

The Secret of Success

Most people having read the account of King Solomon's life would say that he had lived a life full of success.

Ecclesiastes 2:3-11 [NIV] *"I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly, my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worth while for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well — the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labour. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."*

Here is an example of a person who had "been there, done that".

Notice how many "I's" there are in this biography.

At the end of his biography Solomon sums up what he had learnt in his "successful life".

Ecclesiastes 12:1 [Amplified Bible] *"Remember earnestly also your Creator [that you are not your own, but His property]. Now in the days of your youth, before the evil days come or the years draw near when you will say of physical pleasures, I have no enjoyment in them."*

King Solomon did remember God in his youth as a result of the example his father King David.

Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 [Amplified Bible] *"Remember your Creator earnestly now, before the silver cord of life is snapped apart ... the whole circulatory system of the blood ceases to function. Then shall the dust of which God made man's body return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."*

Stripped of our human spirit and God's Holy Spirit our bodies return to dust.

Stripped of God's purpose all our work to succeed is in vain.

Stripped of God's love all our service is futile.

We must put God first in all we do because without Him we have **no** success.

John 15:5 [NIV] *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

Apart from Jesus Christ in us and directing our lives we will **not** find true success.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 [NIV] *"Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true."*

The teacher we are to remember is the Creator God, Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastes 12:11-12 [New King James] *“The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.”*

Christ’s words are the “goad”.

What does goad mean?

A goad or oxgoad was a sharp metal tip attached to a handle and used to keep oxen or cattle moving in the right direction.

We have to allow our Shepherd’s [Jesus Christ’s] words to keep us moving in the right direction.

We are warned here by God not to add anything to the words of Jesus Christ, our Shepherd.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 [New King James] *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”*

In his conclusion, Solomon presents his antidotes for the two main ailments presented in his biography.

1 The lack of purpose, that is **not** knowing and seeking to fulfil the reason we have been given life.

What is the purpose of life?

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

As our Heavenly Father God desires to have children who are like Him in two ways, image and likeness.

Genesis 1:27 [NIV] *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

The original physical creation was only “image” **not** “likeness”.

The Hebrew word translated “image” implies a “shadow” **not** the real product. We meet with people every day who are in the “image” of God but someone who is in His “likeness” is a completely different person.

The Hebrew word translated “likeness” implies two for one model, same manner, this is talking about Godlike character.

In these verses we see what real eternal success is, the real purpose of life.

Anything outside of this is **not** lasting success.

2 The lack of direction in our lives by seeking any goal that will **not** be helping us to have Godlike character created in us.

When we read of the biography of Solomon, the message it brings to us can only be understood with these two conclusive verses in mind.

“Fear God and keep His commandments.”

“Fear” – the Hebrew word means to stand in awe or to revere God.

“His commandments” – in context it is referring to Christ’s Words, His commands, as Christ is our Shepherd and the Holy Spirit He sent is our Teacher.

It is also Jesus Christ who will be our judge at the end of this physical life.

John 14:23-26 [NIV] *“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.’”*

We show our love for Jesus Christ by accepting and obeying His Words, His commands and such a submission to Jesus Christ will allow Him to send the Holy Spirit to come into our lives.

What will such an entry into our lives of the Holy Spirit do? What will He accomplish in us?

John 16:5-11 [NIV] *“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:** in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

The Holy Spirit will convict us of our sins.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Unless we realise the end product of our lives that are **only** guided by our human nature, is eternal death, we will **not** be goaded into Godly sorrow and repentance.

The Holy Spirit will show us that Godly righteousness is a gift from Jesus Christ that is credited to us as a response to our faith in Him as our Saviour.

Romans 4:3-5 [NIV] *“What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. **However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.**”*

Just as Abraham, the *“father of the faithful”* had God’s righteousness credited to him as a response to his faith in God’s [Jesus Christ’s] promises, so can we.

The Holy Spirit will remind us that there is coming a day of judgement.

We have to ask ourselves the question *“Have I committed my life to Jesus Christ, both present and future?”*

The book of Ecclesiastes **cannot** be understood correctly without accepting these final verses.

No matter what the mysteries and apparent contradictions we find in life, just as Solomon did, we must work towards the single purpose that will ensure success, knowing Jesus Christ.

A successful life cannot be found in human endeavours.

To live successfully we need to understand and apply now the following:-

Recognise that human effort without Jesus Christ in our lives is futile.

We must put Jesus Christ first all the time beginning right now.

Realise that everything good and successful in our life is a gift from Jesus Christ.

Live every day with the knowledge that Jesus Christ will one day judge the quality of our life.

How can we assure such a successful life now and in the future?

Romans 12:1-2 [Amplified Bible] *“I appeal to you therefore, brethren and beg of you **in view of all the mercies of God** [that come through Jesus Christ our Saviour] **to make a decisive dedication of your bodies. Presenting all your members and faculties** [body, mind and spirit] **as a living sacrifice, Holy** [by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit] **devoted, consecrated and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable, rational, intelligent service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, this age** [and its culture] **being fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs. But be transformed, changed by the entire renewal of your mind, by its new ideals and its new attitude. So you may prove for yourselves** [in your personal experience] **what is good and acceptable and the perfect will of Jesus Christ. Even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect in His sight for you personally.**”*

This is the recipe for success in this life and the life to come after death.

Success = service by sacrifice of our will.

For this to happen in your life one other characteristic of the life of Jesus Christ has to be ours.

Romans 12:3 [Amplified Bible] *“For by the grace, the unmerited favour of God, given to me I [from personal experience] warn every one among you **not to estimate any thing of ourselves more highly than they should.** Not to have an exaggerated opinion of their own importance, but to rate their ability with sober judgement, each according to the degree of faith [also a gift from God] apportioned by God to them.”*

Humility is essential for lasting success in our lives.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, **not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**”*

Success in God’s eyes is what we allow Him to do in and through us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:9-11 [NIV] *“For we are God’s fellow-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. **For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.**”*

Only if we build our lives on the words of Jesus Christ will we have a firm foundation for a successful life.

Matthew 7:24-28 [NIV] *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” **When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,**”*

Only obedience to the words of Jesus Christ can ensure us success.

Remember what wise King Solomon said in conclusion.

There are many other books but only those of the Shepherd [Jesus Christ] can be the goad that keeps us on that narrow path that leads to success in life.