

# SUCCESS IN LIFE

**Exhortation:** God created you to be a success. And you can be. He has a perfect plan for your life that includes salvation (John 3:16), spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:11), and foreordained works to walk in (Eph 2:10). If you carry out his plan, you will be successful because the Holy Spirit will help accomplish what God wants to accomplish through you. But the alternative, your own plan for your life, is doomed to fail: God will blow all your accomplishments away (Hag 1:9–11; 2:16–19). The choice is yours. Will you be a failure or a success in life?

## PROMISES OF SUCCESS

- *for obedience to the Law and the Covenant (God's written Word):* "So keep the words of this covenant and do them in order that you may prosper in all that you do" (Deut 29:9 RCL). "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go" (Josh 1:7). Note the distinction between success *in everything you do* and success *everywhere you go*. As David's time to die drew near, he advised his son Solomon, "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn" (1 Kings 2:1–3). It should be observed that such overwhelming success is conditional: it all depends on obedience to God's Word. David explained this to Solomon more than once: "Now, my son, the LORD be with you that you may be successful, and build the house of the LORD your God just as He has spoken concerning you. Only the LORD give you discretion and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God. Then you shall prosper, if (⊖) you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel" (1 Chron 22:11–13). The first key to success is obedience to God's Word.
- *for meditation on the Law:* "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Josh 1:8). Two principles must be borne in mind here: (1) knowledge precedes obedience, and (2) you can't obey what you don't know. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers (Psa 1:1–3). "Day and night" is a merism for "all the time"—as much as possible. The second key to success is delighting in and meditating on God's Word.
- *because God is with you:* A third key to success is clearly stated in this passage: "And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. And it came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate" (Gen 39:2–6a). Some food for meditation: (1) Five times the LORD is said to be the cause of Joseph's success. (2) Success is the basis of promotion. (3) An unbelieving, idol worshipping Egyptian is exceedingly blessed by association with Joseph (39:5). (4) Be selective in who you employ: hire believers who are being blessed by God. (5) God has the ability to make any undertaking successful. God was also with David: "And David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him" (1 Sam 18:14; cf. 18:5). And with Hezekiah: "And he did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered" (2 Kings 18:3–7). A fourth key to success is God's supernatural help.
- *for serving God:* "And thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what was good, right, and true before the LORD his God. And every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered (2 Chron 31:20–21). "And Hezekiah prospered in all that he did (2 Chron 32:30b). And the returnees were successful when they switched from their plan to God's plan for their lives (Hag 2:19).

## MEANS OF SUCCESS

- *through prayer:* Nehemiah asked God for a successful audition with Artaxerxes, the king of Persia (Neh 1:11). He prayed for success (cf. 2:4). We may also pray for success in our undertakings.
- *seeking God's will (through prayer, the prophets, and God's Word):* Uzziah was a righteous king (2 Chron 26:4) who "continued to seek God" (26:5) and "in the days of his seeking Yahweh, God made him successful" (26:5 RCL). He was successful in battle (26:6–7), famous (26:7, 15), powerful (26:7), rich (26:10), had a strong army (26:11–14), and superior military technology (26:15). God miraculously helped him to become strong: "He was marvelously helped until he was strong" (26:15). What does it mean to seek the LORD? Rebekah sought God for an answer to a personal question (Gen 25:22). Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, sought God for an answer to his question (2 Kings 8:8). The righteous kings of Judah sought God's will regarding decisions of state. Jehoshaphat, for example, was a righteous king who sought God rather than the Baals (2 Chron 17:3–4). He sought "the word of the LORD" (God's will) before going to battle at Ramoth-gilead (1 Kings 22:5=2 Chron 18:4). He was persistent (1 Kings 22:7=2 Chron 18:6). And because he insisted, Ahab asked "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" (1 Kings 22:15=2 Chron 18:14). God quickly revealed His will to the prophet Micaiah, and Micalah relayed it on to Ahab and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:17, 19–23=2 Chron 18:16, 18–22). But, unfortunately, they did not believe Micaiah and went out to battle (1 Kings 22:29=2 Chron 18:28). Perhaps Jehoshaphat was persuaded by the majority. After the battle, in which Ahab was killed, Jehoshaphat was rebuked by Jehu the prophet and then commended for seeking God (2 Chron 19:2–3). On two other occasions King Jehoshaphat sought God's counsel. In both he was faced with impossible situations. When Mesha king of Moab rebelled against Israel, Jehoram, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom allied to fight him (2 Kings 3:4ff.). But they ran out of water in the Wilderness of Edom—making defeat certain. At that critical moment Jehoshaphat decided to seek the LORD (2 Kings 3:11). He sought word from God as to what they should do. The answer was given by the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 3:16–19) and apparently this time Jehoshaphat obeyed. And later, when Judah was invaded by Moab and her allies, Jehoshaphat again turned his face to seek the LORD (2 Chron 20:3). He did not know what to do (20:12) and sought word from God in prayer. The answer came through the prophet Jahaziel (20:15–17). Jehoshaphat obeyed, and success followed (20:20–30). Other kings of Judah who sought the LORD were Uzziah (2 Chron 26:5), Hezekiah (31:21), and Josiah (34:3, 21, 26=2 Kings 22:13, 18). Uzziah was successful when he sought the LORD: "And he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the visions of God, and in the days of his seeking Yahweh, God made him successful" (2 Chron 26:5 RCL; cf. 26:7, 15). But, sadly, "when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God" (26:16). Punishment followed (26:17–23). Notice that there was a point of time in Josiah's life when he decided to seek the LORD: "he began to seek the God of his father David" (2 Chron 34:3). He was sixteen years old at the time, so he reigned eight years before this without seeking the LORD (34:1–3). They were all successful because God was able to accomplish his desires for his kingdom with righteous kings who sought his guidance and will in matters of state. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, sought the LORD four times but was *not* successful (Jer 21:1–7; 37:3–10; 17–21; 38:14–28). Why? Because he never obeyed what was revealed to him (37:2; 38:15). Apparently he sought God's word out of curiosity. There is a connection between not seeking God and doing evil: Rehoboam did evil because (⊖) he did not seek the LORD (2 Chron 12:14). And he was not successful. His kingdom was divided (11:1) and Shishak invaded Judah (12:1–9). Saul usually did not seek God. Only once did he do so, and this was after God rejected him (1 Sam 15:26, 28). When the Philistines invaded Judah and camped at Shunem (28:4) Saul was afraid and inquired of God but God did not answer (28:6, 15). In despair he turned to a necromancer to seek word from Samuel who had died (cf. Isa. 8:19). For this Saul died the sin unto death and God turned his kingdom over to David (1 Chron. 10:13–14). Success, then, is conditional. It depends on continually meditating on God's Word, prayer, seeking God's will, serving God, receiving guidance and help from God, and obeying God's Word. "If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge, Then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success" (Eccl 10:10 NKJV).