what Moses had written down. “This book of the Law” refers to what Moses had written and what we now call the first five Books of Moses. He was to direct his soldiers and admonish his lieutenants and inspire his commanders to abide in the teachings of Moses.

And why would God want Joshua and you and I to be always teaching and always talking about what the Bible says? The answer is simple. Where the Bible goes, the family goes. Where the Bible is lost, the nation is lost. Where the Bible is clearly taught, the Church knows and loves the LORD.

Your thoughts are not sufficient to enable you to live well in this world. And my thoughts are not sufficient to enable me to live well; or, for that matter, to die well. A number of years ago, I was a Pastor at a Church in the town of Jermyn, PA. And I often went through the town inviting people to Church.

One evening I noticed one porch light on on our street, Madison Avenue. I walked up to the door and rang the bell. A woman answered. I told her who I was and she invited me in. She and her daughter were discussing the Bible. She was Catholic. Yet, she had a friend who had told her the way of salvation and she had recently come to know the LORD as her Savior.

From that day on to this very day, our dear friend Mimma, born and raised in Italy, discuss the Bible. We don’t often talk. But when we do, our conversation revolves around what the Bible says and what the Bible means.

Folks, the LORD gave you 66 books from His heart to your heart. He wants you to keep those books on the tip of your tongue.

But beyond talking about it, He also commands you to *think* on His word. The word the LORD uses to keep Joshua on track was meditate. It means to think over; to study; to turn it over and over in your mind and heart.

Can you imagine being the General of the Israeli army with all a general had to do? And what was to be at the top of his list of thinking? The Word of God.

I’ve learned and I’m learning the Bible. I’ve got a bit of the Bible memorized. And I’m glad I do.

You see, the LORD wants you as His child to focus on your spirit’s relationship to Him. Yes, you will dwell on your situation in life; your problems; the things you undertake every day at school or at work. But can you really find success in those things if you neglect your Bible?

How in the world can you overcome discouragement or overcome impure thoughts or handle the pressures of your job or handle your finances or your marriage or have a true influence on the people God brings into your life? It’s got to be in here [the heart].

I think the main reason why the Christian has problems that are seemingly unsolvable is right here. We have no Scripture to mediate on.

Folks, meditation is beyond reading the Bible. It’s filling yourself with it. Yes, read your Bible. But read it; memorize it; and meditate on it.

And here’s the reason why you need to keep it on the tip of your tongue and in the depths of your heart. It’s so that you will be able to know what God wants

You were made to bring Him glory with your life. There’s no glory where there is no listening to the voice of God speaking to your spirit.

Joshua 1:8 “*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,* ***that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein****: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

Is there anything more important than doing what the LORD commands? Is there anything more important than surrendering to the LORD’s will every area of your life? Is there any areas of your life that you don’t want the Bible to influence and control?

This is God’s provision for your personal success in this world. Your Bible is your means and your measure of success. Leave your Bible home; leave your walk with God a walk in the dark. Let the Bible fill your thoughts and your day and you can walk in the light.

Psalm 119:105 *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

Psalm 119:11 *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”*

Psalm 119:130 *“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”*

Psalm 119:160 *“Thy word is true…”*

John 17:17 *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”*

Folks, you’ve got a lot to do in your life every day. But are you being obedient to the LORD when you neglect to read and meditate and speak the Bible?

Finally, is there a better way for personal success?

Joshua 1:8 *“for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

The two word “prosperous” and “success” are equal. To prosper is to succeed. And the road to success is to let your Bible tell you how to think and to speak and to live.

That brings us to a much better way to define success. Folks, God’s will is that you succeed. But the only true success is as follows. “The ability to apply Scripture so that you live to glorify God.”

He wants you to prosper. And He knows that you cannot and will not succeed when you set His word aside each morning as your begin each day.

A young preacher by the name of Mordecai had gathered a group of people together to pray for an opportunity to minister in the city of Charlotte, NC. The year was 1934. Rev. Mordecai had heard that there was a great need especially in the high school in Charlotte.

As a matter of fact a teenage atheist from the school’s atheist club had stated publicly that he was going to attend one of Rev. Mordecai’s tent meetings and ridicule him. It didn’t matter to Rev. Mordecai that he would be ridiculed. He knew that to be successful he was responsible for one thing; preaching God’s Word.

That fall Rev. Mordecai began a series of meetings in Charlotte. He and his friends had begun praying and asking God to move on the hearts of the young people in that city.

One young teen, Bill, lived nearby. Bill had already made up his mind that he was going to play baseball. His hero was Babe Ruth. Bill had heard that one of the atheists form high school was going to publicly ridicule Rev. Mordecai. So he and his friend Grady decided to join the choir and sit behind the pulpit to see what would happen.

That night as Rev. Mordecai preached, Bill and his friend Grady came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but were hesitant to do anything about it. And when the invitation was given, one of the other choir members encouraged Bill and Grady to go forward. Both received Jesus as Savior and LORD that night.

Now, some would say that Rev. Mordecai was not a great success. And, as far as we know, no one knows the name of the man who encouraged Bill and Grady to go forward during the invitation. But success is not determined by what people think. Success is based upon what God’s thinks. Both young teens were saved that night. Grady Wilson and William “Billy” Frank Graham.

And if it wasn’t for Rev. Mordecai Ham and the man who encouraged Billy Graham to be saved, I might not be here today because I was saved at the end of one of the movies made by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Let’s stand firmly on God’s Word and leave the successes up to Him.

Let’s conclude today by reading and quoting these words from Joshua one.

Joshua 1:8 *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

So, what will it be today and this week? Will it be “I don’t have time for this”? “I don’t need this.” Or will it be? “I will obey you LORD. I will surrender my thoughts to your thoughts. I will read, meditate on, speak, and obey your Words. What will it be?

Will you surrender yourself to His strength and control? Here’s the Prayer of Surrender. *“Father, I surrender my whole life to you today; again. You have saved me for Yourself. Do with me whatever You choose. I am available for You to strengthen me to deal with everything I have to face today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Sing Hymn # 184 “Thy Word”