

## How Do You Measure Success?

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It is fair to say that the majority of people in the world desire to be successful. However, how does one define success? What is one willing to pay for success? One can become successful by understanding what REAL success is.

In Luke 12:13-21 Jesus tells of a man who thought he had achieved success. However, as Jesus tells the story, one can see that he did not achieve success at all. The problem arose because one man felt his brother was cheating him in reference to an inheritance. Jesus tells him, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

To illustrate his point Jesus tells the parable of a farmer who had a very abundant harvest and decided to build bigger barns to store his bounty. He did not think about others who had need nor did he consider the brevity of life. He would lose everything because he would die. Who then would be the recipient of these things? Jesus ends the parable by stating, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores things up for himself but is not rich toward God."

The scripture is about a farmer. Not just any farmer. Not a sharecropper who lived on the edge of poverty. This is about a farmer who has a great yield on his crops and it is all his to do with as he pleases. He can live very well for a long time...build bigger barns to sit back and enjoy...but he will die.

Would you say this fellow is successful? Farmers will tell us that it is not easy to make it big in agriculture. It surely takes more than luck and so the farmer has to work hard for his success.

Who is the truly successful person? The dictionary defines success as "The favourable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavour...the attainment of wealth, position, honours, or the like." Likely the last part of this definition comes close to what most view as success. Charles F. Kittering observed, "Success is getting what you want; happiness is wanting what you get." While this distinction may seem superficial there is a gem of truth buried in it. Many people though hard work and skill have reached a level of success in their field of endeavour but are still filled with fear, insecurity, doubt, and absences of meaningful relationships.

It's to this important issue that Jesus speaks in the parable mentioned above. The parable raises above the dispute over inheritance to focus on what is really important. If life does not consist of status and or possessions then what does it consist of? To Jesus there was only one answer.

Therefore, Jesus closes the parable of the rich farmer by observing, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Does this mean that financial success is all bad? Certainly not! The Bible teaches that our blessings are gifts from God to be received with thanksgiving. Financial success can be a great blessing when seen in its proper perspective.

Passion for getting can absorb a person's time and effort, leading to temptation and the trap of the love of money (I Timothy 6:9,10). Jesus reminds us that it is difficult for a rich man to enter

the kingdom (Mark 10:23) but he did not say that it was impossible. It is a matter of choosing the better part.

In view of this truth one should take inventory periodically to make sure he is not paying too high a price for success. The question then is, "when is the price too high?" First the price is too high when it causes one to forget the divine qualities of love, compassion, purity of life, and the value of friendship with God and man. Being called into the likeness of God such qualities as love, compassion, purity, etc. are vital to true success.

Secondly one is paying too high a price for success when things become more important than people. People who mistreat neighbours, spouse, children, employers, employees, and anyone who happens to come into their path surround us. The story is told of a visitor who went to the U.S. and saw people with attaché cases pushing wildly against each other at the Times Square subway station. He asked, "Is there a devil after them?" "No," someone replied, "There is a dollar in front of them!" Success that is tarnished by putting things before people is false and ugly.

In summary, too high a price is paid for success when it means that one's life is not centred on Jesus. The life that is centred on physical (short term) success rather than on Jesus (eternity) is giving up the only thing that really lasts. The successful person has the attitude of Paul who said, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus...our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:14). Any success that takes one's eyes away from this goal in Christ Jesus costs too much.

How do you measure success? Hopefully the same way God does!