

INTRODUCTION.

- A. God told Joshua,
Only be strong and courageous; be care to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go (Josh. 1:7; NAS).
- B. Ministerial stress and burnout is escalating. Many young preachers, fresh out of school, do not last past their first job. What can be done to reverse this phenomenon? Why are experienced and “seasoned” men quitting after many years in the pulpit?
- C. My task is to help godly men to able to persevere in their ministries. How can a man be a success in the ministry and preach for a small church?

I. SOME THINGS THAT ARE NOT SUCCESS.

- A. Large congregations (**quantity**).
 - 1. This is one of the most haunting problems. The influence of the business—type approach to church work will destroy many good men.
 - 2. “Nickels and noses” is a very poor barometer of the spiritual health of a congregation. Just ask Gideon! God desires quality, not quantity.
 - 3. We have no idea how large the NT congregations were. Yet, what good would it be to be large, yet like the brethren in Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, or Laodicea? I prefer to be small and share the joys of Smyrna, and Philadelphia.
- B. Multiple church ministries (**activity**).
 - 1. The influence of the mega-church is weighing heavy on preachers. As they look at the fabulous facilities, large crowds, large staff and all those different ministries they feel unworthy, lazy, and unproductive.
 - 2. Those building the tower of Babel had great activity and “nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them” (Gen. 11:6). But God was not pleased with their efforts and stopped the construction by confusing their language.
 - 3. Ministry must be done according to God’s will. May we remember once again that even a cup of water, given in the Savior’s name, will not go unrewarded (Mt. 10:42).
- C. Financial wealth (**money**).
 - 1. The Bible is full of warnings about the deceitfulness of riches. Just because a person seems to have an abundance of the world’s goods, does not make them spiritually successful.
 - 2. Paul puts things in the proper perspective in 1Tim. 6: 17-19. This is life indeed!
 - 3. With what are we building? If it is with wood, hay, and straw it will be burned up on the final day. Successful preachers build on the foundation of Christ with gold, silver, and precious stones (1Cor. 3:11-13).
- D. The accolades of men (**praise**).
 - 1. The ego rides high on those who have it elevated with pride, accomplishment, and the praise of others. Yet, one cannot have it both ways. To be pleasing to men may mean that one is not pleasing to God (Mt. 6:24).
 - 2. Those who minister to be seen of men (and receive praise from them) have their reward in full (Mt. 6:5; 2Cor. 10:12). Paul knew that in the world’s eyes he was the “dregs of society” (1Cor. 4:1 1-13), and yet he pressed on (Phil. 3: 12)!
- E. It’s time to redefine success in ministry!

II. SUCCESS IN MINISTRY.

- A. First, success is **faithfulness**.
1. God has NOT called us to be successful; He has called us to be faithful (1Cor. 4:1-2). Just because you are a preacher or elder--it is not your church! It belongs to Christ, and He adds people to His body (Ac. 2:47). God, not the preacher, causes the church to grow (1Cor. 3:5-8).
 2. Look again at 1Cor. 3:7-8. Notice that Paul says that the ones planting and watering are nothing! Quit trying to be somebody successful, just be faithful and you will receive your reward.
- B. Second, success is **servng**.
1. God has NOT called us to be successful; He has called us to be servants (Mt. 20:26-27).
 2. We are not to let our own light (life) shine in such a way as to bring glory to ourselves (Mt. 5:16).
 3. View things in an eternal perspective. This world is not our home. We must constantly view our actions as to how they will "play out" in eternity (Mt. 5:39-45a).
- C. Third, success is **loving**.
1. God has NOT called us to be successful; He has called us to be lovers (Mt. 22:37-40).
 2. Doctrinal purity, talents, gifts, and abilities are all worthless without love (1Cor. 13:1-3, 8-11).
 3. Sadly, it is possible to:
 - a. Preach for a large church and not love God.
 - b. Have perfectly conceived and executed worship services and not love God.
 - c. Preach insightful, Biblical, Christ-exalting sermons and not love God.
 - d. Write books that deepen others' love for God and not love God.
- D. Fourth, success is **believing**.
1. God has NOT called us to be successful; He has called us to be believers.
 2. Psalm 1 speaks of the successful, prosperous man of God. He is one who believes in and obeys the word of God.
 3. Have we allowed those who have abused Mk. 9:23 to keep us from using it?
- E. Fifth, success is **prayer**.
1. God has not called us to be successful; He has called us to pray (1Th. 5:17).
 2. There is great perseverance in prayer (Eph. 6:18).
 3. We must be men of prayer because:
 - a. Of what prayer will do to us (surrender, cooperation, and dependence on God).
 - b. Of what prayer does in the church. The brethren prayed and Peter was released!
- F. Sixth, success is **holiness**.
1. God has not called us to be successful; He has called us to be holy (Lev. 19:2).
 2. The number one thing a preacher can do, is be an example of holiness, and godliness to those in the congregation. Be sure that your life, matches your words. A person can reject someone's teaching, but they cannot reject a holy life.
 3. Successful preachers know what it is to be in the world and not a part of it (1Cor. 5:10; 2Cor. 6:14-7:1).
- G. Seventh, success is **attitude**.
1. God has not called us to be successful; He has called us to joyful (Jn. 15:11).
 2. Our joy comes in knowing that God is good, faithful, and rewarding (Phil. 4:4).
 3. Assurance and optimism comes from knowing that God's grace is sufficient (2Cor. 12:9-10).
- H. Eighth, **success is sweet!**
1. God will finish what He has started (Phil. 1:6).
 2. The sweetness of trials and tribulations is that once we have endured them with obedience and faithfulness to God, the joy is in the victory after the fact (Jas. 1:2-3).
 3. Success is found in hearing but one thing; "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:23).

II. PERSEVERING IN MINISTRY.

A. What you can do for yourself:

1. **Make time to study for yourself.**

Too many times, preachers get caught up in studying for lessons and classes and do not spend time studying for themselves. Choose a book in the Bible or a biblical topic and spend some time enriching your own spiritual life. Another possibility is to go back to school at your local college or university. Even studying secular subjects will give you a mental (and geographical) break from church work.

2. **Place more emphasis on prayer.**

Again, pray not so much for others, but include yourself and the struggles that you are going through. Make time to pray for your needs as well as those of others.

3. **Identify the things you do well, and the things you don't.**

Stress comes from trying to control things over which you have no control. List the things in ministry that you enjoy doing and do well. Concentrate on these things. To over emphasize the other things will cause frustration and depression.

4. **Be proactive.**

Instead of allowing problems and struggles to come your way, establish personal and congregational goals. By continually focusing on the future there will be little time to dwell on things that are disruptive. If the congregation is busy on a task, they will have less time to gripe and complain.

5. **Schedule time off.**

Depression is fueled by physical exhaustion. Preaching is no different than any other profession, the physical body will grow tired in time. When this happens, the mental capacities are usually less efficient. By taking sufficient time off the mental and physical can "re-create." Every preacher should be exercising regularly.

6. **Don't take yourself too seriously.**

Gordon Smith said too many of us suffer from "seriosa nervosa." Kent Hughes makes the following statement, "While we cannot take our work seriously enough, we must never take ourselves too seriously." As the preacher you are not the messiah or savior of the congregation. Remember it is not your church, but Christ's church.

B. What the congregation can do for you:

1. **Brethren should be taught how absorbing the ministry really is.**

The old joke of preachers working but one day week needs to be forever buried. Elders can help out here by teaching a class on what the preacher does in a "typical week."

2. **Brethren should strive to live the Christian life.**

Preachers don't want to hear "nice sermon" or "I really enjoyed that" alter the worship services are over. Rather, the best way that a congregation can help and encourage their preacher is to put into practice the things he is teaching from the scriptures.

3. **Brethren should help the preacher know that the congregation is growing spiritually.**

Because preachers tend to measure success with "nickels and noses" they need the positive feedback that the church is doing better spiritually. He needs to be told of greater love, unity, forgiveness, and mercy among brethren. Make the preacher feel like a success even though the numbers may not show it.

4. **Brethren should not expect the preacher to be involved in everything.**

It unfair to have the preacher at every elders' meeting, deacons' meeting, educational committee meeting, etc. He is to equip the saints for the work of service (Eph. 4:1-13) but that doesn't mean he has to do it all too! A great relief for a preacher is when a member calls about a problem or ministry and says, "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of it."

5. **Brethren should provide and love the preacher and his family.**

The “glass ceiling” should never apply to women in the workplace or preachers in their ministry. The “glass house” should never be the preacher’s parsonage. When a preacher knows that he and his family are loved and appreciated it takes the pressure off. The consuming need to “produce” will vanish if the preacher knows that he is unconditionally loved by the brethren.

6. **Brethren should respect their preacher for what he does well.**

Some preachers are very good personal workers and just fair in the pulpit. Others seem to be great orators and poor in visiting and “people pleasing.” Brethren need to fairly assess the good and poor qualities the preacher and respect him for the good things he brings to the congregation. This is fair because everyone has two such lists in their life. Brethren should never expect a preacher to do something they would not do themselves.

C. Some things you might want to add:

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.