

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

Luke 5:1-11

INTRODUCTION

I think it is safe to say that **most people are interested in being a success in at least some area of their lives! Nobody that I know of likes to fail!**

If you have any doubt, look at the **business section and self-help** section of a local library or bookstore. Look at the best-selling books. Examine all the ads in various media and you will find an abundance of seminars purporting to teach folks **how to be a success.** (e.g. People such as the late Zig Ziglar have made a great living teaching others **how to be successful in their lives!**)

Of all the people in the world, **Christians should want to be a success in their Christian life!** What makes us different from the world is two-fold:

- 1) Our **definition** of what success is...and....
- 2) Our **strategies and methods** of how to get there.

This morning, I want us to take a lesson from a tired and weary group of fishermen who felt like failures until Jesus taught them some lessons.

These lessons they learned are principles that carried over to ministry and helped to sustain them the rest of their Christian lives! Let's look at some of these PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS that we find here.

I. WE MUST ACCEPT THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN EFFORTS AND PLANS! (Vs 2, 5)

We all know that **some of the best laid plans and all of our efforts behind those plans** can come to nothing!

We need to accept what God already knows: (Peter in Vs 8)

Psalm 103:14—“For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.”

It would be good for us to understand what King Solomon said:

Ecclesiastes 2:11—“Then I looked on **all the works** that my hands had wrought, and **on the labour** that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was **vanity and vexation of spirit**, and there was no profit under the sun.”

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A. Peter, Andrew, James And John Did All They Knew To Do And Had Still Come Up Empty!

Have you ever told yourself, “*I’ve got this!*” and then went and gave your best effort and fell on your face so to speak? That’s what happened here!

These were **experienced, professional, seasoned** fishermen who **had the knowledge and had all the right equipment!** They had given it their best shot and came up empty!

All of their **knowledge, experience, and skill** failed them! **Why? Because Jesus was using this experience to teach them (especially Simon Peter) something about the limitation of human efforts and plans.**

2 Corinthians 3:5—“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;”

B. While God Gave Us Brains To Think With, We Don’t Have Enough On Our Own To Do What God Wants Us To Do!

Philippians 2:13—“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Philippians 4:13—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The Apostle Paul, who wrote those words, had learned to **fully rely on God in His Christian walk and ministry and it is what brought success** and allowed him to say in the end: *2 Timothy 4:7* *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

So,
WE MUST ACCEPT THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN EFFORTS AND PLANS or stated more simply WE MUST LEARN TO FULLY TRUST AND DEPEND ON THE LORD!

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II. WE MUST TRUST THE WORD OF THE LORD EVEN IF IT MAY NOT MAKE SENSE TO US! (Vs 4, 5)

Psalm 37:4-5—“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. {5} Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”

A. How Do You Think These Fisherman Felt, Taking Advice From Jesus In An Area That Was Their Business?

Proverbs 23:4—“Cease from thine own wisdom.”

Proverbs 28:26—“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.”

Jeremiah 9:23—“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:”

Understand that **our omniscient LORD knows every situation better than we do!** We must trust **Him** even when **our knowledge and our experience and our skill may tell us differently!**

B. Jesus Was Asking Them To Do What They Had Just Failed At By Themselves!

C. Everything Within These Men Said—“*This Is Futile*”, “*This Doesn’t Make Sense*”—Nevertheless They At Least Half-Heartedly Obeyed What The LORD Told Them To Do! (“Net” vs “Nets”)

Jeremiah 10:23 “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

WE MUST...ACCEPT THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN EFFORTS AND PLANS...TRUST THE WORD OF THE LORD EVEN IF IT MAY NOT MAKE SENSE TO US.

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III. WE MUST PERSEVERE AND OBEY THE LORD EVEN THROUGH OUR FATIGUE AND DISAPPOINTMENT! (Vs 5)

A. The Fishermen Were Tired From Being Busy!

Sometimes we get weary in the battle don’t we!
When we get weary in the battle, especially without seeing results, it gets hard to keep going!

The Apostle Paul wrote an admonition to two Churches about this very thing:

2 Thessalonians 3:13—“But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.”

Galatians 6:9—“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

B. They Were Discouraged, But Willing To Try Again.

When the circumstances of life knock us down we can either lay there and let it keep us down or we can get up and try again.
1 Corinthians 15:58—“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

If we’ve tried and failed, that doesn’t mean it’s time to quit, it means is time to listen to Jesus and His Word!
Hebrews 12:3—“ For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

IV. WE MUST REMEMBER THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK. (Vs 6-7)

1 Corinthians 3:9— “ For we are labourers together with God:”

A. As Success Came, They Had To Share The Burden.

Matthew 9:37—“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;”

B. Since Jesus Was The Ultimate Focus, It Didn't Matter Who Got The Credit.

I used to love listening to the late comedian, Jerry Clower, who was a believer. He once said, *“There is no limit to what can be done for the LORD if it doesn't matter who gets the credit.”*

WE MUST REMEMBER THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK....

V. WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE LORD'S HAND IN WHAT WE DO AND GIVE HIM THE GLORY! (Vs 8)

Peter did not take credit for the success of what had just happened!

In fact, he humbled himself before the Lord Jesus Christ and came face to face with His own unworthiness.

“He who knows himself best esteems himself least.”

VI. WE MUST NEVER GET OVER WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE AND WHAT THE LORD CAN DO! (Vs 9-10a)

This was just one of many wonderful things that the LORD did in the presence of these men. This One Who astonished them continued to astonish them as they followed Him closer and as they obeyed Him!

Peter became a part of Christ's inner circle along with James and John! These three went places and saw some things that the other disciples did not.

The same is true in our lives! As we obey the LORD and follow Him, the closer we get to him, the more we will see what He does and the more we will be amazed by what He does!

VII. WE MUST BE WILLING TO GO WHERE JESUS WANTS US TO GO AND DO WHAT JESUS WANTS US TO DO! (Vs 10b-11)

A. These Men Were Willing To Forsake All That They Had And All That They Had Known For Jesus!

B. These Men Were Willing To Follow Jesus!

CONCLUSION

This was early in Jesus ministry when these men forsook all and followed Him.

But I want to take you to a time a little over three years later. Jesus had been arrested and brought to trial and as Peter tried to see what was going on without getting arrested himself, he denied the LORD three times. Remember that? Remember how his eyes met Jesus' eyes as the cock crowed and Peter went out and wept bitterly!

We know that Jesus was eventually led to Calvary and crucified on a Roman cross and buried. But He arose on the third day just like He said He was going to do!

Remember after Jesus' resurrection how Peter, no doubt full of regret, decided to go back to fishing. (James, John, Nathaniel, Thomas, and two other disciples went fishing with him.) Peter probably felt he had failed Jesus.

But then Jesus came to Peter and these other disciples again and did a similar miracle to the one here in Luke 5. **(John 21)**

Do you think that the LORD wanted to remind Him of that original occasion? You think maybe he was pulling back into Peter's mind the things he should have learned from that first occasion and along the way as He followed Jesus?

The LORD gently directed Peter back to His purpose for Peter's life. (We remember the three-fold admonition to *“Feed my Sheep”*.)

Well evidently, the LORD got through to Peter and the lessons finally stuck with him because he went from that place to become a great fisher of men!

Where are you this morning with regard to the LORD?

Do you know Him?

If you already know Him, are you following Him? How closely?

If you are following Him, are these principles we've seen today a part of your life?