

## **What Is The Secret For Success?**

**April 27, 2022**

**Scripture: Proverbs 3:1-12**

**Summary: God's Word teaches us how we can be sure we will be successful in our life.**

**Questions For God:**

**What is the Secret of Success?**

**One of the most effective methods of learning, I am convinced, is question and answer.**

**How many times in the gospels do we see Jesus answering questions? All the time.**

**He was the master teacher and never made people feel silly for asking.**

**I am afraid that I am going to fail and that I will miss out on all that God has planned for me. How can I be sure that I will be successful in my life?**

**Well, this is a marvelous question. It is one that we ask ourselves. I doubt there is a single person that wants to be a miserable failure in life. I have never met a young child that says, "When I grow up, I want to be a bum" or "I want to be alcoholic" or even, "I want to be second-rate." Nobody thinks that way. Instead, as children we have these dreams lodged deep in our hearts—we use our imagination to picture what life will be like one day when we're at the top. We never dream of failure, we never dream of depression. No, we dream of being successful and happy. We want to know the secret to success.**

**But is there such thing as a secret to success?**

**What is the secret to success?**

**Former Secretary of State Colin Powell once said this,**

**“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” --Colin Powell**

**Now in one sense, I agree with Colin Powell. If you study successful people, you will consistently find that they have prepared themselves rigorously, they have demonstrated an unmatched work ethic, and they have allowed failure to become their greatest teacher. To be at the top of your class or at the top of your organization, you must be willing to prepare hard, work hard, and learn from your mistakes. I agree.**

**But I would disagree with Colin Powell in this way. I do believe that God’s Word shows us the path to success. It’s not simple, but it’s there.**

**The Lord has provided us a treasure map to peace. There are some basic instructions, some secrets, to living in God’s will. And I know this, when you are living in the center of God’s will—I don’t care how much money you make or people you manage—when you are walking in God’s will, there is joy, and peace, and hope. That doesn’t mean that aren’t some trials. That doesn’t mean that your annual income will surpass six figures. But what I am saying is, when you trust the Lord, he will lead you well. God wants to lead you more than you want to follow.**

**Look with me at Proverbs 3 — I want to lead you down the pathway of success. The key verses in this chapter are vv.5-6.**

**Here is the promise that God makes to us.**

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Prov. 3:5-6**

**That is the goal: straight paths. We want to reach a destination and we want to stay on the path. We want our lives to go somewhere, to mean something. We want to leave a God-sized mark on the world.**

**So how do we do it. In the first 12 verses of this chapter, the Lord lays out some clear conditions that you and I must meet if we are going to be eligible to receive that promise.**

**When you go to the bank to take out a loan to purchase a home, you have to meet certain requirements before you are approved to carry that check out the door. There are some conditions that must be met. Well, in this chapter of Proverbs, God gives us clear instructions on what we must do to receive His direction. The first one is this...**

**What Must I Do To Receive God's Guidance?**

**1. I must place God's Word in my heart. (vv.1-4)**

**We see this in the first four verses.**

**How do I receive God's guidance?**

**First and foremost, by planting His Word right here. The will of God is revealed in the Word of God so if you want to know the will of God then you must read the book.**

**It's really that simple. I can't tell you how many times I have been assembling some toy for our children and I have said to my wife, "This is so confusing. I cannot figure this out." And then she speaks those words that stir up rage in a prideful man. She says, "What do the directions say?"**

**Directions?!? Who wants to take the time to read directions? Nobody likes to read directions, we skip that part. And the same is true in the Christian life. So many people are wandering from place to place, from relationship to relationship, from marriage to marriage, from job to job. And they feel confused, disillusioned, and lost, and God says to them, "My son, do not forget the directions."**

**And do you know what happens when people start reading the directions?**

**Do you know what happens when you start stockpiling truth in your heart? You become more loving toward people and you become more faithful in the little things.**

**Love and faithfulness are like jewelry hanging from your neck. That's what v.3 suggests. God's Word will fill you with love and faithfulness and those two things will never lead you astray.**

**Show me a person whose heart is brimming over with love for God and whose life is marked by faithfulness—show me that person—and you will have found someone successful. Their heart is pure before God.**

**Purity is a wonderful thing. When something is pure, it exists in its essential nature—undefiled, unblemished, uncontaminated.**

**We tolerate impurity. A little lust, a piece of greed and envy, a few ounces of slander...these things can remain. And this is what is frightening: as you stray from God's Word, the level of impurity in your life will grow larger and larger and larger until one day you wake up and suddenly: you are engaged in behavior that you never would have tolerated 5 years before.**

**Let me show you a verse: Heb. 4:12**

**For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**

**Look what happens! When you read the Word of God, it will judge the thoughts and attitudes of your heart. It will convict you and it will correct you. It will purify your heart and when we are pure, guess what hangs around our neck? Not worldliness, or greed, or lust—no not those things.**

**What adorns our neck is love and faithfulness and those things will never lead you astray. If you want God to direct your paths, then you must learn and study his Word and allow it to shape your heart.**

**Let's move on to the second condition. To have God's guidance in our lives, to be successful...**

**2. I must surrender control over my life. (vv.5-8)**

**Read vv.5-8...**

**This will come as no surprise: people who are "know-it-alls"—who are wise in their own eyes—they don't pray very much.**

**Why should they pray? They've got it all figured out. The Bible never puts that kind of pressure on us as human beings—to have it all figured out. The Bible never tells us that we should have the answer to everyone else's**

**problems, or that we should be able to solve all of society's ills, or that we will never feel confused in our lives. Instead, the Bible says, "Don't lean on your own understanding...do not become wise in your own eyes, but trust in the Lord with all of our heart.**

**The word translated "trust" in verse 5...it might be used to describe a defeated soldier yielding himself to the conquering general.**

**This is what it means to obey God. It means to yield yourself to a ruling General. God is your new Commander in Chief and He hands out the marching orders. He now has authority. Did you catch that? To trust God means to surrender authority. You grant Him permission to define what success is for you.**

**God's picture of success for you might be radically different than what you had planned.**

**•His picture of success for you might be in raising godly children that will one day make a splash for the kingdom. That's not going to put you on the cover of a magazine, but that is your assignment from the General.**

**•For others today, trusting God might mean taking a lower paying job and moving into a smaller house so that you can do what really ignites your passion. People won't congratulate you for downsizing, but God smiles upon obedient servants.**

**•For others, trusting God might mean staying in a marriage with an unspiritual spouse. He has called you to work in the prayer closet and to be a holy example within the 4 walls of your house, and to hang on to hope. The world won't call you wise for being a faithful spouse, but God has the right, as your General, to hand out the assignments, and to determine what success looks like.**

**Beware! When you begin to think that you know better than God, when you abandon the call, then you have just become wise in your own eyes.**

**You have become a child of Jonah, and just like him, it won't be long until you are running from God, and living in misery. You can't run from God; you can only surrender to Him.**

**But, when you acknowledge Him, in all your ways, in everything that is going on in your life—when you don't turn and run, when you stay in the foxhole—and you recognize God's leadership in your life, He will see you through! And when you have walked that straight path, you will have a faith that is refined, pure as gold, and not only that, you will have an inheritance waiting for you.**

**Many people today think that success means wealth, extravagant vacations, shiny new cars, additional square footage, and plaques on the wall, public fame and approval. All these things bring popularity, but success and popularity are not the same. Do you know what Jesus said in Luke 6? "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." Beware when you become popular.**

**I like how this verse reads in the Message Paraphrase:**

**"There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests...Your task is to be true, not popular. Luke 6:26**

**And when Proverbs says, be true to God, acknowledge Him in all your ways and He will make your path straight, it means that you will feel at peace and you will feel successful in God's eyes...and that is all that matters.**

**Do not try to win the eye of your neighbor, do your best to catch the eye of God. Let him lead your life. Surrender control to Him. He will lead you well.**

**Number 3...the third condition that must be met to receive guidance from God...**

**3. I must surrender my money and possessions. (vv.9-10)**

**Verses 9-10.**

**God will not bless a person who is stingy or tightfisted with him. If you want God to honor you, then you must honor Him with your money and possessions. Now, notice it says in v.9, that we should honor God with our firstfruits. What does that mean? Well, in the Old Testament, the Jews brought the Lord the firstborn of their flocks. When a herd of animals were born, the first was given to the Lord as a sacrifice. And the same with the crops. As the first-fruits of the fields were harvested, they gave them as an offering to God, and in this way the people acknowledged that every good thing comes from above.**

**They put God first, even with their cash. In the New Testament, Jesus affirms this principle of putting God first when he says,**

**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33**

**The principle is very simple. Give to God first, and then watch how he will be faithful to give back. I am convinced that millions of people miss out on certain blessings reserved in Heaven because they will not tithe.**

**Proverbs just said, “in all your ways, acknowledge Him,” and yet this is one way that people refuse to acknowledge him.**

**This why God said this through the prophet Malachi,**

**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. “Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” Mal. 3:10**

**That is a bold promise. Trust God with your money and then watch what He will do. Now I hope that you won’t give just so that you will get something back. That’s not worship; that’s manipulation. That’s like telling your wife that you’ll give her a massage if she’ll mow the lawn. No, we don’t give to God so that we will receive. We give to God because love and faithfulness hang from our necks. And when we love God and when we are faithful to Him, He will always be faithful to provide everything we need.**

**Now there is one more condition that must be met if we are to follow God’s plan in our lives. This is the one I wanted to skip, but it’s there, so I have to teach it.**

**4. I must receive discipline as love. (vv.11-12).**

**My father disciplined me as a child, and there were times when I hated him for it.**

**Likewise, there are times in our lives when God takes something from us. He disciplines us. He might take away a dream, or a relationship, or our savings account, or our reputation. He will take things away, but notice v.11, we**

**should not despise Him. We should not resent Him. Instead, we should receive it in love.**

**Look at this verse, Hebrews 12:11:**

**No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Heb. 12:11**

**Do you allow God to train you? Or do you get angry every time he pulls in the leash? Do you get bitter when other people have what you don't? Or do you trust that God will provide all that you need in due time?**

**Peace comes to those who are trained by discipline.**

**The greatest times of growth in your spiritual life will always be in times of loss and loneliness. It's not in seasons of success that we form spiritual muscle—no, those are the times when we tend to coast. We build the muscles of faith when we allow God to have His way in us. We respond to correction.**

**So maybe you would like to raise this question. You want to know how to be successful.**

**Follow these principles, and you will be a success in God's eyes, and you will live in peace and in joy.**

**When you find a person that lives in total peace, you have found a person that feels successful.**