

## MINISTUDY SUCCESS Is More Than Money

Prepared by Richard H Sedliacik

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

Instructions: The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Look up and read in your Bible the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions elaborate on the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

What is success? Is making a lot of money, and experiencing the pleasures of life, real success? Is achieving fame and fortune and status in the eyes of others h Lie success?

Let's learn what real success is from One whose life was the most outstanding success story of all time.

1. What goal did Jesus Christ say should be uppermost in the minds of true Christians? Matt. 6:33. Did He indeed become a true success? Phil. 2:5-11, Matt. 28:18.

While on earth as a human being, Jesus did not seek after material possessions. He put first things first in order to become a true success. He sought the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!

Even though Christ's life ended in crucifixion, God raised Him from the dead and has put all authority and power into His hands. He was truly the most successful man who has ever lived!

But most people in this money-conscious, money-hungry world are convinced that money, and all the material things it can buy, are real success.

Christ's teachings were centered on becoming a spiritual success in life. But He also had something to say about the physical side of life. In His "sermon on the mount," He expounded the basic,

trunk-of-the-tree principle concerning material wealth. Let's carefully notice what He said.

2. Did Jesus show the foolishness of storing up exceedingly great wealth? Luke 12:15-21, Matt. 6:19. Also notice Proverbs 5:10-11 in this regard.

How clearly Jesus' words apply to the dogeat-dog competition, hoarding and universal thievery of our modern world.

3. What kind of "treasure" did Jesus say we should be striving to store up, and where? Matt. 6:20.

The treasure Christ is referring to here is godly spiritual character and spiritual rewards in God's Kingdom; gaining this treasure is based on our works in this life.

4. What else did Jesus say? Verses 21, 24. ("Mammon" in verse 24 refers to money.)

Jesus knew that devoting one's life to anything physical is worship, and hence idolatry. Setting our hearts on earthly treasures breaks the First Commandment.

5. Do we have to be overly concerned about providing for our physical needs? Read verses 25-32, noticing especially verses 25 and 31.

Jesus answers in verse 25: "Take no anxious thought," as the proper translation from the original Greek should read. That is, "Don't worry - don't be overly concerned about -- your physical life. Food, clothing and shelter certainly are necessary, but they are not the most important things in life.

6. What is the summation of the matter? Read verse 33 again.

Yes, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

If your thoughts, your prayers and your energies are oriented primarily toward God's Kingdom and His Work, which is preparing the way for that Kingdom, Jesus shows you need not experience material worries.

If we will truly seek God's Kingdom and obedience to Him first - not just kidding ourselves that we are, while putting them second or third or fourth in our time, interest, study and application- then He guarantees our sustenance and needs will be met.

7. Does God grant spiritual wisdom to those who obey Him? Ps. 119:97-100, 104. Does this wisdom lead to both spiritual and physical blessings? Prov. 3:16-18. What are we warned not to do when those blessings come? Ps. 62:10, last part.

Don't ever let abundance turn your heart from God. Always keep your heart set on the Work of God's Church and on His coming Kingdom and your part in it.

8. What can happen to the person who begins to trust in his wealth? Prov. 11:28. What did Jesus say the "deceitfulness of riches" can do to those who have heard and believed God's truth? Matt. 13:22, Luke 8:14.

Wealth tends to deceive people into relying on it, and can counteract their faith and zeal toward God.

Affluence can become a stumbling block and actually undermine spiritual values and commitment if we allow our minds to wander from Jesus' instruction in Matthew 6:33.

9. Should we labor merely to accumulate great wealth? Prov. 23:4. Why not? Verse 5.

10. What did Paul tell Timothy would happen to those who desire to be rich? I Tim. 6:9.

Paul did not mean that it is wrong to prosper. God wants everyone to follow the way that will result in full, abundant lives - both spiritually and physically (John 10:10, III John 2). But notice:

11. Does evil of all kinds grow out of the love of money? I Tim. 6:10.

Money, of itself, is not evil. A proper respect for money, for the great good it can do, is right and proper.

But inordinate love (lust or craving) for money leads to lying, cheating, stealing, prostitution, organized crime, murder, suicide, war - and to personal frustration, discontent and family quarrels. A poor person may be drawn into sin by lust for money just as easily as a rich person.

12. What is God's admonition to the rich? Verses 17-19.

God tells the rich to use their wealth for good. God's way to eternal life and permanent prosperity is absolutely certain, but nothing is as uncertain as this world's riches.

13. What lesson had the apostle Paul learned in life? Phil. 4:11-12.

Paul could be content whether abased (poor and without funds) or abounding (having abundance). He continually gave God thanks in every circumstance and kept his eye on the Kingdom of God.

14. Are we therefore to be content with the basic necessities of life, if that be the extent of God's material blessings for us today? I Tim. 6:5-8. Should we be satisfied with what we have? Heb. 13:5. Why? Verse 6.

15. Is a "little" with obedience to God better than great wealth with troubles and injustice? Prov. 15:16, 16:8.

16. What does Solomon say to those who think they wouldn't experience any problems if they became wealthy? Eccl. 5:12. Also read verses 13-16, especially in a modern translation if you happen to own one.

King Solomon, the wisest and perhaps the richest man who ever lived, proved that seeking to acquire material things merely to satisfy the ceaseless cravings of the flesh is useless vanity - utter emptiness! He had everything, did everything. In the end, Solomon realized he had nothing but a handful of wind.

17. Has God promised to supply every need of the righteous? Phil. 4:19.

Our major necessities are just three: food, clothing and shelter. Expensive furniture, appliances, televisions and stereos, a second or third car for the family, double ovens and many other modern "conveniences" are luxuries one may or may not be able to afford. Luxuries should be purchased only as one is financially able to afford them.

18. Nevertheless, does God often grant the obedient, who put His ways first, some of the "extras" in life they would like to have? Ps. 37:34. But, unfortunately, what is the purpose of all too many in asking God for blessings? Jas. 4:3.

19. Are the blessings that come from God free of sorrows? Prov. 10:22.

Those who seek first the Kingdom of God and are prospered by Him can be spared both the despair and deprivation of poverty and the manifold troubles of the worldly rich.

Learn to put first things first. Make the spiritual goal of the Kingdom of God your No. 1 goal in life. And do your part in helping to proclaim the good news of that coming Kingdom to the world.

We, if we are the Spirit-begotten children of God and we develop His holy, righteous character, are destined to become like God - His very own Children by the resurrection - Members of His divine Family!

That is the incredible, awesome, supreme purpose of human life. That is the definition of true success.