

Defining Success

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The God of this world with his entrapments of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, confuses many as to what success is. The confusion is not about what the word means. But there is confusion. It has to do with the fact success applies to specific areas, and it is possible to be a success in one area and a failure in another.

The successful athlete may be a business failure. The successful executive may be a failure as a husband or father. The successful family man may be a failure as a musician or artist.

Everybody has known success and failure (somewhere, sometime, at something). Now, when all is said and done, what does it take to make a successful life?

The fact that one makes a lot of money, or is a great success in some field of endeavor, is by no means the equivalent of a successful life. Al Capone was a successful crook (at least he was for a long time) and made lots and lots of money. But at the pinnacle of that success, he was even then a failure. Adolph Hitler wanted to kill Jews and conquer neighboring countries, but in his hour of greatest success in carrying out his ambitions, who would say he--as a man, his life--was a success?

If one succeeds in satisfying and gratifying the lusts of the flesh and eye, and the pride of life, that is not true success. Oh, sure, he succeeded at what he was trying to do, but what he was trying to do was so opposed to his own best interests that his is a legacy of foolishness and failure. It is like a man wanting to commit suicide, and succeeding at it. The more successful a fool is, the worse off he is.

You need a clear view of what makes life itself a success. Here it is:

``Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole _____ of man" (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**).

That last phrase, without the word duty in the blank space, is what the passage literally says -- ``the whole of man." The whole; whole suggests the fullness, the completeness or, if you please, the success and blessedness of man, is in fearing God and keeping his commandments. Do that, and no matter what else of good or ill befalls you, you will be a success.

Your life, dear reader, is a success to the extent that you obtain the approval of your God. Love God with all your heart, and your fellow man as you love yourself. Submission to God and kindness to man are more important than hitting ``home runs" in business or earthly enterprises.

What is success? It is Jesus saying, ``Well done" and ``enter in."