

## How to Have Success

Joshua 1:7-9

Sunday, April 26, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown,  
Iowa

### Introduction

When I was a boy, I would sometimes listen to a speaker on the radio that my father recommended. His name was Earl Nightingale and he was a motivational speaker of sorts. The only thing I remember specifically from him was that he was the first person to tell me that I should "plan my work and then work my plan". It turned out to be good advice. I have, however, not spent much time listening or reading on the subject of success in life. I've been told that in earlier generations, books about success emphasized developing a reputation for integrity while later works made marketing and influence their focus. Here we have a passage in the Bible that mentions success specifically and I'd like to consider not just how to be successful, but what defines success in the eyes of God.

### Set the Stage-roust the evil inhabitants of the Promised Land

The historical situation of this passage is unique. The people of Israel, after four centuries of slavery, have spent four decades wandering the wilderness. Their leader, Moses, is dead, and his second-in-command, Joshua, has taken over leadership. He, and Caleb, are the only ones who remember life in Egypt. Everyone else knows only a life of wandering, and stories of slavery. Before them is the Jordan, which they are to cross and then oust people living on the land before them. It is nothing like the our life circumstances today, or is it? We don't have to fight people and take away their villages, but our best lives as followers of Jesus will always involve overcoming challenges and obstacles. Jesus Himself said that in the world we would have tribulation, but to be encouraged, because He has overcome the world. (John 16:33) And in Hebrews the promise that God gave to Joshua that He would never leave or forsake him (Joshua 1:5, 9) is offered again to us. (Hebrews 13:5)

### Define Success-Wisdom, practical as well as theoretical

The last sentence of Verse Eight says: "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. The word for "prosperous" has as a root meaning "to press forward". Someone who is prosperous in this

sense has a life that is making progress, is not "spinning wheel" or caught in the same toxic routine. Such a person is going places (metaphorically). Such a person is becoming someone, making progress in their development as a person. And "success" (the key word for today) has to do with wisdom. Note that neither word insists in happy circumstances or abundant wealth to be fulfilled. A successful person, according to this verse in the Bible, is one who has knowledge and wisdom; the ability to use that knowledge well. That is at the heart of a successful life, according to the Lord.

#### Application: Meditate

The application of this passage is the command to "meditate". We are to meditate on Scripture, just as it says in Psalm 1:1-3: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in his season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." The Holy Spirit teaches us and builds wisdom in us via Scripture, so a good working knowledge of Scripture is vital to a strong spiritual life. In this passage, meditate has to do with speaking the Scripture aloud, often over and over again, such as one would if he were attempting to memorize a verse. Analogous to that is someone who listens to the Scripture being read. It's all good, utilize what works for you.

#### Conclusion

God spoke to Joshua just before he led the people of Israel over the Jordan River into the Promised Land and told him how to be successful, as well as defining what success is in the Lord's eyes. We don't stand before that river with villages of people with whom we must do battle, but we do face our own share of challenges and difficulties that we must face together. The God who gave those wonderful promises to Joshua offers the same promises to us, and like Joshua, we need them in order to be successful in life.