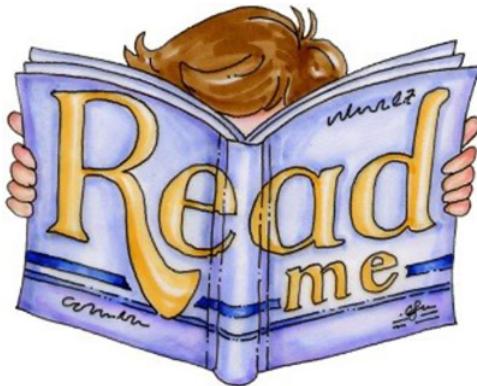


IF FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!



What is success? A good question...right? One might say, "Are you speaking of money...power?" or, "Are you speaking of a person's overall life including family, friends, job, education...tangible things or both tangible and intangible areas of living?" It all boils down to how a person defines success as to whether he or she would be considered successful.

Throughout this devotion I will quote some people who you will know and who you knew were successful in life...while other quotes will come from people who you probably have never thought to be highly successful, but just entertaining. You will find in these quotes some words of encouragement; while other quotes will be discouraging because we know how their life ended. All in all this devotion, hopefully, will enlighten, encourage, empower, and energize the reader to new heights leading to a successful and rewarding life.

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

- Winston Churchill.

Strength to endure hardships, the will to swim the mighty river of criticism, the drive to make butter out of sour milk are the ingredients to a good return for success.

I don't know of one person on my list of successful business people, successful pastors, successful marriages, or successful parents who have not failed and struggled many times at their endeavors in life. The difference between failure and success is how you handle both in light of the circumstances surrounding the actions. What do I mean? Go back to Mr. Churchill's quote; failure is not fatal. It's not the end for someone in

their failure if he is willing to have the courage to try again. Maybe it might not be in the same area of thought, with the same person, with the same ideologies and philosophies, but you will try again to grab a hold of success as you take the courage to make changes where and when necessary. You might have to think of a different method or way of doing the things you feel you are best at, or change directions and yield to new ideas in how to get to your destination.

"As for your failures - stop calling them failures. Refer to them as "experiences". That's all they really are - just experiences."

- Lindsey Rietzsch

Just recently, I placed a particular address in my phone to let my GPS lead me to the place where I am to be at a particular time. However, about halfway to the destination, a construction crew shut down the street in which I was to turn. Not only "Alexia" or ever who she is was confused, but so was I. She kept saying, "Make a U-turn and turn right; then turn right and continue to the original route." I knew the GPS (Ms. Alexia) did not know about the construction crew shutdown. I had to change my thought pattern and not listen to others who were leading me down the wrong direction. I quickly thought, "Go straight to the next street and the GPS will quickly pick up the signal and lead me on to the right path to success." Nada...never happened...Ms. GPS (Good Planning System) shook her head and gave up on me. After asking a service station employee (dirty hands, smile on face, and a person with fluent English) as to how to get to my destination, he not only told me exactly how to get there, but drew a quick map as to where to turn and what street to look for. I did not make it on time, but did arrive at my destination with Ms. Alexia still saying, "Make a U-turn and turn right to get back to my original starting point."

Changing directions, changing methods, changing philosophies, and bypassing the technical gadgets to be successful is sometimes mandatory, worthwhile and wise. Life's circumstances, major and minor, sometime requires the breaking down (humbling ourselves) and admitting faults, admitting failure, and admitting we need help. Most of the people who look to be failures in life are not ready to admit fault, not ready to humble themselves, and not ready to seek counsel for misguided and mistakes made by the person they see in the mirror every morning. If the truth were known, they blame others, parents, teachers, bosses, and God for their broken-down way of life.

"Success means doing the best we can with what we have. Success is the doing, not the getting; in the trying, not the triumph. Success is a personal standard, reaching for the highest that is in us, becoming all that we can be."

- Zig Ziglar.

I imagine most every father has purchased a swing-set for their child. If it is for Christmas, most dads wait until the kids go to bed on Christmas Eve before he starts to put the swing together. The dad does not want the kids to see the swing before they get up on Christmas morning. Bad mistake... waiting until the last minute. Most dads hurriedly, with pliers and a screwdriver in hand, gets in the garage and begins his task of putting the pieces together. About midnight, he sees he has made progress. He is sleepy; but, being a good daddy, he trudges on screwing #1 screws onto #1 bolts, standing up the final project only to realize he has the stand-up ends on the wrong end of the main cross bar...because to get the slide on, it would be up-side down when attached. He sees many bolts, nuts, screws left after finally getting the swing to look like a swing-set. It is 5:30 in the morning and he now is afraid that without those bolts and screws on the right brace, etc. his child might fall when he or she swings. He now realizes he should have read the directions first.

Been there and done that? About half of the male hands just went up. Don't feel bad, Dad, because your spouse has done the same thing with their new miniature oven, or playhouse they were trying to put together. Both of you look at each other at 6:00 a.m. on Christmas morning and say, "Oh, what the heck...we did the best we could" ... and then go wake up the kids.

Oh, by the way, the sweet wife and mother of your children (Princess) does not know that you had to take one end of the swing set off after it was finished. Why? Because you could not get it out of the garage when it was fully completed. Keep it a secret...I will never tell!

After Christmas is over and you are discussing with each other what you could have done different, both of you agree... "We will always read the directions first." That thought lasts for about a month and then you have to put an alternator on your car; you forget to remove your battery cables before starting the project...and you find yourself charged up the wrong way...burnt fingers and a bump on the head where your head hit the hood as you jumped back trying to get away from the sparks. Am I the

only one who has this wonderful experience to deal with in life? For some reason the last two paragraphs above always finds the person reading this epistle to suddenly become more interested in this worthy document. I will not explain why. Maybe the next quote will give us an idea of why we keep going.

"To succeed in life, you need two things: ignorance and confidence."

- Mark Twain

How to handle success is not really any different than handling failure. It is in the attitude of the person who desires to "keep on trucking" and not giving up and it is in the attitude of the successful person in realizing he has not accomplished all of the endeavors in life without help...without help from others and Almighty God. Since I am a Christian and believe there is a life, a beautiful and wonderful life, after our journey on planet earth, I firmly stand on faith and the grace of our Savior for my successful journey to the Promised Land found in the Word of God. The Word of God, the Bible, gives me directions to follow for success. I either choose good or bad, success or failure, as I walk through this life. I have found every answer to my failures in life as well as the successes in life in the Word of God.

I know, you are thinking, "Then why do bad things happen to good people? Why do we have to see good people die early in life?" The answer is in the Word, but most of the time we don't want to accept the consequences of our asking and the actions that come with the answers.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..."

- Hebrews 9:27

Sounds discouraging, disheartening, and a total downer...but, not if you know the answers from the Word of God. The answer to the death and dying question... *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"* John 11:25 (NIV).

That's it...That's it! All the bad stuff, all the discouraging words, and all the devastating acts that take place in life are covered and deemed annulled by Jesus' words. Just when life looks like a failure and we have lost the ball game of life, we see that in the end we will be successful if we only believe and hold fast to our goals and objectives. We can lose...and still win!

"At any given moment, you have the power to say that this is NOT how the story is going to END"

- M.H.S. Pourri

Jesus made it possible to win...no matter what. To be successful one must think ahead...I mean think about the future. In other words, we win in the end! Live today like it is your last one on earth getting ready to depart for greener pastures. Heaven is real...but one must get on board by believing in the power of the cross...and the personal relationship with the Resurrected One...Jesus, the Messiah.

