

HOW TO HAVE YOUR MOST SUCCESSFUL YEAR

By Andy Manning

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The title of this sermon is “How to Have Your Most Successful Year.”

I am going to devote the next few minutes to setting you up for the best year of your life.

THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Let’s talk about the definition of success for a moment.

There are two kinds of success. Spiritual success, and material success.

When most people think about success, it is material success. Things like professional advancement; financial abundance; physical health; marital bliss; family harmony, etc.

Spiritual success is about relationships – a right relationship with God, a right relationship with others, and a right relationship with yourself.

In other words, you are right with God, you are treating others the way God wants you to, and you are doing the things for yourself that only you can control – sticking to your goals; waking up on time; eating right; reading your Bible every day, etc.

Today I want to focus on spiritual success.

Most people go about the pursuit of success all wrong.

They ignore spiritual success and focus entirely on material success.

But let me explain spiritual success so you can see why that is foolish.

You'll see that while you shouldn't ignore material success, that your primary focus should be on spiritual success.

FOUR REASONS TO PRIORITIZE SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

1. Spiritual success is true success.

Success is...

- discovering God's will for your life and doing it.
- relational, not circumstantial.
- about character, not achievement.
- about management, not ownership.
- about input, not outcome.
- how you behave alone and in the home, not on stage.

Success is not...

- Outer beauty, but inner character.
- Intelligence, but wisdom and knowledge.
- winning, but how you respond to failure.
- what you have, but what you do with what you have.
- what you accumulate, but what you send ahead.
- how many people serve you, but how well you serve others.
- a destination, but a journey.
- how well you start, but how well you finish.

Material success is nice, but in the end, it doesn't matter. True success is spiritual success.

2. Spiritual success is required for happiness.

The problem with ignoring spiritual success and focusing only on material success is that we are spiritual beings. We are not just physical. We need more than physical, material, and earthly things to be happy.

In fact, you can have all the material success in the world, and yet still be completely empty on the inside. And hate your life. And long for something more.

But if you achieve spiritual success, even without material success, you will find happiness, inner peace, contentment, significance, self-confidence, and personal satisfaction.

3. Spiritual success is completely within your control.

Another problem with material success is that you can't fully control it.

Much of material success is out of your control.

You don't have full control over your health. Often perfectly healthy people fall seriously ill and even die.

You don't have full control over the economy, over your customers, over your coworkers, over the government, over the weather.

You cannot control how your spouse behaves. You can't control your parents. You don't have full control over how your kids turn out.

You don't have full control over your physical appearance. You don't have full control over your intelligence. You don't have full control over your physical abilities and talents. You have some control over those things, but a large part of material success is out of your hands.

In many ways material success is a matter of luck; of being at the right place at the right time; of who you know.

However spiritual success is completely within your control.

You have full control over your relationship with God. You are as close to God right now as you want to be. You are as spiritually mature right now as you've chosen to be.

You have full control over how you treat people; over how you treat your spouse and your kids.

You have full control over your relationship with yourself. You have full control over your diet, and your schedule, your spending, and your habits, your daily disciplines, your morality and integrity, your attitude.

While you have limited control over your material success, you have complete control over your spiritual success.

If you want, this year you can achieve spiritual success. And that means that this year you can be truly successful. You can have your most successful year ever.

The only person stopping you is you.

4. Spiritual success always results in material success.

You can achieve material success without achieving spiritual success. We see that all the time.

But you cannot achieve spiritual success without also achieving material success.

Material success always follows spiritual success.

First of all, it's a promise. God promises material success those who achieve spiritual success.

And second, it's a law of the universe, sort of like the law of gravity. If you achieve a right relationship with God, with others, and with yourself, then it will increase your material success.

But here's the catch. While spiritual success always results in material success, the amount, the type, the timing, and the extent of material success are not guaranteed.

They differ from person to person.

For one person spiritual success might result in a flourishing home life.

For another, spiritual success might result in abundant wealth.

For another, spiritual success might result in physical health and longevity.

For another, spiritual success might result in professional advancement, and fame, and recognition.

And here's what we know. We know that spiritual success doesn't guarantee a problem-free life.

We know from the Bible that sometimes God allows His most faithful children to endure the toughest trials.

No amount of spiritual success can make you exempt from suffering.

Suffering is a part of God's plan to make us holy.

That's why it is dangerous to see spiritual success as a means to an end.

You must not see spiritual success as a way to get material success.

If you strive for spiritual success in order to gain material success, you will always end up disappointed, because the material success that you do get will never be the kind that you are looking for.

Spiritual success is not a means to an end; it is the ultimate end. Spiritual success is ultimate success.

Even without much material success, if you have spiritual success, you will be happy, and content, and have inner peace, and on and on.

You will go to heaven.

You will have an abundance of heavenly treasure.

Spiritual success is the reason you were created.

If you achieve spiritual success this year, then regardless of what happens to you on a material level, I guarantee that you will have the best year of your life.

You will look back on 2019 and be satisfied, proud, happy, and content.

So let's look at eight Biblical principles of success.

8 BIBLICAL SUCCESS PRINCIPLES

1. Pursue wholehearted devotion to God.

2 Chronicles 16:19 “For the eyes of the Lord roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him.”

What does wholehearted devotion to God look like?

There are **four ways to pursue wholehearted devotion to God** – all of them essential.

Obey God. Joshua 1:7 “Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go.”

Pastor Robert Jeffress said, “God uses, favors, and rewards those who obey him. You would not continue to use a painter who did not obey you. An employer

favors those employees who are obedient. A parent rewards children who are obedient. Why? Because we are made in the image of a God who uses, favors, and rewards people who obey him.”

Seek God. Not His hand, or His stuff, or His blessing; Him. Look at what the Bible says about King Uzziah. **2 Chronicles 26:4-5** “He did what was right in the Lord’s sight just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God throughout the lifetime of Zechariah, the teacher of the fear of God. During the time that he sought the Lord, God gave him success.”

Fear God. **Psalm 112:1-3** “1 Hallelujah! Happy is the person who fears the Lord, taking great delight in his commands. 2 His descendants will be powerful in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.”

Thomas Watson said, “The fear of God is to have him always in our eye. He who fears God imagines that whatever he is doing, God looks on, and as a judge, weights all his actions. To fear God is to have such a holy awe of God upon our hearts that we dare not sin. The fear of God will make you forsake sins which can neither be heard nor seen by men. The fear of God destroys the fear of man.”

Delight in God. **Psalm 37:4** “Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart’s desires.” What does it mean to take delight in the Lord? It means to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

2. Aim for righteousness.

You can’t ask or expect God to help you if you are violating His will.

Psalm 5:12 “For you, Lord, bless the righteous one; you surround him with favor like a shield.” **Proverbs 2:7** “He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity.” **Proverbs 10:24** “What the wicked dreads will come to him, but what the righteous desire will be given to them.” **Proverbs 13:19 (NLT)** “It is pleasant to see dreams come true, but fools refuse to turn from evil to attain them.” **Proverbs 14:11** “The house of the wicked will be destroyed,

but the tent of the upright will flourish.” **Proverbs 21:21 (NIV)** Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honor.” God clearly promises success to those who aim for righteousness.

What is righteousness?

Righteousness means being in a right relationship with God.

There are two kinds of righteousness.

First, judicial righteousness.

Before we are saved, we are guilty before God and deserve hell.

The moment we trust in Jesus Christ, God declares us not guilty.

Our standing before God has changed from sinners deserving hell to believers deserving heaven.

Judicial righteousness in Christ is a permanent, irrevocable standing before God.

It changes your standing before God, and your relationship with God. You become a child of God, part of God’s forever family. As God’s child, He promises to care for you.

The second kind of righteousness is ethical righteousness.

This is how you act after you are saved.

Ethical righteousness is right acting before God.

It is the fulfillment of God’s expectations in your relationship with Him and in your relationships with people.

It is God's right way of living in relationship to Him and to others. It is conformity to God's rule and His will.

3. Honor your parents.

Deuteronomy 5:16 (CEV) "Respect your father and mother, and you will live a long and successful life in the land I am giving you." **Ephesians 6:1-3** "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, 3 so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land."

This is the fifth of the Ten Commandments; the first of all the social commandments.

Notice two things.

First, it is unconditional. It doesn't matter whether you like your parents, or how your parents treat you. Honor them regardless.

Second, it has no age limit. You outgrow your responsibility to obey your parents, but you never outgrow your responsibility to honor them.

How serious is God about this commandment? **Deuteronomy 27:16** says, "'The one who dishonors his father or mother is cursed.' And all the people will say, 'Amen!'"

You will not prosper and succeed in life if you dishonor your parents.

How do you honor your parents? I made up an acronym to help you.

How to HONOR your parents:

H – Help them as they get older.

O – Obey them right away with a good attitude.

N – Never hold a grudge against them.

O – Open up your life to them.

R – Respect them with your words and actions.

Pastor **Philip Ryken** wrote, “To honor one’s parents is to give due weight to their position. It is to give them the recognition they deserve for their God-given authority. To honor is to respect, esteem, value, and prize fathers and mothers as gifts from God.”

4. Pray for success.

Nehemiah 1:11 “Please, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to that of your servants who delight to revere your name. Give your servant success today, and grant him compassion in the presence of this man. At the time, I was the king’s cupbearer.” **Psalm 90:17** “And may the Lord our God show us his approval and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful!” **Psalm 118:25** “Lord, save us! Lord, please grant us success!”

One person said, “You can do more than pray, after you’ve prayed, but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.”

You should be praying for success every day; praying over your goals every single day.

A famous Hollywood actress was walking on the red carpet and she fainted and fell right there in front of the crowds and cameras. Someone asked her, “What happened?” She replied, “I forgot to breathe.” Forgot to breathe? How stupid is that? No more stupid than forgetting to pray.

First Catechism says, “What is prayer? Prayer is asking God for the things He has promised in the Bible and giving thanks for what He has given.” **Thomas Watson** wrote about prayer, “It is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ.” **Thomas Watson** wrote, “The tree of promise will not drop its fruit unless shaken by the hand of prayer.”

To make sure that you make time for prayer, schedule a daily quiet time. Every day at the same time get alone with God for prayer and Bible study.

5. Study and master God's word.

Joshua 1:8 "This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do." **Psalm 1:1-3** "1 Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. 2 But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. 3 They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do."

Less than five percent of Christians have ever read through the Bible even once.

Ever wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our smart phone?

- What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?
- What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?
- What if we used it to receive messages from the text?
- What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?
- What if we gave it to kids as gifts?
- What if we used it when we traveled?
- What if we used it in case of emergency?

If you want to succeed in 2019, make a commitment to read through one of the daily Bible reading plans on our church website. And do that every single year.

The Puritans had a hunger for God's word. Their church services lasted about 3 hours; they knew they might fall asleep, so they paid a tithingman to keep them awake so they wouldn't miss anything.

George Muller (1805-1898) had a hunger for the word. He read the Bible over 200 times in his life, and more than half of those were on his knees. (Warren, Bible Study Methods, 8).

The famous preacher **Charles Spurgeon** said, “When you’re cut you should bleed Bible.”

6. Seek Biblical wisdom.

Proverbs 1:3 (NLT) “Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair.” **Proverbs 3:13-18** “13 Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, 14 for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire can equal her. 16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor. 17 Her ways are pleasant, and all her paths, peaceful. 18 She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who hold on to her are happy.”

What is wisdom? Wisdom is the ability to make really good decisions.

I heard it said recently that the biggest difference between people who really flourish in life and those who don’t is simply that – wisdom. The ability to make really good decisions.

Think about it. The average person makes about 70 decisions a day, or 25,000 decisions a year. If you live 75 years, that’s 1,875,000 decisions. Life is the sum of your decisions.

So how do you seek Biblical wisdom? By reading and studying the Bible. The Bible is filled with principles about money, relationships, parenting, marriage, happiness, professional success, politics, etc.

As you read the Bible, seek out Biblical principles that will help you make good decisions.

There's an entire book of the Bible devoted to wisdom – the book of Proverbs. It has 31 chapters. Many Christians throughout the centuries have made it a goal to read one chapter a day from Proverbs, thereby reading it through every month, every single month.

7. Honor the Lord with your wealth.

Proverbs 3:9-10 “9 Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. 10 Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.”

“Don't talk about my money!” Now we know the problem. You think it's your money.

Pastor Graham Scroggie says, “There are two ways in which a Christian may view his money. “How much of my money shall I use for God? Or How much of God's money shall I use for myself.”

If you want to succeed in 2019, you must honor Him with your wealth. How? Four ways.

Tithe. Malachi 3:10-11 “10 Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the Lord of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. 11 I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit,” says the Lord of Armies.

Make an honest living. Avoid dishonest gain. Jeremiah 17:11 “He who makes a fortune unjustly is like a partridge that hatches eggs it didn't lay. In the middle of his life his riches will abandon him, so in the end he will be a fool.” Don't lie and cheat and steal to get ahead.

Share with those in need. Deuteronomy 15:10 (CEV) “You should be happy to give the poor what they need, because then the Lord will make you successful in everything you do.”

Avoid greed. Be content. Don't make it your goal to get rich. Don't catch the disease of affluenza – it's when you earn money and buy things to show off, to keep up, or to make yourself happy. **1 Timothy 6:6-10** “6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. 8 If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

8. Make good plans.

Proverbs 21:5 (NLT) “Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.” **Proverbs 4:26 (GNT)** “Plan carefully what you do, and whatever you do will turn out right.” **Ephesians 5:15-16** “15 Pay careful attention, then, to how you live—not as unwise people but as wise— 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” **1 Corinthians 9:26 (CEV)** “I don't run without a goal. And I don't box by beating my fists in the air.”

Planning is essential to success. Failing to plan is planning to fail.

Someone said, “There is a six P formula for personal and business success. Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.”

Why do you need to plan well? Because you only have so much time. You only have so much energy. You can only do so many things.

The purpose of planning is to make sure that you use your time wisely.

One person said, “Setting goals is a stewardship issue. God wants you to make the most of your time. Goal setting falls under the category of time-stewardship.”

Don't mistake activity for achievement. Just because you are moving fast doesn't mean you are going somewhere. You might just be running in circles. That's why you need a good plan.

How do you make good plans for your life? Goals.

One person said, "Goals are decisions to grow and improve, along with the plans to achieve them."

Goals are your vision of the future. Your design of your future. If you don't design your future, other people will.

Goals focus your energy. They keep you from wasting time, money and energy.

Rick Warren explained why you need goals. "You will go through life by design or by default. You will decide what's important, or others will decide it for you. Without goals you are abdicating control of your life. Without goals, you are just reacting and existing and coasting. Coasting is always getting slower."

How do you set goals?

There are **5 Different Types of Goals**. 1, **Daily** goals. Daily things you need to do. 2, **Short term** goals. 1 week to three months. 3, **Long term** goals. 1 to five years. 4, **Life-time** goals. To become like Christ. To stay happily married. To retire comfortably. 5, **Eternal goals:** Goals that will outlast you. Legacy goals. Investments that you make in people and in the church. Integrity. Reputation.

There are also **Four Categories For Goal-Setting**. 1, Finances. 2, Family goals. 3, Fitness. 4, Faith.

Goal-Setting Exercise.

1, Go through one category at a time, and write down all your goals.

2, Determine the type of goal – daily, short term, long term, etc.

3, Prioritize your goals. Must do, and want to do. Most impactful, less impactful.

4, Rewrite your goals so that they are **BEST**: Believable. Energizing. Specific. Time-bound. **Someone** said, “The difference between a goal and dream is a deadline.”

5, Review your goals every day.

CONCLUSION

We’ve just covered eight Biblical success principles. Eight things you need to do to achieve spiritual success – a right relationship with God, with others, and with others.

2019 doesn’t have to be like every other year. You don’t have to stay stuck in neutral. Your life can change. You can be successful. God is ready to do amazing things in your life. The rest is up to you.

Before we close, I want to pray over you “The Priestly Blessing” that was used by the priests to bless the Israelites.

Numbers 6:24-26 “24 May the Lord bless you and protect you; 25 may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace.””