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PILLARS OF SUCCESS IN SCRIPTURES

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Introduction

The Bible is filled with characters who, by all standards, were successful men and women during their days. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Noah, Job, David, Solomon, Nehemiah, Esther, Abigail, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, just to mention a few, were highly successful as recorded in the Bible. A critical study of these characters will undoubtedly show that there are common characteristics found in them. This means that success, even during the Bible days, does not come by accident; it is a consequence of the operation of interrelated values (or pillars as we have them in this lecture). God is the giver of true success, but He gives it to whoever is willing and ready to pay the price. The passage in Deuteronomy 28:1 clarifies this point: *And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.* So, what is the price of success from the biblical point of view? That is the big question that this lecture seeks to answer. In this lecture, you will be taken through the difference between Godly success and worldly success and predominantly what is called the pillars of success in scriptures with personality illustrations. The lecture relies substantially on the thoughts of Dr David Oyedepo as documented in his book, *Success Strategies* which was first published in 2003. I pray that this lecture will impact you and change your life as you seek to join the bus of successful children of God in Jesus Name.

What is Success?

The subject and concept of success has remained controversial since time immemorial. While some see it from the purview of wealth accumulation and positions, some see it as simply the accomplishment of any given purpose. So, there are two main schools of thoughts. The first school of thought which defines success looking at it from the perspective of wealth accumulation will not mind describing a thief who has accumulated so much wealth as a successful individual, in as much as he or she commands earthly riches

and influence in the society. However, the other school of thought that defines success from the standing point of purpose accomplishment will never describe a thief as successful. The oppositional views between these two school of thoughts is what has made the subject of success to remain controversial till date.

Nevertheless, the Word of God (the Bible) is very clear about what success is all about. Going through the scriptures and looking at the histories of successful biblical characters, the subject of success should no longer be controversial to children of God because what defines a successful person is clearly identifiable from the scriptures. In the light of the foregoing, this lecture aligns with the biblical configuration and framework of success.

An instance of the biblical framework for success can be found in what King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 10:22: *The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.* What this passage means is that true success only comes from God, nothing more, nothing less, and when God gives it, no sorrow is added. There are rich persons in the world who are really not happy even with their riches; such persons cannot be said to be successful going by the biblical configuration of success. Godly success is the one that results from the blessing of God, while worldly success is the one that is man-made with value-added-sorrow (VAS). It is therefore the blessing of God that differentiates between Godly success and worldly success. Our orientation in this lecture is to the effect that the Bible compliant success is the true success.

Dr David Oyedepo (2003), in alignment with the biblical framework of success, describes this true success as follows

- It is not possession.
- It is not a destination.
- It is accomplished stewardship.
- It is freedom from struggles.
- It is walking in divine purpose.

The totality of the above descriptions of Bible compliant success is that success is divinely determined. It is not about the plans of man, but about the plans of God for individuals. This means that true success can only come upon a man if he follows the plans of God. Oyedepo makes it clear that whatever the dreams and aspirations of a man, if they do not tally with divine plans, then success cannot result.

As mentioned earlier on, there are numerous biblical characters who were tremendously successful during their own days. These individuals shared common values, which are referred to in this lecture as pillars of success. What, therefore, are the pillars of success in scriptures?

Pillars of Success in Scriptures

As documented in our core text for this lecture (David Oyedepo's *Success Strategies*), there are two main pillars of success. They are **devotion** and **wisdom** with the latter branching into *direction* and *discretion*. In this lecture, I have added the pillar of self-discipline making it three pillars that will be explored from the scriptures.

The Pillar of Devotion.

Devotion can be defined as the status of a man that enables him to have a walk with God. In Proverbs 13: 20, we learn that *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*. According to Oyedepo (2003: 20), *devotion was a common attribute of the successful personalities in scriptures, beginning from Noah, to Abraham, Job and on to David, Solomon, Peter, and Paul*. When a man is devoted to God, he becomes God-addicted and God in turn enables him to become successful. Let us look at the examples of Noah, Joseph, Job, Abraham, David, and Paul.

- **Noah:** He was addicted to God and God in turn made him a successful man. By being the only man left, together with his household, after the flood. Hebrews 11:7 - *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*
- **Joseph:** Joseph became successful in the land of Egypt because he had a very fearful walk with God. Genesis 42:18 - *And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:* He became a Prime Minister in a country that is not his.
- **Job:** Just like Noah and Joseph, Job was devoted to God and God himself described him as an upright and perfect man. Job 1:8 - *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the*

earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?.
It was recorded that Job became the richest man of his region.

- **Abraham:** Abraham's close walk with God earned him the description of a friend of God and the father of faith. He consequently became tremendously successful. Genesis 22:2 - *And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Abraham became the father of nations.
- **David:** David's background could not be said to be very outstanding. Nevertheless, his close walk with God earned him success and he eventually became a king of Israel. Psalms 132: 4-5 - *I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.*
- **Paul:** Even though Paul was an addicted persecutor of the children of God and the Gospel, the moment he became a devoted child of God, his story changed, and he became so successful that he wrote a greater percentage of the books of the new testament. Philippians 1:21 - *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

There are so many other biblical personalities whose walk with God earned them positions at the top during their lifetimes.

The Pillars of Wisdom

Wisdom can simply be defined as the ability to discern the best choice to take out of numerous possibilities. In fact, wisdom is so important to God that he described it as the principal thing (Proverbs 4:7). It must be noted that only God gives wisdom that leads to success. The good news is that God is ready to give wisdom to whosoever wants it (James 1:5). Anyone operating by the wisdom of God will not have problem with getting directions from God and will also be empowered with the virtue of discretion. From scriptures, there are many personalities who displayed the pillar of wisdom and became so successful during their days. Let us consider the examples of Solomon, Esther, Abigail, and Daniel.

- **Solomon:** Solomon was a very successful King of Israel because God gave him wisdom. 1 Kings 3: 9-12 – *9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.* The same Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs which is full of wisdom nuggets.

- **Esther:** Esther displayed a very high-wire wisdom which she got after prayer and fasting. She used the wisdom of food to get at Haman who had previously planned to annihilate the Jews through what I call the wisdom of food. Esther 5:4 - *And Esther answered, if it seems good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.*

- **Abigail:** Just like Esther, Abigail got the wisdom of God and she quickly knew what to do to successfully save herself and her household from the hanger of king David. 1 Samuel 3: 18-25 – *18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. 19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. 20 And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. 21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. 23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 25 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 26 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.*

- **Daniel:** Daniel became a Governor in a foreign land as a result of the display of wisdom before King Nebuchadnezzar. He did what all the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans could not do because of his access to divine wisdom which he got after he prayed to God. Daniel 2: 16-19 - *16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

One very striking thing about the two pillars of devotion and wisdom is that they are interrelated. When a man experiences a close walk with God, he is given access to divine wisdom and success will result. According to Oyedepo (2003: 23-26), when a person has access to the wisdom of God, he or she will not lack direction and discretion. According to him, while direction is all about the divine plans of God for a man, discretion is *knowing where to go and where to invest your energy and resources*. That is to say, God has plans for everyone He has created – Jeremiah 29 11 -13 says *11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* In Psalm 33: 8, God also promises, *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* Access to the wisdom of God is what enables man to be directed towards the plans and it takes discretion to know what to do with the unfolded plans. In Jeremiah 1:5, for instance, God revealed the plans He had for Jeremiah: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

To the two pillars of devotion and wisdom, one can add the pillar of Self-discipline.

The Pillar of Self-Discipline

I define self-discipline as the ability to do the right things always whether it is convenient or not. This definition gets a scriptural backing from the passage in Hebrews 12:11 - *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.* The Bible records the display of self-discipline of many successful biblical characters and they include Joseph, Daniel, Jesus, and Paul.

- **Joseph:** Joseph's success in life would have been ruined if he had succumbed to the sinful demand of Potiphar's wife to lie with her. It was the self-discipline operating inside of him that made it impossible for him to commit that sin – an offer that a self-indulgent person would have jumped at. – Genesis 39:9 - *There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*
- **Daniel:** By all standards, Daniel was a very successful man, he became a governor in a foreign country as a result of devotion, wisdom of God and self-discipline. He displayed self-discipline by refusing to defile himself with food and drinks. Daniel 1:8 - *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*
- **Jesus:** Jesus was an embodiment of success when he was on the earth to live with the people physically. His devotion to His Father was unparalleled. His display of wisdom and self-discipline has not been matched by any human being living or dead. One example of His display of self-discipline is when He was tempted by the devil with food while He was on a long prayer and fasting period. His response to the devil's temptation even shocked the devil: Matthew 4: 4 - *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*
- **Paul:** Paul the Apostle reached the pinnacle of his career as an Minister of the Gospel. He was absolutely devoted to God. His self-discipline was also remarkable thereby putting testimonies in his mouth as exemplified by his words in 1 Corinthians 9:27 - *But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

Self-discipline is a pillar of success. I do not think anybody can become successful, talking about Godly success, without the value of self-discipline, there were examples of biblical characters that became failures at the end of the day because of lack of self-discipline. Samson's case comes to the fore here. He was a Nazarite from birth, highly devoted to God and with unfettered access to the wisdom of God. However, he blew it with lack of self-discipline by falling into the deceptions of Delilah.

Conclusion:

Godly success is the heritage of all children of God because it is His will that everyone prospers – 3 John 2 - *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.* However, Godly success does not fall on anyone by accident. It begins with an unalloyed submission to God and to His will for our lives. When a man is absolutely devoted to God and His kingdom, God in return gives him an unfettered access to His wisdom when he asked for it. And when a man fears God, he will build self-discipline. With these three pillars of devotion, wisdom and self-discipline in place, nothing again can stop you from becoming successful in your life. I pray for you today that the spirits of devotion, of wisdom and of self-discipline will fall upon you in Jesus name. Amen

References

Main Text

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