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How do you measure success in your life and ministry? Too many times it is easy to get caught up in using the offering or attendance numbers as the yardstick. Or when we go to a minister's conference we judge ourselves by what others are doing to determine if we are successful or not. Today I want to help you redefine success in your life and ministry. There is a tendency to confuse success with the rewards of success. If you don't consider yourself successful until you see something happen, then you are only inches away from considering yourself a failure.

Success is not the raise, the recognition, the building completion, or the large attendance numbers. Those are only the rewards of success. Many of you are some of the most successful pastors, youth pastors, and leaders in the country right now, yet you don't feel like it because you don't see the fruit and rewards of your success yet.

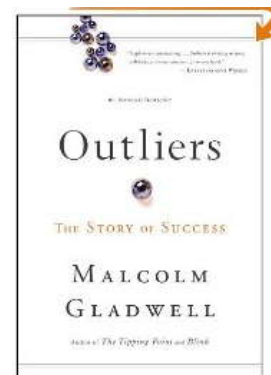


True success in the Kingdom of God is staying faithful to the vision and plan God has given you. **If you are where God wants you to be, fulfilling the responsibilities he has given you, you are successful! Success is remaining faithful to the process God has laid out for you.** Many would look at Joseph while he was a slave or a prisoner and would declare him a loser. He didn't look very successful in the world's eyes. Yet in God's eyes he was one of the most successful men on the planet because he was walking down the center of God's will. This path would ultimately take him to a place where all would openly see the rewards of his successful life and

character. Be careful not to curse the place you are at this very moment. You could be experiencing success that is positioning you to do even greater things for God than you ever imagined. Back in 1981 after I graduated from Bible College I was on the TV crew of a very large church in Dallas. I was mad and frustrated. I despised the job because I wanted to be a youth pastor, not a cameraman, not an editor or lighting guy. Yet those 12 months of media experience has impacted my ministry for the past 29 years! I thank God for it now, but I couldn't see it then. Your current situation, as miserable as it seems, is preparing you for something even greater!

David was successful long before anyone chanted his name and called him a hero. He was a success when nobody was around to cheer as he killed the lion and the bear. He didn't do it for the glory or the attention, he chose to be a successful shepherd and protect the sheep under his watch. He chose to be faithful to his calling and not slack off even though no one would have blamed him if he had lost one or two sheep. He was considered just a boy by most people yet David determined in his heart that in order to be the absolute best shepherd possible, he could not afford to lose even one lamb. He went the extra mile not for fame or glory but because of his character and obedience to his calling. If you are in the city God has called you to be, serving in the church He has called you to serve, and you are doing what He told you to do there, **YOU ARE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL!**

David realized something out in the fields tending to the sheep. If he didn't stop the lion or bear the very first time, they would only return on a regular basis for their next meal. They would ultimately destroy the entire herd and take his life as well. Many of the ministers that have "fallen" in our time have shared after the fact that it was a monster they had fought for years. True success in life is winning the private battles first which will ultimately lead to the rewards of success and public victories. In the book Outliers after doing countless hours of research on people who were successful in sports, music, and business . . . they could not find anyone who "drifted to success." ALL of them were the result of countless hours of practice, extra effort, and becoming successful



before achieving visible success or the rewards of success. One example they shared was of the Beatles. Many would look back at the 1960's and say the Beatles stumbled upon success when they were discovered and appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. The reality is they had played more sets and concerts in pubs and clubs than most bands play in a lifetime, prior to being discovered.



Success begins with doing the mundane, non-glorious, obedient actions that no one else sees. When David showed up at the battlefield to bring food to his brothers his mission was not to kill a giant and become the most popular man in all of Israel. He was simply being faithful to obey and honor his father. If he had responded like some teenagers today who despise and disobey their parents we would not be

talking about David thousands of years later. It was David's sheer act of obedience to his father that was his success. And that success positioned him to become a giant killer and reap the rewards of his success.

Let's face it, I would hope ALL of you want to be a giant killer and do something great for the Kingdom of God in your lifetime. I have never heard anyone say, "I'm just striving to be mediocre!" Yet it is all too easy to become discouraged if we aren't aiming for the right target! Many ministers are pursuing the rewards of success and getting distracted. **SUCCESS IS WALKING DOWN THE CENTER OF GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY.** Every day you get up and show up . . . you are a success!

True success is not based upon how many people were in attendance. It is in knowing that you delivered the message clearly and accurately that the Holy Spirit put on your heart and you were intent on ministering to the people that were there. Success is not the size of the offering, it is having a confidence that you did everything you could do to love the people and impact their lives. Your heart was for the people to leave refreshed, knowing they had experienced the presence of God. If people's lives are being changed they will show up next week with their friends and gladly support the vision.

Just For Fun



The Church Cake

Alice was to bake a cake for the church ladies' group but forgot to do it until the last minute. She remembered it the morning of the bake sale and after rummaging through cabinets, found an angel food cake mix & quickly made it while drying her hair, dressing, and helping her son pack up for Scout camp.

When she took the cake from the oven, the center had dropped flat and the cake was horribly disfigured and she exclaimed, "Oh dear, there is no time to bake another cake!" So, being inventive, she looked around the house for something to build up the center of the cake and found it in the bathroom - a roll of toilet paper. She plunked it in and then covered it with icing. Not only did the finished product look beautiful, it looked perfect.



So before she left the house to drop the cake by the church and head for work, Alice woke her daughter, Amanda, and gave her some money and specific instructions to be at the bake sale the moment it opened at 9:30 and to buy the cake and bring it home. When the daughter arrived at the sale she found the cake had already been sold.

Amanda grabbed her cell phone & called her mom. Alice was horrified. Everyone would know! What would they think? All night Alice lay awake in bed thinking about what she had done.



The next day, Alice promised herself she would try not to think about the cake and would attend the fancy luncheon/bridal shower at the home of a fellow church member and try to have a good time. She did not really want to attend but having already RSVPd, she couldn't think of a believable excuse to stay home. The meal was elegant but to Alice's horror, the cake in question was presented for dessert! Alice felt the blood drain from her body when she saw the cake. She started out of her chair to tell the hostess all about it, but before she could get to her feet, someone said, "What a beautiful cake!" Alice, still stunned, sat back in her chair when she heard the hostess say, "Thank you, I baked it myself." Alice smiled and thought to herself, "God is so good."

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