

Success Secrets from Sacred Scripture

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By Rev. Joseph Kostelnik, Ph.D.

Success Secrets from Sacred Scripture

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Gospel Truth Ministries
P.O. Box 1885
Cincinnati, OH 45201-1885
USA

<http://www.gtm.org/>

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Introduction

“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” (Josh. 1:8).

Success means different things to different people.

To some it is money, to others, power, to still others, a place of authority in the community.

But what does success mean for a Christian?

This verse from the Book of Joshua gives us a clue. You will remember that God gave Joshua this advice just prior to entering the Promised Land. God has a “Promised Land” for all of us. He has a “Jericho,” a “sweet place” of victory and personal satisfaction for every believer. Looking at the subject spiritually, success for a Christian can be defined as the ““progressive accomplishment of God’s will.”

Just as each tribe of the nation of Israel had been given a particular “lot” or portion of Palestine to possess, so each believer has been gifted and called to let his or her light shine in a particular sphere of influence. The particulars will differ from one saint to another. But the principles will remain the same.

As we are poised to enter a new millennium, we need to be reminded of the eternal characteristics of success found in God’s Word. It is my prayer that this little course will prove to be stimulating, encouraging and enlightening as you seek to take your place in the Kingdom of God in the 21st Century.

May God’s richest and best be yours.

Rev. Joseph Kostelnik, Ph. D.
White Oak, Cincinnati, Ohio
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Anointing

*“**B**ut ye have an anointing from the holy one, and ye know all things” (I Jn. 2:20).*

I heard about an evangelist who was delivering some cassette tapes to one of his ministry supporters. She testified that when she opened the door upon his arrival, there was a flash of light and her drunken husband in the back bedroom suddenly became sober!

How can we account for this?

The Anointing.

Why is it that one preacher seems to “beat his gums” while another seems to minister the “oracles of God” confirmed with “signs following?”

The Anointing.

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the anointing of the Holy Spirit was exclusive to a select few of God’s people: prophets, priests, kings, judges and other special representatives. Not only that, but it was not an abiding or continuous experience even for these blessed servants of God. David prayed:

“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit (anointing) from me” (Psa. 51:11).

No doubt, the sweet psalmist of Israel remembered how the anointing to serve as king had departed from Saul and an evil spirit had taken His place.

The New Testament

Quite a change has taken place in the New Testament age regarding the ministry of God’s Spirit upon His servants. It is no longer “exclusive” but “inclusive,” available to “whosoever will” (Acts 2:38ff.). Not only the ministry gifts, but every person who names the Name of Christ in living faith is a candidate for the anointing of His Spirit (Lk. 11:13).

In addition, the experience of the Spirit-filled life is not temporary but permanent. Jesus prophesied:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever” (Jn. 14:16).

John, the beloved disciple, confirms this:

“But the anointing which ye have received from him abideth in you” (I Jn. 2:27).

The KJV rendering is true to the Greek original. “Abideth” means to continually remain upon us. HalleluYah!

In other words, the anointing upon us today doesn’t “come and go,” but it “comes and stays!” The question isn’t “are we Spirit-filled believers anointed?” but “do we BELIEVE in the power of the anointing dwelling within us and resting upon us?”

The anointing opens the door to the manifestation of the nine “gifts” of the Spirit flowing through us to meet the needs of others (I Cor. 12:8-10). They serve as windows for the light of God to shine through. We shouldn’t be surprised when God “shows up” in our lives to bless someone; we should be surprised when He doesn’t! Jesus had so much power (anointing) flowing through Him that even His clothes were conduits for the anointing (Mk. 5:28-29). Paul had the same experience (Acts 19:11-12). According to the Book of Acts, if Peter got close enough to a sick person for even his shadow to fall on them they were healed (Acts 5:15).

During one crusade in Greece I felt led to have a seeking sufferer “grab my sportcoat” for healing, rather than my praying for her. Fortunately, she was “spiritually-minded” and obeyed the word of faith. She fell under the power and rose up healed. The interesting thing was what several of the soloists said to me after the meeting. “When she reached for your coat it was covered with ‘fire’ and it leapt from you to her.”

You’ve been wondering why some in the Body of Christ seem to have a larger effect upon humanity than others. You’ve asked God why more is not happening in YOUR life. Now you know the answer:

The Anointing.

Secular and Spiritual

Here’s another fascinating fact about God’s anointing upon our lives. It is not limited to only “spiritual” endeavors. The Bible speaks of individuals “anointed” to work with cloth, etc. (Exo. 28:3ff.). God can “anoint” you to sell cars!

Why not begin today to invite His anointing into *every* part of your life?

Boldness

“**A**nd grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may be speaking thy word. By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be being done through the name of thy holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:30).

I was negotiating with the owner of the building we now lease for over a year. Before he agreed to our having the building over 30 other congregations had been through it and had attempted to work out some sort of a deal. When I asked him why he had finally decided to work with us he replied, “because you kept bugging me!”

How could I be so bold as to continually pressure this local multi-millionaire to work with us?

I had a God-given boldness.

People who are successful in life all possess this divine attribute.

When Joshua and the children of Israel were preparing to enter their “Promised Land,” God charged him to be *bold* (Josh. 1:7).

You and I are going to have to be equally bold to possess ours.

Someone has said there are three kinds of people in life:

Those who *make* things happen...

Those who *watch* things happen...

Those who *wonder* what happened...!

In other words, we can either choose to take “what life dishes out,” or consult the “menu.” The menu is God’s Word.

What It Is

Boldness in the Bible does not refer to any natural, human form of bravado. It basically means, “freedom or plainness of speech.” In other words, boldness means we are secure enough to make our wishes known to life in such a way that they are granted to us. Who can put a price on this quality?

As we read in the text quoted above, the early disciples realized they needed more than “bluff” to succeed in ministry. Their needed courage and boldness was linked in their minds to the manifestations of God’s Spirit through them. This is always the case with true, spiritual success. As the Lord told Joshua:

“For Yahweh thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest” (Josh. 1:9).

In the case of our real estate situation, God gave me a supernatural “word” about a year before we actually moved into the property. As I was praying, I “saw” (in my spirit) the words, “White Oak Chapel” over the porch. God then “spoke” to my heart, “Behold, I have given you the land.” This supernatural encouragement gave me needed boldness in my negotiations with the builder/owner. The result is we are celebrating our sixth year in the facility next month (July 1999)!

What It Does

Paul testified to his “boldness of speech” to the Corinthians (II Cor. 7:4), appealed to the Ephesians to pray for his continued boldness of speech in preaching (Eph. 6:20), and declared our boldness and access into the very Presence of God through the Spirit (Eph. 3:12; Hb. 10:9). Moreover, John assures us of our boldness in the coming day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world (I Jn. 4:17)!

The pagan will be “tongue-tied” in the Presence of the Lord, but you and I cry, “Abba, Father!”

This characteristic of holy boldness or freedom of speech cannot go unnoticed by others. Whether we are testifying to the grace of God or simply conducting our secular affairs for His glory, those around us will testify, inwardly, if not audibly, that we “have been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Compassion

“*F*or the love of Christ constraineth us” (II Cor. 5:14).

I was in England, on my first short-term mission trip. My soloist, worship leader and I, were standing outside a large tent fellowshipping with a pastor friend and his three daughters. Inside, a crowd of over 1500 people were praising God and waiting for the main speaker to begin his ministry. My soloist had been invited to minister in music. Then it happened.

What “happened?”

As I was speaking with my English friends about my desire to minister to the people of Australia (I had been called there in 1976 while attending seminary), I suddenly broke down into great, heaving sobs. From the depths of my being I found myself saying, “I’ve got to get there...I’ve GOT to!” Everyone around me got quiet at this seemingly unexpected and awkward occurrence. I found myself, amidst my tears, wanting to “wrap my arms around” the entire population of the island continent and single-handedly present the nation to the Lord in salvation.

Later that night—inside the tent—when the sponsoring ministers recognized the “visiting missionaries” from America in the audience, I nearly stood up and interrupted him by saying, “Excuse me, but I’m Australian.”

What would cause an American (of Russian/Italian descent) to possess such an intense love for a completely foreign nation to him?

The Bible calls this *compassion*. And it is definitely a “success secret.” Nearly every Bible character who “went places for God” possessed it in abundance. It is the driving, inner force that enables us to “keep on keeping on” in our service for humanity in the Lord’s Name.

A Compelling Indwelling

What exactly *is* this mysterious, yet powerful emotion?

According to the sacred scriptures it refers to a deep moving from within. The word comes from a Greek noun describing the internal organs of an animal or person (i.e., heart, liver, lungs).

The “inner parts were regarded by the ancient Greeks as the very site of the emotions. The word is used of the ministry of the Master a number of times in the New Testament.

If we are motivated by His Spirit, we, too, will experience it. True compassion will lead to actions or “works of faith.”

“And Jesus having gone forth, saw a great multitudes and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Mt. 14:14).

The compassion of Christ will inspire us to reach out to the sick and needy.

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Mt. 9:36).

Compassion within will find a way to express itself without in a desire to “reach out” to those in need.

“And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things” (Mk. 6:34).

Sometimes it takes divine compassion to tell people the truth: God’s Truth in order to save them from the satanic doctrines and beliefs being foisted on the unwary today. It is the compassion of the Lord that is driving this ministry’s “One-in-a-Million” campaign to train up a million believers in the power of God’s Word before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Reach Out

What will compassion do for *you*?

It will enable you to get outside of yourself and it will get you personally involved in God’s great, big Love plan for this world. Whether it’s one-on-one ministry through a telephone call, letter or visit, or a large outreach to thousands or millions, divine compassion is the Lord’s “mission motivator” in your heart and mine. It’s the divine “oil” in the machinery of our hearts keeping them aflame with His love for those in need.

For the first few months of our mission service in Australia our team (four adults and a child) depended on \$50.00 a week in honorariums. It turned out the ministry group sponsoring us did this deliberately to “test our motives” (other Americans had “been in it for the money”). Compassion kept us firm in our calling. In the text at the head of this chapter, Paul declares the power of Christ’s compassion that motivated his life.

Now what about *ours*?

Determination

“*F*or I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (II Cor. 2:2).

Here is an amazing declaration and an equally amazing attribute.

The Apostle Paul refused to be sidetracked in his life’s work and ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. He possessed a “success secret” called, *determination*.

Do we?

When the going gets tough, are we “tough enough” to get going? Or do we fail and fall amidst the pressures of life? And believe me, they will come, without our “believing” for them! This factor is something like spiritual “grit” or tenacity. It is the power of a surrendered will that refuses to say “no” even in the midst of apparent defeat. Paul had it. We must have it also.

Spiritual Focus

It’s so easy to allow ourselves to be thrown off course by the contrary winds of life. It takes this inner force of determination to see things through for God’s glory. Sometimes it involves pain.

My friend tells me he was stung by a bee when he was just a six-month old baby. Who knows how it got into his playpen. His mother came out into the yard when she heard him crying. She had to pry his little fingers open to find out the cause of the tears. His swollen, open hand, stung five or six times, held a bumblebee; a *dead* bumblebee. Now that’s determination!

Spiritually speaking, it is determination that enables you and I to be the “last man standing” after a spiritual conflict (Eph. 6:13). It enables us to maintain our focus. Paul’s determination enabled him to stay true to his task of evangelizing the known world with the truth of the gospel. It would have been much easier for him to stay with the “status quo.” He had the credentials (Phil. 4:3-6). It was the power of his will that kept him true to his calling to preach Christ crucified.

When distractions come—and they will—we must exercise our God-given power of will to persevere. My friend tells me each bee sting only made him squeeze tighter until he “won!”

Looking Unto Jesus

Where can we find such inner resolve?

How can we continue to pursue our God-given goals in the face of distress, distraction and demonic destruction?

The apostles were faced with a similar situation in Matthew's gospel, chapter 14. The Master had commanded them to take ship and "go to the other side of the lake." As they set out to accomplish this goal "the winds became contrary." Most of the time the troubles of life don't indicate we're "out of God's will" but in the very center of it!

At the very darkest hour of night, when it seemed all hope was gone, when it seemed they would not only fail in their mission but lose their lives in the bargain, Jesus appeared.

Sadly, they didn't rejoice; they cried out from fear (Mt. 14:26). Why? They didn't recognize Him. No doubt, BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T EXPECTING HIM TO COME!

His response to them is informative:

"Cheer up; I-I am: stop fearing" (Mt. 14:27, Gk.).

Now Peter's reaction makes sense:

"Lord, if thou-thou art, bid me come unto thee on the waters" (Mt. 14:28, Gk.).

Jesus had here declared Himself to be Yahweh of the Old Testament, the Miracle-worker Who had parted the Red Sea, split the Jordan and fed millions with manna from heaven and water from a rock! Peter's logic said, "if You are 'I AM,' not only are You a Miracle-worker, but You enable Your people to walk in the miraculous too!" Jesus' response said it all:

"And he said 'come'" (Mt. 14:29).

The following verses describe Peter's unusual "walk!"

Jesus *is* Lord. He is a Miracle-worker and He will enable us to win in life's fight. We just need to remain determined to completely fulfill His will for us. If and when a miracle is required, it will be forthcoming.

He is determined to see us succeed.

Are we?

Enthusiasm

“*Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*” (Col. 1:29).

If my memory serves me correctly, the late Dr. Norman Vincent Peale had a speaking itinerary planned three years ahead at the time of his death, Christmas Eve, 1995, *at age 95!*

How can we account for this?

Enthusiasm.

He was in love with life and fired inwardly by a zeal and devotion to the cause of Christ. He was captured by the notion that the positive power of Christianity could literally change the lives of all those who would willingly surrender to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Passion

No doubt, as our opening text proves, the Apostle Paul likewise experienced the invigorating power of an indwelling Presence. Just what is this mysterious source of energy that turns dedicated believers into world-changers who don't know how to quit?

How can we enter into this glorious life of endless, boundless drive toward our goal of completing our destiny in the Lord?

The word “enthusiasm” contains the clue. It comes from two Greek words which, when combined, mean, “in God.”

Isn't that something?

Look at that toy boat. It's pretty, well-constructed and attractive to the eye. Will the little boy play with it?

Possibly. Will he attempt to use it on the living room rug? Probably. Will he get the maximum amount of enjoyment from it in that way? Not likely.

But place that boat in its intended, natural environment and watch out! Especially if it's got a battery powered motor! Water, water everywhere! And a whole lot of laughter, too!

Why?

The boat's finally “in the water.”

Our Home is God

Paul told the unbelieving Athenians:

“For in him we live and move and are” (Acts 17:28).

If that is true of God’s “prodigal sons,” how much truer should it be of His redeemed children!

Paul testified of “striving” in his labor for the Lord. An interesting word. A Greek verb from which we derive our English word, “agony.” At times he “agonized” in his service for others. How could he continue? He was “enthused!” The God Who lived within him continued to spur him on to greater and greater heights in his ministry to others. Perhaps this is why some of us experience “power shortages.” We’re not really busy with “God’s thing” but ours. Perhaps we’re in the process of trying to accomplish what one writer terms a “good idea” rather than a “God idea.” When we encounter resistance, there’s no supernatural “push” to keep us going.

Who’ll Stop the Rain?

A number of years ago, I was ministering in crusades on the island of Haiti. Superstition still prevails in many areas, even among Christians. One example is rain being a “bad omen.” The last night of the meeting over eight thousand had gathered to hear the Word. I was praying behind the platform when God spoke to my heart, “I’ll do anything you ask me tonight.”

After two hours of preliminaries, when I arose to preach, the rain started and the crowd started to disburse. I attempted to reassure the people that water was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, etc., but then declared I knew Voodoo priests had been “praying for rain” but God was going to show Himself strong. Boldly I said, “no more rain ‘til the end of the meeting!” Instantly, the rain ceased, the meeting went on, and over 100 souls were saved and over 1,000 saints were filled with the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4! Why? How?

God had sent me to Haiti; the meetings were *His* idea.

If we lack enthusiasm, let’s make sure we’re really “in God” and He’s truly “in us” as we seek to fulfill His will and not ours.

Faith

“**B**ut apart from faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing: for he, the one constantly coming to the one, true god must believe that he is, and he **becometh** a rewarder of them, the ones that diligently seek him out” (Heb. 11:6, Gk.).

Perhaps you’ll notice that my literal translation above reads a little differently than the KJV. I have included it in this lesson deliberately to underscore this very important fact:

Real, Bible faith is a “success secret.”

That is, not every believer walks in the light of this powerful, spiritual quality. Consequently, not every Christian is automatically “rewarded” with what they are seeking from the Lord. As with everything in the spiritual life, there are conditions to be met. There are no “bargain days” with the Lord, no “blue light specials” or “three-for-a-quarter” experiences.

Diligence Required

The scripture states that those who receive what they desire from God “constantly come” to Him and when they do approach His Majesty it’s with *diligence*. In other words, these believers scan the world around them in their time of need and then—by an act of will—”look off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith.”

It’s not that they disregard their fellow man or refuse help from the natural realm. Rather, they look to God as the Source of their supply and leave it to Him which, if any, human channel of delivery He deems appropriate.

This attitude is rare. That’s why the eleventh chapter of Hebrews doesn’t list even dozens of “faith heroes,” let alone hundreds or thousands.

Jesus said:

“Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth” (Lk. 18:8, Gk.)?

Faith and Believing

According to sacred scripture, these two spiritual qualities—faith and believing—though related, *are not the same*.

Faith is a noun. It is the name of something. We either possess it or we don’t. Hebrews 11:1 declares:

“Now faith is the substance (Gk. ground, confidence) of things being hoped for, the evidence (Gk. conviction) of facts not being seen” (Heb. 11:1).

It is faith that enables us to “believe God is” (Heb. 11:6). How do we receive this spiritual understanding?

“So then the faith by hearing, and the hearing by a spoken word from God” (Rom. 10:17, Gk.).

A “word from God” is like receiving a deposit slip from someone who tells you they’ve deposited \$5,000.00 into your account. Even though you don’t have the “cash in hand,” you *know* (because of the deposit slip) that you have the money. It is your “evidence of things not being seen.”

Believing is Acting

The text with which we began this chapter goes on to describe those who “diligently seek Him out.” It is these believers whom God “rewards” with a divine supply. In other words, after receiving faith that “He is,” they *act* on that fact. You see, unlike faith, “believing” is a verb. Faith is a *fact*; believing is an *act*. Faith is a Quality of the spirit; believing is an *activity* of the soul. Faith is *supernatural*; believing is natural. Unfortunately, it’s possible to possess faith without believing (acting), as well as to believe (act) without possessing faith. But when the two work together, *miracles happen!*

Not long ago my father suffered a third heart attack along with a bout of pneumonia and a minor stroke. As he hung between life and death we prayed, “diligently seeking” the Lord. We possessed faith that “He is Yahweh-Ropheka (the Lord our Physician)” and that He would “reward” my dad with healing. During prayer God spoke to me:

“I shall not die but live, and declare the works of Yah” (Psa. 118:17).

He recovered and within weeks began to prophesy regarding the Second Coming of Christ.

Do you have “faith?” Are you “acting” on it?

Generosity

“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

I have a paperweight that means a lot to me. It’s a brass key. It was given to me by a lady I taught in Bible school. She’d had a vision and the Lord gave her a shiny, golden Key. He said, “this is the Key that opens every lock, the Anointing of the Holy Spirit. I don’t see this woman very often but the key sits atop my desk, a mute reminder of her experience with Jesus and His Gift to me of the Comforter.

A Giving God

According to Paul in the text quoted above, these words were spoken by the Lord. While we don’t find them recorded anywhere in the four gospels, yet we know the Master must have spoken them at some point in His earthly career; they’re in keeping with His life and ministry. If we have the Spirit of Christ, they’ll be true of ours also.

Think about it.

God’s Gift to the world is Eternal Life (Jn. 3:16).

The Father’s Gift to the Church is the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:13).

The Bible—from beginning to end—is the beautiful story of our giving God “doing what comes naturally”: giving.

Generosity is definitely a “success secret” because it is intimately tied up with the nature of God and our relationship with Him. If we’re really one with Him, we’ll mirror His giving personality in our words and works.

He gave Adam and Eve Eden, a “garden of delights.”

He gave Israel Canaan, a land “flowing with milk and honey.”

He has given the Church “all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Isn’t that something?

He gave His Only-begotten Son 2,000 years ago and today there are nearly 600 million born again, Spirit-filled persons alive on planet earth. Talk about the miracle-power of a Seed-gift’.

The Giving of Living

There's something about divine generosity that brings about incredible blessings to everyone involved.

Some years ago I was driving home after hosting a Christian television program (a gift of my time). As I listened to a radio program, the evangelist began prophesying some things that applied to me (desiring greater outreach for the Lord, etc.). Soon, I was impressed to send him a certain amount of money. I did (a gift of my finance). In a few weeks, after an unbelievable number of coincidences, I found myself preaching throughout Holland and Belgium (a gift of my ministry). Scores were saved, filled, healed and delivered. The day I was to leave, the sponsoring minister's daughter (who edited his magazine) requested that I write an article for their magazine (a gift of my talent). *That article was published in their magazine and sent to over 100,000 homes!* Needless to say, the radio speaker's prophecy came true! I also returned to the Netherlands twice and the ministry continues to translate and publish book excerpts of mine as well as a Dutch edition of an entire book.

Think of the number of lives that were touched. And all because of the principle of generosity.

Spiritual Inventory

What have *you* been given?

Do you consider your time, tithes and talents "yours" or do you see yourself just a "steward" under God?

Abraham was blessed by God and then commanded to BE a blessing (Gen. 12:2, Heb.).

Israel, after being blessed by God, was to *be* a blessing (Exo. 19:6).

We, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, are to be salt and light to this fallen, needy world (Mt. 5:13ff.).

It is a spiritual law that what we share *increases* and what we hoard decreases (Pr. 11:24).

How do you see yourself? As a source of your own fulfillment? Or as a Seed to be planted into the lives of others?

It all depends upon what you do with this concept of generosity.

Holiness

“*F*or it stands written, ‘be ye holy; for I am holy’“ (I Pet. 1:16).

The story goes that an evangelist visited a certain small town and had a great meeting with many notorious sinners being converted, including a very well-known, promiscuous, young lady.

About a year later he returned for another meeting and was receiving testimonies before he preached. The young woman arose and declared, “thank God for your meeting last year. I got saved from a life of sin and debauchery. It’s been a year now and, praise the Lord, I just about quit!”

We don’t know whether the brother enjoyed her testimony or not!

Salvation and Sanctification

Sad, isn’t it, that some of us in the Body of Christ either don’t know or don’t understand God’s plan for us as His redeemed children?

The Bible makes it quite clear that Jesus was to be the “first-born among many brethren” (Rm. 8:29).

That means we’re to share His likeness, not only in a resurrection body someday in the future (Ph. 3:20), but in character and conduct NOW (I Jn. 3:3; II Cor. 7:1).

This isn’t religion, but a relationship. Spiritually, we’re “bone out of His bone and flesh out of His flesh,” being members of His Body (Eph. 5:30). In other words, our lips and lives should be changing on a daily basis: from faith to faith and glory to glory. It’s impossible to be successful in the Christian life without endeavoring to live a life pleasing to God.

For one thing, a lot of our success in life depends upon answered prayer. That’s not going to be a habit with us if our hearts “constantly condemn us” when we’re in His Presence (I Jn. 5:14).

The Bible calls this process, “sanctification.” Simply put, this means a life style of separation *from* the things of the “world, the flesh and the devil;” and separation *to* the things of God and His word. It’s basically a matter of changing our thinking, speaking and acting to agree with His word.

Some folks associate sanctification with long hair, long sleeves and long faces!

Led By the Spirit

The Bible view is simply a life of Love, since “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rm. 14:8-10).

It’s kind of like a cross:

The vertical beam illustrates the “first great commandment,” putting God first in our lives, making Jesus, Lord (Mt. 22:37; Rm. 10:9-10).

The horizontal beam symbolizes the second, loving our neighbor AS ourselves (Mt. 22:39).

None of us does this perfectly, but this is the goal toward which we’re to aim. And it isn’t an impossible goal. Even secular psychologists tell us any old habit can be broken and a new one begun in as little as 21 days.

What is possible for us with the Holy Spirit’s help?!

It’s the Spirit of God Who will “put to death” our fleshly responses to life’s challenges (i.e., “works of the flesh,” Gal. 5:19).

Paul says:

“For if you are living according to the flesh, ye are about to die: but if ye through the spirit are putting to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

*“For as many are **led** by the Spirit of God, **they** are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:13-14).*

Did you notice verse 14 begins with the word “for” or because?

Paul is saying the “leading of the Spirit” is in the area of our living holy lives. Most of us have pulled this verse out of context and talked about being led to buy a house, take a job or marry a certain person! God can certainly guide in these areas, but these matters aren’t Paul’s subject here!

If we’ll live in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit and order our lives by the Spirit, we won’t fulfill the desire of the lower nature, but will produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is Love for God and others (Gal. 5:16, 22; Jude 20-21).

And *that’s* what holiness is all about.

Inspiration

“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8).

This lesson may well be worth the price of this entire course to you. It may be worth the time you have set aside to become acquainted with these “success secrets.”

Those who are successful in the Christian life, those whose lives really count for time and eternity are at once inspired and inspiring. That is, they are “turned on” by the Lord and they, in turn, “turn on” others with the fire of divine desire.

Why?

Inspiration from the Lord.

The verse quoted above is interesting.

First, Elihu (the only one of Job’s “comforters” whom God didn’t correct) reminds us of our real nature:

Spirit, Soul & Body

“But there is a *spirit* in man...”

We are eternal spirit beings, born of the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9, 23). We will live on forever, either in or out of the Presence of God. This is dependent upon our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ in this life (Jn. 3:36).

Peter refers to this as the “hidden man of the heart” (I Pt. 3:4). Paul calls it the “inward man” (Rm. 7:22).

Your spirit is the “real you.” While you inhabit a physical body, you express your spirit as a “soul” (Gen. 2:7). The body, apart from the spirit is “dead” (Ja. 2:26). The word “soul” is never used of a disembodied spirit except in Rev. 6:9 where it is understood in the sense of “persons” as in Exo. 1:5.

Solomon, agreeing with Elihu, reminds us:

“The spirit of man is the candle of Yahweh, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (Prov. 20:27).

It is our spirit with which the Lord communicates.

Inspiration

And then Elihu continues:

“And the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding...”

The word “inspiration” means, “to breathe strongly, to animate, impart life, to impart words and wisdom, etc.”

The word used in the LXX, “pnoEE,” means, “blowing, vapor, wind, breath,” and is used in Acts 2:2 of the “wind” on the Day of Pentecost. We see the obvious connection with the Holy Spirit. This “inspiration” gives us “understanding” or wisdom: God’s view of life’s circumstances.

Who could put a price on the acquisition of *that*?!

Rivers of Inspiration

Jesus promised us “Rivers of God’s Presence” flowing out of our innermost being (spirit, lamp, Jn. 7:38-39).

Is it really possible to have a never-ending, constantly flowing stream of wisdom and revelation flowing from us?

The Apostle Paul seemed to think so. He taught that one of the main reason for our receiving the Spirit was so that we might “*know* (understand) the things having been freely given to us by God” (I Cor. 2:12).

Mysteries of the Spirit

According to the inspired apostle, while communing with God through the Holy Spirit, or as a result of that fellowship, we can receive: revelations, words of knowledge, prophecies or teachings (I Cor. 14:6).

When given in a public setting, accompanied by the companion gift of interpretation, they minister to/inspire *others* (I Cor. 14:12-13).

However, this inspiration may also be ours, alone, in private (I Cor. 14:6, 18). In this way, God can “charge” us with “inside information” concerning His plan for others and us. His “wind” will inspire us and our words will then inspire others, too!

This will cause God’s will to be done on earth as in Heaven.

Joy

“And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 13:52).

Joy is part and parcel of the Christian faith. It is definitely a “success secret.” After all, the sacred scriptures teach:

*“For the joy of Yahweh--**it** is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).*

Notice the word “it” is bold in the text quoted above. Although it doesn’t appear in the KJV, it is in the original. It is bold because the inspired penman wrote it that way; to make it definite and emphatic.

What Is It?

Just what is this character quality successful believers possess called, “joy?”

It comes from a Greek noun meaning, “delight, gladness, exultation, etc.” It is related to the words for “grace” and “rejoice” or “welcome.”

It brings a beautiful experience of life to mind, doesn’t it?

Joy or Happiness?

Some have distinguished between “joy” and “happiness.” Perhaps rightly so.

Happiness is dependent upon the outward, the senses. For example if things “go right,” we’re happy; if not, we’re sad.

Joy, on the other hand, is inward, a product of the spirit. Someone has described it as an artesian well at the base of the soul. It’s not so much an emotional condition (although it sometimes leads to one!), but, rather a deep, abiding sense of oneness with God. It is akin to the “witness of the Spirit” that assures us we belong to God regardless of the circumstances around us.

According to the Bible, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is a manifestation of the Personality of God. Did you know that He “rejoices over us with joy and singing” (Zeph. 3:17)?

Before Jesus Christ went to the Cross to die in our place he sang a hymn (Mt. 26:30).

Real, Bible joy is also an evidence of the baptism or fullness of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52).

Joy accompanies a real “Bible revival.” Luke writes of Philip’s evangelistic ministry in Samaria:

“And there arose great joy in the city, that one” (Acts 8:8, Gk.).

The idea is, there was something different about Samaria compared to other neighboring towns that set it apart: JOY.

What accounted for the difference?

Samaria had “received the Word”; Philip had preached the “gospel.” The very word means, “good news.”

Let me ask you a question.

How do *you* respond when you hear, “good news?”

Maybe there isn’t as much joy in the contemporary Church as in Bible days because there isn’t as much *good news* being declared. Our faces look like twenty-to-five on a clock instead of ten-to-two!

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though not seeing him, but believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (i pt. 1:9).

Laugh At the Devil

I remember one place we stayed in while we were evangelizing. The cockroaches were big enough to saddle and ride into the meeting (I don’t care for bugs indoors). There in that bed, the moonlight streaming into that little trailer, I forced myself to peer way down deep into my soul (where the Presence of God is, Jn. 7:38). Thank God that River was there. Not outward happiness based on circumstances (they were lousy), but inward *joy*. Regardless, we belonged to Him! I forced myself to praise the Lord. Soon, it was spontaneous. Then I spent some time laughing at the devil and snored HalleluYah all night.

The Joy of the Lord is *your* strength!

Kindness

“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7).

I was seated in a crowd of about 3,000. We were all waiting to hear a word from God from the man of God. He had nearly a half-century of experience and knowledge in the work and word of God.

As this minister began to share a vision of his calling to (among other things) minister healing to the sick, I was impressed by something else. It was intangible. It wasn't his teaching, though it was revelatory. It wasn't his preaching, though it was inspirational.

What impressed me most of all was his demeanor; his affect. I found myself thinking, “How kind he is.”

Transferred Anointing

Later in the same meeting, while he was sharing another incident from his past ministry I felt something like a “wind” come from the platform. It “hit” me in the chest and an indescribable sense of love and compassion filled my heart. I turned to my wife and asked, “Did you feel that?” “What,” she asked. With tears in my eyes, I turned to my sister-in-law and asked the same question. She nodded affirmatively, sobbing.

I don't know what, if anything, was imparted to us that evening. I'd like to think it was this characteristic of kindness. Lord knows I need more of it. Do you?

What Is It?

According to one Greek authority, the word means, “goodness, honesty, uprightness, mercy and generosity.”

That about covers it, wouldn't you say?

Isn't humanity craving these qualities? This success secret really amounts to putting the “Golden Rule” into action. It's compassion translated into works. It involves speaking the truth “in love.”

Wounded By Words

Have you ever been given advice from a fellow believer, “for your own good?”

Perhaps, you were in the wrong on a particular issue. Or perhaps you didn't need any advice but it came unbidden.

Wouldn't you agree the "spirit" in which the information came was equally, if not more, important than the facts?

I remember one such incident during seminary. A "brother" just had to "minister the truth" to me regarding certain aspects of my personality ("in love" and "for my own good"). I had rather he'd have just kicked me in the stomach (that's what I felt like when he left my room anyway). I went into a tailspin and was depressed for weeks. What spirit was motivating him? Whose words were they? (Job 26:4).

I soon found out he was fearful of not graduating and uncertain whether to marry a young lady he'd gotten pregnant (he was engaged to someone else).

The Source

As the text we began this lesson with shows, God is the Source of our kindness.

Let's face it. It's not natural to be: good, honest, upright, merciful and generous. We're more likely to operate by the "rule of gold" than the "golden rule." It's more natural to "look out for No. 1" or "do unto the other guy before he doesn't it to us."

Paul speaks God's kindness toward us "in Christ Jesus."

This naturally brings our attention to the Cross. Among other things, God was "kind" to us in Jesus. He charged all of our faults, failures, frailties and foibles to Christ's account. He expects us to be "kind" to others in return. "Bear the burden of one another's failings; then you will be fulfilling the Law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2, Knox).

Successful believers are kind. Their kindness draws people to them. Our example in this life style is the Heavenly Father. His Spirit within us will provide the motivation.

Will we follow through?

Love

“**A**nd hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

There is a remarkable miracle recorded in the Book of Acts.

It is not the sound of a “rushing, mighty wind,” or even the “cloven tongues of fire,” nor even the miraculous ability of the 120 to begin speaking in languages they had never learned.

It is described in Acts 2:44-45:

“And all that believed were constantly together, and were having all things common; and were selling their possessions and good, and were parting them to all, as each man was having need” (Gk.).

What’s so miraculous about this?

Just this:

“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).

The “devout Jews” were no doubt from various theological backgrounds such as, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc. Under “normal” circumstances, they would have had nothing to do with each other. They actually opposed each other. But then this wasn’t a “normal” situation!

Supernatural Experience

The greatest miracle of Pentecost was the change that being filled with the Spirit about in the hearts and lives of those who received Him. Years of prejudice melted in moments when the Holy Spirit filled their hearts. Barriers became bridges, obstacles became opportunities and what had been stumbling blocks became steppingstones.

The Love that filled their hearts was not natural, but supernatural. It was not fleshly, but spiritual. It was not human, but divine in origin. It would have been “normal” for two Pharisees to share; it was divinely “abnormal” for differing religious factions to do so.

Carnal Christians

Unfortunately, even with the Love of God poured out within our hearts, we can limit or stop its flow.

The same Peter who experienced an “instant” healing of lifelong prejudice against Gentiles (Acts 10:34-35), later disowned non-Jewish believers when some messianic Christians showed up (Gal. 2:11ff.).

I remember preaching what was to be a “union meeting” involving several congregations from the same denomination in a small city in the north of Australia. As it turned out, the sponsoring church received cooperation—not from another congregation within the full-gospel denomination, but from one outside!

Brethren, these things ought not so to be!

Four Loves

This love we’re speaking of is divine in origin. As you may know, the Greek language has at least four different words for “love.” One speaks of sexual or romantic love, another of love within the family unit. Still another refers to the love of friends. The love which is a “success secret” is the fourth, “aGAHpee,” the unconditional love of God. It is a supernatural quality of compassion that loves, cares for and ministers to the object of its affection without regard to what or if there is a response.

Born of Love/Filled with Love

If we read the scriptures carefully, we discover that we first received the Love of God when we make Jesus Lord (I Pt. 1:22). The apostle Peter goes on to remind us that we should go on to “love one another with a pure heart fervently.” In other words, we have a choice in the matter and a part to play.

According to Paul in the text with which we began this chapter, we have also been filled with Love if we’ve gone on to be “filled with the Spirit.” It’s simply a matter of our choosing to cooperate with Him in displaying His Personality rather than our flesh on a daily basis.

How?

Jude gives us a helpful hint:

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 20-21).

Motivation

“*F*or it is God, the one who is constantly effectually working in you, the willing and the doing of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13, Gk.).

Many years ago the Lord spoke to me about the subject of motivation at a very unusual time: while I was in the midst of recording a radio broadcast!

Needless to say, I was anxious to finish my teaching so I could get to studying!

Motivation is very definitely a “success secret.” Without it we are victims of the law of inertia: “a body at rest tends to remain at rest.” Some of us have been “resting” so long we’re in danger of drawing flies!

The Revelation

What did God show me during that radio broadcast?

He opened my eyes to Paul’s revelation in Eph. 2:2:

“*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit, the one that is constantly working in the sons of disobedience*” (Eph. 2:2, Gk.).

As I read this verse I suddenly saw a bright, shining key to understanding the mystery of motivation, both of the saved and the unsaved.

According to Paul’s revelation here, unsaved humanity is motivated by the unholy spirit of evil. *But how many sinners are conscious of this?*

Most unbelievers don’t even believe in personal evil, let alone that their thoughts, words and deeds are constantly motivated by it! It operates *unconsciously*. In other words, while they go about “doing their own thing,” they are actually doing the devil’s! As I said in another book, it’s as if there is a “subterranean well of corruption” deep in the spirit of every human being.

Good and Evil

What the Lord went on to illuminate to me is that this same concept—unconscious motivation—operates in the believer. It is the same principle; only the Motivator differs!

This principle is described in crystal clear terms by Paul in the verse with which we began this chapter.

Just as Satan is “effectively working” in the unsaved, so God is constantly motivating the believer. It is “unconscious in the saint just as it is in the sinner. In both cases, they

are “doing what comes naturally.” One motivating influence accomplishes the will of God, the other the will of the adversary.

*“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled **in** us, the ones constantly walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).*

“Charismania”

What does this mean to us in terms of successful Christian living?

Just this:

We can be rescued from super-spiritual, superstitious life styles. We don’t have to wait for “words,” “holy goosebumps” or any other “hyper-spiritual” manifestation. The fact is God is always leading, guiding and directing our steps as we seek to please Him. To paraphrase Paul, “He’s working His will *in* us; we simply have to work it *out*!”

This translates into God-glorifying goals on our part.

“For that ye ought to say, ‘if the Lord will, we shall live, and, do this, or that’“ (Ja. 4:15).

Goals should be godly; *but we should have goals!*

It’s not that the Lord cannot and does not guide us supernaturally; but this is the exception, not the rule.

Lacking any “outside” motivation, we see a need and fill it to the glory of God. Instead of saying, “Lord, if You want me to give to this cause, just let me know,” we operate on this principle:

“Lord, here’s a need, I have the finance to meet it. *Unless you stop me*, I’m going to give to your glory!”

The Choice

Thank God, we have the opportunity to choose whom or what shall motivate us. As the Lord said, none of us can serve two masters, but we’re all serving one, *while usually unaware of it.*

Narrowness

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mt. 7:14).

As I understand the calling of God upon my life, I have one major ministry to accomplish before I “finish my course.”

I received a life-changing vision in September 1975. Although I have recounted the vision a few times over the years, I’m convinced the real thrust of the communicating of this particular aspect of God’s word is yet future. The subject matter of the vision is contained in John 14:6:

“I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

Rather “narrow” wouldn’t you say?

Rather “exclusive” isn’t it?

And yet even natural law is equally “narrow.” For instance, you can’t go north while traveling south no matter how much you “want” to.

A person suffering from pneumonia might prefer to treat the disease with a Band-Aid rather than a course of antibiotic, but that choice is simply not an option; not if the sufferer really desires healing.

A Series of Choices

Successful people are necessarily “narrow” in their approach to life. That is, they accept the fact that a victorious life demands particular choices on a regular basis. These choices rule out other possibilities.

For example, Paul had to choose the “narrow” path of apostleship in order to be effective for the Lord. That choice automatically ruled out acceptance by the Pharisees, Sadducees and other Jewish factions of the day. This “narrowness” isn’t the constricting, stultifying type that restricts our development as fulfilled human persons. Rather, it frees us from the tyranny of “shotgun” efforts and releases us to the focus of “sharpshooter” accuracy.

Enoch

It was a “narrow” road that Enoch walked in the days before the Flood. A godly life style lived among ungodly people made him anything but accepted by the masses. The wisdom of his decision was vindicated, later, however, when he “was not because God took him” (Gen. 5:25).

Noah

It was “narrow” of Noah to insist that his boat and *only* his boat was the means of escape and preservation. No doubt, he was refused membership in the “First Church.” Yet, he, too, was vindicated when the flood came and a longsuffering God finally judged the wickedness of mankind.

The very nature of choice demands a “narrowness” of attitude on our part. As Jesus said in two different gospel accounts, if we’re not *for* Him, we’re against Him and if we’re not against Him we’re *for* Him. There can be no middle ground.

Success demands that we be “narrow” enough to believe our beliefs and accept the consequences without compromising or wavering, regardless of the cost.

The Early Church

It wasn’t easy or popular for the believers of the first century to remain loyal to the cause of Christ. It wasn’t popular to declare Jesus as Lord and not the Roman emperor.

Yet these early believers chose to live and propagate this “narrow” way:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

This attitude is no more arrogant than one that accepts the truth of the law of gravity: what goes up must come down.

As someone has said, “stand for something or you will fall for anything.” I will add, “stand for the *right* thing, the *true* thing, the *godly* thing,” even if you are accused of being narrow. You will be glad you did. And so will others.

The New Age

This is a day and time that abhors “narrowness.” This is just the hour when we need it most. Will you be “narrow” for the Cause of Christ?

Optimism

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope” (Phil. 1:20).

“Two men looked through prison bars; one saw mud, the other saw stars.”

This little rhyme speaks volumes about success in life. It really describes the difference between optimists and pessimists.

Now what about *you*?

Is the glass half empty or half full?

Perspective

This matter of optimism is really about perspective, how we choose to view things in life. We learn a lot about Paul’s perspective in the verse quoted above. He wrote that sentence while in a dirty, dingy jail. How could he do it? By choosing to control his perspective.

In context, Paul is relating his hope that he would be released and enabled to finish his ministry for the Lord (he was and he did).

The word “expectation” is interesting. It means, “intense desire.” People who succeed in the Christian life have that: an intense desire to live up to their full potential in the Lord.

Paul didn’t ignore his surroundings or deny the pain, pressure and problems associated with his predicament. He simply shifted his attention away from what he didn’t want to what he did. In this way stumbling blocks became stepping stones, barriers became bridges and obstacles became opportunities.

See What You Like

A number of years ago, the Lord spoke to me in secret prayer:

“If you don’t like what you see, start seeing what you like.”

I eventually wrote a book outlining that subject (*Creative Faith*). This is really another way of saying we must live by faith.

“Now faith is the confidence of things being hoped for, the convictions of things not being seen” (Heb. 11:1, Gk.).

Optimism is that positive world view that believes:

“The earth is Yahweh’s, and the fullness thereof; the habitable world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1, Heb.).

The Christian optimist believes that good, not evil, is eternal; evil is just a temporary inconvenience.

Mountains or Molehills?

I remember marveling at the height of the buildings as the plane took off from Los Angeles international airport. Once we were airborne, those buildings shrank to “specks.” The altitude brought a different attitude. This is true in spiritual matters also. Some of us have great, big problems and a little, bitty, god.

One evangelist wrote of a cross-country trip he took. He was disappointed during one leg of the trip as the hills in the distance didn’t look very large and he’d hoped to view some cliffs. As he got closer, he realized the “hills” were a mountain range! Some of us are pessimists because we’re so far away from God in fellowship He seems “small” compared to our problems. We need a change in perspective.

Life for a Look

What we habitually “look” at, spiritually, will motivate us. In the Old Testament story, everyone who “constantly looked” at the brazen serpent was healed (Nm. 21:9).

I learned this lesson—physically—just after getting my drivers’ license at age 16. I was making a left turn when a friend yelled at me and waved. I looked away momentarily and waved myself right into another car. My hands followed my eyes and the car followed my hands!

I’ve done a lot of horseback riding and found the same truth operating on the trail. If I don’t “watch where I’m going,” I’ll soon be going where the horse desires (back to the barn).

Time to Change

Most of us desperately need a change in our inner vision, from negative to positive. We need to move from what “is” (negative) to what can “be” (positive). Fortunately, if you’re reading these words, you still have time to change your view. As you look at your life and experiences, do you like what you see? If not, why not start seeing what you like?

Patience

“**B**ut let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Ja. 1:4).

A number of years ago, a world-renowned pastor-evangelist was being unjustly accused by the religious and secular community. By coincidence it happened that I was able to speak to the husband of a Christian lady who had been the media minister’s personal secretary for a number of years.

“What does she make of all these charges?” I asked him.

He replied with a smile, she said, “about the only negative thing I can say about him is he wants everything done yesterday!”

Not a bad report, wouldn’t you agree?

Most believers who desire success in life desire it *now*.

Especially here in America, we don’t like to *wait*.

God’s Clock

“For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Psa. 90:4).

The apostle Peter apparently belonged to the same denomination as Moses for he quoted this verse in one of his letters (II Pt. 3:8). In addition, on the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed the outpouring of the Spirit was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy concerning the “last days” (Acts 2:16ff.).

The “last days” of the Lord have certainly lasted!

John the beloved declared 2,000 years ago:

“Little children, it is the last hour” (I Jn. 2:18, Gk.).

Either the good Lord needs His watch fixed or He tells time differently than we do!

When Now Isn’t Now

“Delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles, unto whom **now** I send thee” (Acts 26:16).

What’s unusual about this verse?

The context is Paul's testimony before King Agrippa detailing his conversion.

But it is a matter of biblical history that Paul never ministered to the Gentiles until 13 to 15 years *after* Jesus spoke these words to him on the Damascus road!

God's "now" is different than ours!

A Gift From Within

How do we adjust our spiritual "clocks" to God's?

This is where patience or longsuffering come in. Some folks believe trials, troubles, temptations and tribulations "give" us patience. But they don't. They simply give us the opportunity to "bring it out." Patience or longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). That's why James tells us to "let patience have her perfect work." This characteristic is *in* us; trials just "bring it out": *if we let them*.

Joseph learned this lesson. He was 13 years from receiving God's dream for his life and its fulfillment. He stopped off at the pit and the prison before entering the palace.

"Whose (Joseph) feet they hurt with the fetters: iron entered into his soul: until the time of his word came: the saying of Yah refined him" (Psa. 105:18-19, Heb.).

Abraham was 25 years waiting for the miracle-child, Isaac. And Moses, called at age 40, wasn't sent until he was 80.

In the meantime?

These Bible characters allowed the patience of God to work in them. That's why they became better rather than bitter.

It was four years between my call to England and my first trip there, six years for Australia, one each for Greece and France. At this writing (1999) it has been 24 years since a certain ministry calling came to me (I'm still awaiting its fulfillment).

Spiritual Abortion

Abortion is a terrible sin and a blight upon our nation. But think of the many "spiritual" abortions we have caused through our refusing to wait on the Lord until a promise or ministry comes to fruition. It takes spiritual grit and gumption to "keep on keeping on" when nothing seems to be happening.

Maybe that's why Hebrews 11 is only one chapter long.

Quietness

“For thus saith the Lord Yahweh, the holy one of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved: in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not” (Isa. 30:15).

Someone has said that the good Lord gave us two ears but only one mouth for a purpose; that we should listen twice as much as we talk!

Think about it for a moment. If we listen to the other person we wind up knowing what we know as well as what he knows. Sometimes it pays to be quiet.

A friend of mine in during my seminary days amended a cliché thusly, “silence is golden but speech is a jewel!”

I would change the quote to read, “silence is priceless!”

A Word to the Wise

“Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” (Prov. 17:28).

A quiet engine is normally a powerful one. We know something is wrong when the “sputtering” starts and the loud noises escape from under the hood.

Jesus demonstrated that silence is often the better part of wisdom, especially when in the presence of a fool such as Pilate:

“But Jesus gave him no answer” (jn. 19:9).

If “a soft answer turneth away wrath” (Pr. 15:1), sometimes no answer at all puts the fire out completely.

How the Feathers Fly

The story goes that a certain lady in a minister’s congregation had spread a false report about him all over town. Finally realizing her sin, she came and asked his forgiveness. After quickly granting it, he took a small pillow and sliced it with a letter opener, then shook its feathery contents in front of an open window. She watched in puzzlement as the wind carried the feathers away.

“You are forgiven for your words, but will they be forgotten?” he asked.

How many marriages and ministries have been damaged—some of them irreparably—due to the ill-timed or wrongly motivated use of words!

How unfortunate that meekness is often confused with weakness.

According to the text with which we began this chapter, our quietness is actually our strength. It is not a sign of weakness, but of *wisdom*.

Practice Exercise

Try this little spiritual experiment.

The next time a close friend, family member or business associate makes an unkind, critical or stupid remark about you or about someone else in your presence, *don't respond*. Don't say a word. Just let the silence act as a sounding board to their voiced unkindness. They will receive a wake-up call! Soon their speech will change; at least around you.

To be successful in the Christian life requires a combination of many personality ingredients. One of these is the discipline of spiritual quietness, of minding our mouths. The wisest man who ever lived said although there is "a time to speak," there is also a "time to keep silence" (Eccl. 3:7).

God grant us the wisdom to know the difference.

Rest

“*F*or thus saith the Lord Yahweh, the holy one of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved” (Isa. 30:15).

I heard a minister’s sermon tape recently that included an interesting story about President Woodrow Wilson. It seems this famous politician had a habit of never making any important policy decisions after 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon. He knew he might be “tired” then and would not be at his best.

It seems all those who succeed in life know the importance of rest as well as work. Devoting time to one without the other is like trying to row a boat with only one oar; we end up moving in circles rather than making progress.

Rest for the Body

The Bible makes it clear that we are three-fold beings: spirit, soul and body. Success in the will of God must certainly include victory in all three areas.

I believe it was coach Vince Lombardi who said, “fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

Perhaps he read the biblical story of Elijah the prophet. How could a man who had called fire down from heaven in front of his enemies and destroyed 450 false prophets turn and run from one woman (I Kg. 19:3)?

He needed rest: physical and spiritual.

If you take the time to read his whole story you quickly discover that was God’s prescription for him. James reminds us that we share the same human nature with the great prophet of God (Ja. 5:17). Not only does that mean we can have a similar faith, but that we can suffer similar fates and experience similar physical, emotional and spiritual tiredness.

The Lord put the prophet to sleep, *twice*, fed him and then gave him a new spiritual direction (see I Kg. 19:5-18).

Our Lord took three major “retirements” from active ministry in his three-and-a-half year spiritual career. He admonished His followers to, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile” (Mk. 6:31). One minister has added, “or come ye yourselves apart!”

Adequate sleep, an afternoon nap, proper food, exercise and recreation (I just bought my first horse) will enable us to finish our course for the Lord in 50 years rather than five.

Rest for the Soul

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mt. 11:28).

Rest for the mind, nerves and emotions; how we need it!

Where to find it?

At the feet of Jesus.

The verse preceding the one above admonishes us to, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28).

As important as earthly confidants are, there is nothing to compare to the rest and relief that come from unburdening our hearts to the Son of God in secret prayer. If you doubt the power of this intimate communication, simply read the psalms of David. Often he begins with a groan but ends with glory. This will be our portion also.

Rest for the Spirit

Our spirits, likewise, need a daily dose of rest in order to remain strong and spiritually sensitive. The Lord has amply provided for this through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke of “rivers of living water” or spiritual refreshment attending our being filled with His Spirit (Jn. 7:37ff.). Isaiah called this experience a “rest” and a “refreshing” (Isa. 28:11). Peter promised repentant, Spirit-filled believers “times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Paul prophesied an edification of the inner man for those of us who would let the Holy Spirit help our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26; I Cor. 14:4). And Jude declared we could build ourselves up on the foundation of our faith and keep ourselves within the sphere of God’s love by means of praying “in the Holy Ghost.”

If Paul needed to edify and bring rest to his spirit before he could benefit others, we must follow his example (I Cor. 14:18; Eph. 6:18).

Rest is available; will we choose it?

Simplicity

“**S**urely *i* have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: *My soul is even as the weaned child*” (Psa. 131:2).

This verse is very descriptive of one who deliberately chose to be “down to earth.” What is amazing is to remember that the author is King David, arguably one of the most famous characters in the Bible.

He begins by saying:

“Yahweh, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high (Heb. wonderful) for me” (Psa. 131:1).

Incredible statement, isn’t it?

One wants to take David by the arm and shake him, saying, “see here now, what’s this all about? You’re rich, famous and a king, prophet and psalmist! If you held royalties on Psalm 23 you’d give Bill Gates a run for his money!”

No doubt, David would reply, “I’m just a shepherd boy; but I do love the Lord with all my heart.”

It was his experience with God that prompted the oft-quoted statement:

“For man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart” (I Sam. 16:7).

What’s Inside Counts

A number of years ago, I was preaching a large crusade in Darwin, Australia. After the service, a young man dressed in a dirty tee shirt and jeans approached me. He explained a bit about the ministry he was involved in and shared about how blessed he’d been by my meeting. He offered to take me to dinner at a nearby restaurant.

During our conversation, I mentioned to him that there were some problems at home. Later, in the car, he offered me his phone to call America, long distance, and to feel free to spend as long as I needed. I furrowed my eyebrows and he said, “that’s part of the fun of being rich.”

I found out later that he was a multimillionaire and had been traveling full time in the ministry for two years, living on “residuals.”

I’ve shaken hands with several millionaires in my life but none wearing jeans and a tee shirt!

Perhaps you've found that those with the most often say the least.

Quiet Effectiveness

I was privileged to spend some time with one of my spiritual mentors a few months before he passed away. I quizzed him about spiritual matters and remarked about how famous and effective he and his colleagues had been for the Lord in comparison to ministers of my generation. He absolutely would not admit to being special in any way.

The facts of the matter are that although he was only a high school graduate, he'd written over 500 books, ministered in over 103 nations and trained over 510,000 persons for the ministry!

He and others like him had discovered the secret of spiritual focus, of the "single eye" for God's glory. He knew the importance of simply doing the will of God without any fanfare for public show. He was "simple" enough to spend an hour with a young, "unknown" minister who was preparing for missionary ministry.

How different than another "big shot" in ministry who has never even replied with a "form letter" to a very personal testimony I shared with him.

Secret of Simplicity

This matter of simplicity is a priceless success secret. Often, overlooked, it is nevertheless powerful in its results. It will keep us focused, prevent distractions and foster humility while defeating pride.

Once while recovering from a very severe case of the flu I was reminded of just what my priorities in life and ministry were. After all, I was too ill to do much besides pray! The Lord reminded me that was and is my main calling.

Will I remain "simple" enough to do it?

Will *you* be "simple" enough to do God's will for *your* life?

Trustworthiness

“But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel” (Phil. 2:22).

These words from the Apostle Paul refer to Timothy, his young colleague in the ministry. He was assuring the Philippians that Timothy would faithfully minister in his stead.

How could he be certain?

Young Timothy possessed this success secret of trustworthiness. He could be counted on. He was faithful, consistent and committed. Listen to what Paul said about him to the Corinthians:

“Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the lord, as I do” (I Cor. 16:10).

Did you get that?

Remember, at one point God was doing “special miracles through the hands of Paul (Acts 19:11-12). He had the ministry of an apostle, consistently confirmed by, “signs, wonders and miracles” (II Cor. 12:12).

Yet, he boldly assures the Corinthian church of Timothy’s ability to minister in the same way.

Prepared, Not Perfect

Notice, also, that Timothy apparently had a problem with fear or apprehension (cp. II Tim. 1:6-7). Yet this fact didn’t disqualify him from spiritual service. He simply needed to hear and heed advice on how to deal with it from the natural and spiritual standpoints (I Tim. 5:23; II Tim. 1:6-7). With a change in diet and a commitment to regularly release the “prayer language” of the Holy Spirit he would overcome.

Persistence Wins the Day

Many years ago I was employed as the program director of a Christian radio station. One of the weekend announcers was doing his overnight shift. I happened to be there and asked how he felt being up all night. He replied, “It’s not perfect, but it could be a lot worse. I could have no job in Christian radio at all.”

When he switched to daytime hours I began to shift more and more work to him (he had a master’s degree in Journalism 6, Communications). When I left the job to begin missionary work in Australia, I recommended him for my position. The general manager gave him the promotion without hesitation. Why? He was trustworthy.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Lk. 16:10).

Rome wasn't built in a day as the saying goes. Yet I've known many believers over the years who expected to become world-class ministers immediately. It doesn't happen that way. God rewards faithfulness. We must prove ourselves trustworthy. I've known many “would be” ministers over the years who planned to take nations for God. Yet they couldn't be trusted to attend their home church two weeks running. I preached to 10 long before I spoke to 10,000. I was willing to instruct a handful of believers in a living room prayer meeting before God gave me an audience of millions through short-wave radio.

The secret of success is no secret. We must develop the character attribute of trustworthiness.

One of the greatest compliments I ever heard paid to a man of God was “he's always the same.” What a testimony! This man could be canted on; his word was his bond. Perhaps that's why he's still in the ministry, still proclaiming the full gospel.

Bloom Where Planted

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (I Cor. 12:18).

Regardless of your station in life, whether in the ministry or as a dedicated layperson, make faithfulness a goal toward which you strive. Stand where God has set you and bloom where He's planted you. It takes faith sometimes to do this, but you will be rewarded, here and hereafter.

Understanding

“**A**nd unto man he said ‘behold the fear of Yahweh, that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding’” (Job 28:28).

This verse of scripture is one of the Bible’s many little “nuggets,” tucked away, just waiting for the serious student to dig out.

Wisdom is a success secret we will look at a couple of chapters from now. The one to which we turn our attention now is: *understanding*.

The ancient patriarch, Job, declares, “to depart from evil is *understanding*.”

What on earth does he mean? And just how, exactly, is this spiritual, “understanding,” a success secret? Several Hebrew words are translated “understanding,” including the meanings, “knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, discernment and heart.”

Context is Everything

Perhaps a rule of Bible interpretation will help us a bit here. “If you take a text out of its context, you wind up with a pretext!” In other words, we can get the Holy Spirit’s meaning of this characteristic if we observe carefully the setting in which it appears.

Job counsels to depart from evil is “understanding.” But understanding what?

Understanding that God’s way is the right way.

Someone has observed that the original meaning of “commandment” was: “signpost.”

God’s will, as revealed in His Word, His Law, is the “right way” to live. To live one’s life according to any other guideline is to be led into “evil,” *regardless of what it looks like*.

As Solomon observed:

“*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Pr. 14:12).

All That Glitters...

I was discussing a young man’s various marriage choices with another minister. I mentioned one very beautiful young lady as a possibility. He responded, “sometimes what looks like the blessing turns out to be the devil in disguise!”

This concept applies to many different areas of life. The world system constantly clamors to us with its carnal advice:

“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither;’ and as for him that wanteth understanding (heart, Heb.), she saith to him, ‘stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant’” (pr. 9:16-17).

“But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell” (pr. 9:18).

Age-old Truth

This wisdom doesn’t just apply within the context of the temptation to commit adultery, but is equally applicable in other areas of life.

It really illustrates the ancient lie first told to Adam and Eve in the Garden:

“Yea, hath God said... Ye shall not surely die...”

Lies!

And God’s motive in providing His “signpost?”

“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

In other words, God is ‘holding out on you.’”

The Truth?

Adam and Eve were already sons of God and had been invited to partake of the Tree of Life (Gen. 2:16). The apostle Paul told the Truth to Timothy:

“But (trust) in the living God, the one who constantly holdeth out to us all things richly for enjoyment” (I Tim. 6:17, Gk.).

This is the Truth, If we have understanding (insight, intelligence, heart) we will believe it and act and live accordingly. God’s precepts and principles are for our good; they lead to life more abundant.

Do we “understand” this?

Vision

“*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*” (Pr. 29:18).

A Vision in Prayer

We were driving from Athens to Thessaloniki. I had hours to enjoy fellowship with the Lord and was praying in the Spirit.

Suddenly, in my “mind’s eye (spirit),” I “saw” an elderly, gray-haired, balding man to my right. We were in the front of a church sanctuary. He was looking over my shoulder toward the platform while I was praying and then prophesying over him.

The next morning I walked into a “familiar” church auditorium that I had never seen before. As I took a seat in a pew in the front right of the sanctuary, a man approached me, smiling. He appeared to be in his 70’s, had gray hair and was balding. I smiled inwardly as he introduced himself to me as the pastor and then remarked, “how is it that I feel that I know you?”

He was excited as I shared my prayer/vision experience of the previous day. After I ministered the word that morning, I called him out, prayed and prophesied, “acting out” my vision.

Vision—natural or supernatural—is an important success secret for us as believers entering a new millennium.

Types of Vision

There are a number of different kinds of vision experiences awaiting us in the Lord. Each has a specific function and purpose. For instance, our text describes people “perishing” apart from a certain kind of vision. The second half of the verse defines it: a knowledge (vision) of God’s Law/word.

On the other hand, those of us who seek God’s view of life and obey His word find life here and hereafter (Jn. 10:10).

A second type of vision refers to a plan, purpose or pursuit; a blueprint for our lives. Full 98 out of 100 persons do not have any such goal, either long or short term. If we don’t know where we’re going, how will we know if or when we’ve arrived (have succeeded)?

The Lord Jesus illustrated the necessity of this type of vision when He spoke of going to war and building projects (Lk. 14:28ff.).

I recently purchased my first horse (after riding someone else's for seven years). I have a vision (plan) of what I want to accomplish in terms of training him. Every time I work with Doc I'm heading toward that goal.

Spiritual Vision

A third type of vision refers to the supernatural, spiritual kind I received in the car while traveling to the north of Greece. This is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit wherein our natural senses are "suspended" and we become acutely sensitive to the spirit world.

We do not become "unconscious" (I was fully aware of being in the passenger seat of the car, tooling up the highway during my vision). Rather, we become more aware of the spirit world for a time.

This type of experience is part and parcel of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17) as prophesied by Joel. Both Peter and Paul had similar experiences (Acts 10:9ff.; 22:17). Sometimes they come at night (Acts 18:9). We must add the important fact that such spiritual manifestations are not confined to the ministry, but are available to dedicated laypersons also (Acts 9:10ff; 10:3ff.).

Regardless of how they come or to whom they appear, spiritual visions accomplish God's purpose for others and us. They provide information unavailable any other way.

While we cannot "make" them happen, our dedicated prayer lives can certainly increase the chances of God's visiting us in this way (I Cor. 14:6, 18).

Perhaps the most important point is our response to them. It should be Paul's:

"Whereupon, o King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

Wisdom

“**W**isdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Pr. 4:7).

My horse received a visit from the farrier today. The blacksmith is a very fine, Christian gentleman with over 20 years of experience. “Doc” seemed to want to investigate the brother’s credentials. He soon found that he was not only gentle but firm. As the horse attempted to play up, the farrier simply said, “See here young man (my horse is only two); we’ll have none of that.” “Doc” settled down and behaved.

As my wife and I talked with this kind, Christian horseman, we soon discovered his views of horsetraining were very similar to the man under whom I study. When in doubt, *ask God for wisdom* (Ja. 1:5). In the course I am studying my instructor (a Spirit-filled believer) includes a tape entitled, “The Greatest Horse Training Secret I Ever Learned.”

What is it?

When knowledge, experience and training are not enough, *ask God for wisdom!*

Someone has said that wisdom is the ability to use knowledge correctly. There are many educated “idiots” in the land today. It seems their wisdom has not kept pace with their knowledge. This causes problems; for themselves as well as others.

Smart But Stupid

I have ministered the Word in some halfway houses and Salvation Army chapters. Invariably I have encountered doctors, lawyers and clergymen who are not practicing their professions. Somehow they lost out in life and have found themselves “down and out.” One wonders about physicians who smoke, lawyers who get involved in shady deals and ministers who don’t “walk their talk.” Perhaps they have mistaken education for wisdom. They are not the same.

According to the Bible, facts without faith are insufficient if we are seeking success in this life and the one to come. Wisdom, as our text illustrates, is closely associated with “understanding.”

As we have seen this “understanding” involves a heart commitment to looking at and living life according to God’s Word, will and way. It means to follow God’s commandments (signposts) and to depart from evil. In many instances this translates to walking by faith rather than sight.

“*The fear (awe) of Yahweh is wisdom (Job 28:28).*”

Someone has said that the fear (awe, reverence) of God eliminates all other fears. The idea is we must be more concerned with disobeying or disappointing the Lord than man.

Trust and Obey

I just completed a mission trip to Greece. I preached seven times in two churches in Athens, twice in Thessaloniki and once in Erchomenos. Natural, human information (based upon the senses) told me it was the wrong time to take a trip. My father had recently passed away after a long illness, there were many needs within the congregation I pastor, finances were tight, etc. Yet, I had the inner conviction as well as God's calling and Word to go.

Only eternity will reveal all that was accomplished as we saw nearly 60 souls saved, over 80 filled with the Spirit, over 100 Christians consecrating themselves to the Lord's service and testimonies of healing from: cancer, deafness, bone problems, vision difficulties, etc.

Wisdom is available to us, *if we desire it.*

"For Yahweh giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (pr. 2:6).

"But if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Ja. 1:5).

But there is a condition.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (Ja. 1:6).

In other words, our asking must be in earnest, arising from a heart willing to be obedient when the direction comes.

The story goes that a young man in the Far East desired wisdom from a "master." The elderly men took the fellow to a river and proceeded to place and hold his head under the water. After a time he allowed him to come up and breathe. The boy was shocked and puzzled. The elderly man said, "when you desire wisdom as much as you desired air, you will receive it."

Something to think about?

Excellence

“*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Hades, whither thou goest*” (Eccl. 9:10).

“If you don’t have time to do it correctly the first time, where will you find the time to do it over?”

Challenging thought, isn’t it?

How many of us have discovered this success secret of “excellence,” of doing our “utmost for His highest” as Oswald Chambers would put it.

It matters not what arena of human production you look at, those who pride themselves on the pursuit of excellence seem to succeed. Cutting corners, sloppiness, disorganization all add up to more avenues for error. Where error grows, success withers.

Are we committed to excellence?

A Glaring Contrast

At the time of this writing, my son has just begun in the preaching ministry. Last night he gave me a little tract he had just prepared. He intends to send it along to some brethren overseas who have ordered our books and ministry courses.

About the only thing I could find wrong with it was it looked about a hundred times better than what I’ve been preparing for publication over the years! He seems to be a perfectionist, wanting everything he does to be “just so.” His research is always thorough, his messages the right length, and his altar calls “on target.” No doubt, he will be a success in life and ministry if he continues on the path he’s travelling.

Spiritual Motivation

Where can we find sufficient inspiration for “going the extra mile” in our secular or spiritual work?

Will attention to natural considerations such as the latest advertising methods, statistical conclusions or market research findings be sufficient? Cold, hard facts seldom motivate when the flesh finds it easier to “get by.”

It’s not natural to get to work early, be willing to stay late and give 110% to our employer (or ourselves if we’re self-employed). The apostle Paul gives us a helpful hint from Heaven along this line.

*“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, **as to the Lord**, and not unto men: knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24).*

Paul is suggesting that you and I acquire “X-Ray eyes.”

That is, we’re to look past the “seen,” (the business, boss, etc.) to the “unseen” (the Lord Jesus).

This will transform work from being “mean” (ordinary) to “meaningful” (eternally significant). Working “by faith” understands that there is more to life than meets the eye. Solomon counseled:

“The king’s heart is in the hand of Yahweh, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Pr. 21:1).

David reminds every willing worker:

“For promotion (Heb. lifting up) cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa. 75:6-7).

God Exalts

You can be sure if we are faithful in a few things, we will be faithful in much and we will be rewarded accordingly: here & hereafter (Lk. 14:11; Rev. 22:11).

Payday isn’t always on Friday in the Kingdom of God, but it always comes. God’s computers are never “down” and He never confuses our accounts.

Let’s pledge ourselves to do the very best we can with what He’s given us and serve others excellently in His Name.

Yearning

“**A**s the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, o God”
(Psa. 42:1).

The psalmist in this verse describes yet another success secret for those of us who desire to excel in fulfilling God’s will for our lives.

It seems he had developed an “appetite for the Divine.”

Notice I said he had “developed” this hunger and thirst. It isn’t natural to us. However, once it takes hold of us it can become an obsession.

Heavenly Addiction

One minister of another generation who ministered in 103 nations, trained over 500,000 individuals for ministry and authored over 500 religious books said if he missed his daily prayer time he felt worse than an individual who missed his daily cup of coffee.

Successful Christians all experience this spiritual yearning for the Presence of God. Once we have “tasted the goodness of the Lord,” nothing else ever really satisfies.

“*My soul thirsteth for God, for the Living God*” (Psa. 42:2).

How many of us really know this bittersweet experience of union with God and yet desiring even more of Him?

Jesus spoke to this situation:

“*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*” (Jn. 7:37).

The idea of the original language here is, “Let him come unto Me at once and *keep on coming*; let him drink at once *and keep on drinking*.” It is a continuous experience our Lord is recommending.

Earlier He had explained:

“*I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth in me shall never thirst*” (Jn. 6:35).

Trust and Obey

If we really trust in the Lord, we will demonstrate it by seeking Him—His power, His will—daily in prayer.

The Holy Spirit will help us.

“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)” (Jn. 7:39).

Let’s face it. Our strength, intelligence, power and resources are limited. God’s are not. Shouldn’t we take advantage of this?

“But they that wait upon the Yahweh shall renew (Heb. exchange) their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

Someone asked the man who has grown the largest church in the history of Christianity how he did it. He replied, “I pray; I obey.”

I might add this man averages about three hours of prayer per day.

“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before...” (Phil. 3:13).

One who penned a great deal of the New Testament wrote these words. But with all of his success, do you sense his yearning, his desire for *more*?

A few verses later he reiterates the eternal paradox:

*“Let us therefore, as many as be **perfect** (Gk. mature), be thus minded” (Phil. 3:15).*

Why a paradox?

“Not as though i had already obtained, either were already perfect” (Phil. 3:12).

Do you see it? Perfect—mature—yet not completely perfect! He still had the yearning, the spiritual desire for *more*.

May God grant us a similar hunger and thirst.

Zeal

“**F**or I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you” (Col. 4:13).

What causes zeal?

What gives us the ability to get and remain “fired up” over a project?

Certainly, all of us can agree that successful persons all possess this characteristic in abundance.

Positive or Negative

The Greek word rendered “zeal” in the verse quoted above is an interesting one. It literally means, “to boil;” figuratively, to “seethe” (with emotion), either good or bad.

For example, this word is the basis of our English word, “jealousy.” Normally, this is considered an unhealthy emotion. I have a friend in Greece who told me she was unable to attend our crusade one evening. When we asked why, she responded with a heavy accent, “he is too zeelos.”

On the positive side we find the word translated “fervent.” The scriptures speak of zeal or ardor for the Gospel (II Cor. 7:11; Rm. 10:2), for God or for others (II Cor. 9:2). John applied the words of Psa. 69:9 to the Master’s zeal for His Father’s house (Jn. 2:17).

In any event, the emotion inevitably results in action. Our Lord’s zeal for God’s House resulted in Him fashioning a whip and driving crooked moneychangers from the temple. On the other hand, we have all read accounts of “crimes of passion” where the spouse murders the object of his affection rather than to allow another to possess her.

Passion or Apathy

This concept of zeal is closely associated with another Greek word we know as “passion.” To be without it is to be “apathetic” (Gk. a, without; pathos, passion) or listless. According to Paul’s revelation in Col. 3:21, this is the tragic situation a child can find himself in if raised in the wrong way.

*“The fathers, stop provoking (irritating, exasperating) your children to anger, lest they be **discouraged**.”*

The picture here is a child raised in an anxiety-producing environment who finally transmutes fear into anger at the source of the threat (like a dog continually backed into a corner). Whether or not this rage is ever expressed, an enormous amount of energy is expended, leaving little or none for pursuit of success in life.

Godly Goal

As we have seen from the way the word is used, zeal is normally evoked by a person, project or principle perceived to be important.

In the text with which we began this chapter Paul commends his co-worker, Epaphras. This man had given himself to Spirit-led intercession on behalf of the Colossian church. His goal was for them to “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12). The apostle describes the man’s efforts on their behalf as “laboring, wrestling, striving;” literally, “agonizing,” and that, *fervently*. This is the perfect picture of zeal in action.

When was the last time you were *zealous* enough about something to put some “blood, sweat and tears” into the endeavor?

It’s probably been that long since you accomplished a goal.

Zeal for ministry in Australia prompted me to pray for just under seven hours before reaching a “breakthrough.”

Zeal kept my family and me in Australia for our full itinerary when it would have been much easier to return home prematurely.

Zeal for the will of God, for something *bigger* than yourself, will carry *you* forward to success in life, too.

ALSO BY THE SAME AUTHOR

You Must Be Drunk!
Why Not Women?
Ready For The Rapture
Creative Faith
Faith's Formula
Living on the Threshold of Eternity
How to Get Rich, Quick!
What Price, Freedom?
At the Master's Feet
The Presence of God
Light For Living (formerly four books)
Plead the Blood!
Seven Secrets of Successful Living
Wonder-Working Words
Walk with God
Help from Heaven
When You Need a Miracle
Your New Life

ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Dr. Joseph Kostelnik is founder and president of Gospel Truth Ministries, an apostolic ministry with a three-fold vision: a local church (**White Oak Chapel**), training up and sending out of ministers of the Word (**The Prophetic Voice Institute**), and short-term mission trips to foreign fields as God leads.

He holds a B.A. from Point Park University, an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary, a Th.D. and Ph.D. from International Seminary, an honorary D.D. from Kingsway Christian College & Theological Seminary and an honorary Litt.D. from International Seminary.

He has served as: pastor, assistant pastor, evangelist, Bible teacher, missionary, author, educator, and media minister. He has ministered in the United States as well as overseas, including: England, Scotland, Australia, France, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Crete, Haiti and New Zealand and his ministry is marked by the miraculous.

For information about the Christian life, to arrange a ministry meeting, or to order additional copies of this book, visit <http://www.gtm.org/> or write:

Gospel Truth Ministries
P.O. Box 1885
Cincinnati, Ohio 45201-1885
U.S.A.