

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, October 27, 2013

Series: Living in Godly Success!

Message: Maintaining Our Godly Identity While Achieving Success

Scripture: Esther 4:10-14

- I. How do we manage our Godly identity with our successes? We must ask ourselves whether we allow our successes to define us or if success is a blessing that we use to give God glory through our lives. A principle for Living in Godly Success is that we must *“appreciate that our Godly identity and worth are independent of the accumulation of power, prestige, resources, and fame.”* When we let our successes define our worth, we will be easily swayed by the opinions of others and the circumstances of life.
 - a. *Mark 8:36 - What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*
 - b. *Matt 5:16 - In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*
- II. The book of Esther records the story of Hadassah, who was also called Esther, and her rise to be the Queen of Persia. At an early age, Esther’s cousin Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter. Although Mordecai was one of the Jews that were exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon, he still honored God in his life and customs. Unfortunately, this choice to live for God brought conflict with another royal official - Haman.
 - a. In Esther 3:5, we learned that when *“Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage.”* Haman was determined to not only destroy Mordecai, but also to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.
- III. **1- Living in Godly Success compels us to thrive in life without losing our Godly identity**
 - a. *Esther 4:13 “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape.*
 - b. The reality is that success - even Godly success, can be a double edged sword. Godly success can easily turn into selfish ambition when we are not grounded in God and in His word. Why? Because success can be intoxicating. *Living in Godly Success recognizes that our power, position, resources, or fame do not define our worth but our true worth is found in Christ Jesus.*
 - c. Mordecai challenged Esther to realize that just because she had achieved success by becoming the Queen of Persia, it didn’t mean that she wouldn’t be susceptible to downfall without God working on her behalf. We have to remember that success does not eliminate our need for God.
 - d. *Jeremiah 9:23 says, “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches.”²⁴ but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.*
 - e. We can compare what success did to Haman vs. Mordecai.
 - i. In Esther 5:10, Haman defined his worth based upon his success. *“Then Haman called together his friends and his wife, Zeresh.¹¹ He told them how wealthy he was and how many sons he had. He also told them all the ways the king had honored him and how the king had placed him higher than his important men and his royal officers.¹² He also said, “I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to come with the king to the banquet she gave. And tomorrow also the queen has asked me to be her guest with the king.*
 - ii. Success made Haman boast in himself; Godly success makes us boast in the God that we serve. In Esther 9:4, when Mordecai’s fame *“spread throughout all the provinces,”* he remained humble and leveraged his success to gain victory for God.

- f. The Lord provided the Children of Israel with the same warning that success can cause us to lose our Godly identity.

i. *DEUT 8:10* When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. 11Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” 18But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

- g. If you don’t know your identity now, you won’t be able to find your identity when you achieve success.

IV. 2- Living in Godly Success recognizes that someone else’s road to success is not necessarily our road to Godly success

a. *Esther 4:14* For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish.

b. Mordecai advised Esther that her royal status couldn’t protect her from the calamity of man’s rebellion towards God. Esther had to realize that her journey to achieving Godly success was based upon her calling not simply based on what others had done previously.

i. Esther become Queen because her predecessor decided to usurp the king’s authority. Esther could look at Queen Vashti’s demise and determine that she should stay quiet in order to be successful as a queen. Yet, God had a different plan for Esther in her role as Queen.

c. An additional principle for Living in Godly success is that we should “learn from our forerunners without feeling compelled to compare ourselves based upon their calling.” We shouldn’t try to reflect the person that God created someone else to be. Instead, we are to live worthy of our own calling.

i. *Proverbs 12:15* The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

ii. *Proverbs 19:20* Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. 21Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.

V. 3- Living in Godly Success recognizes that our standard for Godly success is measured according to our calling.

a. Mordecai challenged Esther to realize that her success was not simply measured by the standard of fame and prestige. Instead, Esther’s success was measured by her willingness to fulfill the Lord’s calling for her life. Mordecai said to Esther, “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

b. In God’s kingdom, every success has a kingdom purpose. The attainment of Esther’s royal position wasn’t for her to revel in but to glory through. God wanted to get the glory through her life!

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- 1) Name someone that you admire that has exhibited Godly integrity while achieving success. It can be a famous personality, parent, pastor, friend, mentor or other. What lessons have you learned from them?
- 2) As you reflect back on last weekend's sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp? Were you challenged in any area of your personal walk with God?
- 3) How was Queen Esther's identity challenged after she achieved success? In what ways has your own identity been challenged from the successes you have accomplished? Do you recognize any traits from Haman's boasting (Esther 5:10-12) in yourself?
- 4) Living in Godly Success recognizes that our power, position, resources, or fame do not define our worth but our true worth is found in Christ Jesus. Have you looked into the mirror to see the worth that God has placed inside of you? How do you acknowledge your worth while recognizing areas that still need growth?
- 5) **Read** Deuteronomy 8:10-18. How does praising God for our successes allow us to maintain our Godly identity? Pastor Joseph stated, "If you don't know your identity now, you won't be able to find your identity when you achieve success." Do you agree with this statement? Why or Why not?
- 6) While salvation has only one road to success, the individual aspects of our life's journey are not necessarily the same from person to person. Pastor Joseph stated that a principle for Living in Godly Success is that we must "learn from our forerunners without feeling compelled to compare ourselves based upon their calling." What are the dangers of the comparison trap, even with Godly heroes? How do we balance the admonition to listen to advice (Proverbs 12:15 and Proverbs 19:20) with the obligation to allow the Holy Spirit to lead our paths?
- 7) "In God's kingdom, every success has a kingdom purpose." What does God expect from our successes? What are ways that you can leverage your successes to glorify God?