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# SUCCESS KILLS



*Sidestep The Snares That  
Will Steal Your Dreams*

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WAYDE GOODALL

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First printing: March 2009

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New Leaf Press, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638

ISBN-13: 978-0-89221-692-5

ISBN-10: 0-89221-692-1

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 2009923748

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the New International Version of the Bible.

**Printed in the United States of America**

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For information regarding author interviews,  
please contact the publicity department at (870) 438-5288.



**New Leaf Press**

A Division of New Leaf Publishing Group

[www.newleafpress.net](http://www.newleafpress.net)

*Dedicated to my wife Rosalyn, our son Jeremy, and our daughter Kristin,  
who are wonderful friends and gifts to my life.*

*A tremendous amount of credit and acknowledgement needs to go  
to Rosalyn, who edits everything I write. She is one of the  
most gifted people I know and I simply could not do what I do  
without her. She is an amazing wife and mother.*



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# PREFACE

## *Sidestep the Snares that Will Steal Your Dreams*

**H**ow do you define success? Should you fear it? Why do so many people fail when they attain positions of influence, power, authority, and prestige . . . or when they accumulate wealth or are given a title? How can you protect yourself from making wrong decisions and losing much of what you have worked so hard for? When you achieve what you feel is success, how do you maintain your equilibrium and your sense of balance, to ensure that your career and life are enjoying a healthy balance?

Corporate and religious scandals of recent years have caused unprecedented havoc and heartache in the world's economy and in the church world. Executive and spiritual arrogance cause a toxic atmosphere in too many organizations. There are safeguards and principles we can focus on to ensure balance with excellence in what we do.

Almost every leader, company, and church struggles with these questions . . . or at least they should.

There are many definitions of success. What is your definition? Peter Drucker said, "Until you figure out what success means to you personally and to your organization, leadership is an almost pointless conversation."<sup>1</sup>

When you attain what you feel is success, how can you live in such a way that you continue to grow in character, integrity, and contentment along with that success?

In their extensive research, Jerry Porras, Stewart Emery, and Mark Thompson (coauthors of *Success Built to Last*) found that as soon as you place someone on a pedestal as a role model, there seems to be a perverse

law of the universe that increases the chances that person or that organization will stumble foolishly.<sup>2</sup>

We have been created to be successful in our journey through life. But it is likely that God defines success differently than we do. All of us have been given unique gifts, talents, and abilities. We all have experiences of pain or joy that are to be used for the good of others. All of us have made mistakes, been taken advantage of, and been the target of misinformed criticism.

These experiences can be our greatest gifts. God can help us look deeper, examine what is going on, and decide that we will use our hardships as opportunities to become better.

Wealth, power, prestige, education, or influence have little to do with God's definition of success. He is interested in our faithfulness, our obedience, our character, and sometimes our blind trust in Him.

*Commit your actions to the LORD, and your plans  
will succeed (Prov. 16:3; NLT).*

The pressure to obtain success (in the traditional way) is often driven by other people, who need us to make a living or reach a career goal. When success means more money, more things, becoming famous, or obtaining power, it will not give the satisfaction that all of us desire.

You are unique and have a passion to make a difference for good for yourself and for the world. Until you give yourself the gift of doing what you are passionate about, you will not have the success you desire deep inside.

#### Endnotes

1. Jerry Porras, Stewart Emery, and Mark Thompson, *Success Built to Last* (New York: Plume Books, 2007), p. 11.
2. *Ibid.*

what is  
SUCCESS?



CHAPTER 1

*Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you  
want to test a man's character, give him power.<sup>1</sup>*  
— Abraham Lincoln

**H**ow can someone who seems to have it all, who has achieved a level of success or fame, risk it all? How can a company or ministry that has the books to prove that it is unusually successful make a decision that will literally “bring the house down”?

A high-profile pastor, writer, advisor to government leaders, and leader of the National Association of Evangelicals, Ted Haggard, admitted having some level of relationship with a male homosexual masseur. His position, power, and popularity might have been the toxic combination that gave him “permission” to drive just an hour from his home to visit this man . . . hoping to hide his behavior from the public, his church, and his family. This “fog” in his thinking permitted his arrogance, lack of judgment, and sense of entitlement.

Mark Foley, the U.S. congressman from Florida, resigned after it was revealed that he sent sexually suggestive instant messages to teenage congressional pages. Other government leaders have told me that many people change when they reach these high-profile offices.

Professor of psychology Tomi-Ann Roberts says, “The more power we have, the more we can convince ourselves we are invulnerable and we can get away with the things that all of us have just beneath the surface the desire to do.”<sup>2</sup>

Companies, such as Christian publisher Multnomah Press, can make very ambitious expansion plans that are high-risk because of the appearance of a trend of success for the long-term future.

Multnomah's huge hit *The Prayer of Jabez* sold over eight million copies in 2001 (more than any other book that year). Thinking that this was going to fund the future of their organization, Multnomah made decisions that were "off the chart" of realistic growth. Money was spent, stock was produced, staff was hired; but the book took heavy returns (millions of copies) from bookstores. As a result, the company was forced to reduce staff and eventually sell the organization. They are no longer in business.

The lesson? Momentary success, victory, or achievement does not guarantee a stable future.

*So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*  
(1 Cor. 10:12).

History is full of stories of those who were successful, but lost most, if not all, of what they had. Talent, ability, and power can go to your head.

Subtle changes often take place in us when we achieve fame or are elevated to places of influence and power. Authority and the power to influence are necessary if we are going to be a leader, but they can also be the deadly arrow that will bring us down. It is often said, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Many desire wealth, and wealth is helpful as we build a country, company, or church but wealth without discipline can bring tremendous arrogance and pain.

Many work, study, and prepare to be the most talented in their field, but what they are so gifted in can also push their egos over the edge, resulting in ego-driven leadership rather than servant leadership.

Many seek knowledge and wisdom; however, those with tremendous intelligence and natural wisdom can make very wrong decisions, because they "think" they can trust their every choice. Could this be why "Not many wise men . . . are called" (1 Cor. 1:26; KJV)?

All of us desire experiences and gifts that help us improve and achieve our goals. But the truth remains, "Circumstances do not make the man; they reveal him to himself."<sup>3</sup>

Success has to do with being *faithful*, with being *obedient* to God, and with *doing the right thing*.

*Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you. . . . So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man* (Prov. 3:3–4; ESV).

Success might be the greatest challenge that you could experience. While there is nothing wrong with being successful, there needs to be a constant awareness that the gift of success can be the very thing that will cause harm to our lives. The blessing of perception can easily become the curse of deception.

### ***The Most Talented Man in His Day***

During his day, Solomon was wealthier and wiser than any other king on earth. As a young leader, he desperately desired discernment to govern the people of Israel. He understood the importance of making right decisions and asked God to give him a unique ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

God answered his prayers and gave him a wise and discerning heart. The Bible tells us that “there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be” (1 Kings 3:12). God also gave him great wealth, honor, and respect. There was no equal among the kings on the earth.

*God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. . . . Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom (1 Kings 4:29–34).*

It took Solomon 20 years to build the temple (his palace), to dedicate the temple, and to bring the “ark” into it. He was obedient and precise, and demonstrated leadership at a level that was amazing to those who observed his life. What talent and sense of timing and correctness this young leader demonstrated.

But . . . something happened to him during his time of incredible success. His mind began to change. All of us can experience boredom. We can begin to wonder what it would be like to explore other options. He permitted himself to think about things that he knew were not pleasing to God.

Subtly, slowly, he became someone who craved earthly pleasures more than the things that pleased the Lord. Solomon became a very different man from when he began his days as Israel's leader. His heart changed, his decisions became foggy and complicated, and his life was full of compromise.

God spoke to Solomon again. “Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you” (1 Kings 11:11).

The Creator who gave him more success than any other human took it away.

What had Solomon done to deserve that?

*King Solomon . . . loved many foreign women. . . . As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods* (1 Kings 11:1–4).

He became disobedient, stubborn, and arrogant, and his heart changed. The wisest, most respected, and greatest man of his time began making many wrong choices. He lost much of what he had gained — including God’s respect.

Why? Wrong thinking. Complacency and pride about what he knew and what he owned. His success became his enemy.

We must remember this: God will not permit His Kingdom, either in the heart or in the world, to be led by the world’s (carnal) principles.

Solomon once wrote, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. . . . A prudent man gives thoughts to his steps. . . . Evil men will bow down in the presence of the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous” (Prov. 14:12–19).

If only Solomon had listened to his own words, thought about what he was doing, and simply trusted God, he could have avoided all kinds of heartache and pain in his life. After many years of incredible favor and fame, he did exactly what God told him not to do. He knew the rules, understood why he was blessed, but decided that he would do it his own way.

He reached his goal and acquired all that he went after, but it cost him dearly. He went through years of discouragement, disillusionment, and confusion. He could have enjoyed even more success if he had kept his focus on obedience to God.

Solomon’s downfall during the height of his success should be a warning to those who choose to misrepresent facts, to deceive others, and to take matters into their own hands. Spiritual success and God’s blessings only come by righteous means, not by manipulation or disregard for God’s principles.

The story of Solomon is not unusual. The headlines frequently remind us of leaders who fall. Respected people, who we once looked up to, make decisions that shock us.

Why? Power, influence, money, physical attractiveness, wisdom, and winning can quickly become an ego trip. We begin believing our own press releases and trusting people’s flattery, and we feel like “little gods.”

O.J Simpson’s book *If I Did It* reveals the hypothetical scenario of if and how he *could have* murdered his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend Ronald Goldman. The decision to write such a book is not only an

insult to our common sense, but reminds us of the human potential to do wrong and to be motivated by personal greed.

Michael Vick, the star quarterback for the Atlanta Falcons, shocked the owner of the team, as well as peers and sports fans around the world, when it was revealed that he had been involved in dogfighting and possibly racketeering. Why did he do it? What was he thinking? How long had he been involved in that underground activity? Certainly he didn't need the money. The adrenaline in his blood when he led his team to victory was the same adrenaline that rushed through his veins when he saw one dog maul and kill another.

The Bible and history give us all the evidence we need to be aware that all of us can make some very wrong decisions. Isaiah said, "Each of us has turned to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).

What can we do?

When we are successful, we must not rely on success — but trust in the God who has given us our gifts.

Remain humble, honest, and hungry.

Know that for some reason we have been given a sacred trust. Don't depend on titles, influence, money, or position.

Trust the Creator daily and know that whether we have much or little, His love for us will never change. He is not impressed with our wealth, education, or power. He is impressed by our sincere trust of Him.

Human reason is one of the most admired idols of the intellectual world. Heresies such as situation ethics, reasoning about when life begins (or is to end), or even the existence of a personal God are begun in the thoughts of people we often admire as the brilliant thinkers of the day. With pride at the very core of our nature, man would like nothing more than to be his own god. Find a teaching that encourages the wonderful abilities of a person in his own eyes, and he will be a glutton at its table.

*Success comes from within, not without.*<sup>4</sup>

— Bill Purdin

When God grants success, He intends for it to be used for His advantage. Our success can be the tool that will help people individually or collectively. It can also be used for wrong motives or behavior, and for selfishness.

God created us to be successful; but what is His definition of success? Is it power? Is it all about what you own or how much money you have? Is it about education, politics, or being the CEO of a Fortune 500 company?

These are common definitions of value and worth. But it is deeper than that. While God desires all of us to be successful, we need to understand not only His definition of success, but also where it comes from — and *we must hold it gently.*

### ***Success Equals God's Favor***

Looks can be dangerous.

Others can observe our lives or look at what we own, where we live, where we work, or what we drive and think that we are not successful. The appearance of success (or failure) can be a tricky deception.

The experience of Joseph, recorded in Genesis 39, could be interpreted as a nightmare.

He was reduced to the stature of a slave by his jealous brothers. They thought he was trying to manipulate them into thinking he was superior because he told them about a wonderful dream God had given him. They began to resent him, and that resentment grew to a point where they wanted him to die. Since one of the brothers desired to help Joseph and not to kill him, they decided to sell him to a caravan of people going to Egypt. When he arrived, he was put on the auction block and sold into a life of slavery.

The person who bought Joseph had a wife who wanted to have an affair with him and falsely accused him of attempted rape. It was assumed that Joseph was guilty and he was put into prison.

If we could have been there to watch that scenario unfold, we would likely have thought that God's hand was against Joseph — he had a right to feel victimized. His life appeared to be in utter chaos.

But the opposite was true. God knew exactly where Joseph was and what he was going through. Four times in Genesis 39 the Bible tells us that “the LORD was with Joseph” (2, 3, 21, 23). Because Joseph honored God in all that he went through, God honored him.

Joseph was eventually considered a successful young leader. But because of circumstances, overnight he appeared to be a failure. Then, after many years of trial and hardship, he became successful again. Because he refused to become bitter in life and refused to blame his brothers for his difficulties, God blessed him. Joseph literally saved tens of thousands of lives and was recognized as a gifted and wise leader. He had received the respect of the most influential people in the land.

Back and forth . . . success, failure, and then success again.

During his roller coaster life, Joseph maintained one characteristic: he trusted God no matter what. Whether he was a leader, a prisoner, or a person of tremendous power, he remained faithful and relied on the knowledge that God was with him.

Joseph didn't rely on a position, a title, financial affluence, or people's opinions to assure him that he was successful. He just knew that no matter what, God was with him. The position didn't make the man; regardless of the circumstances, the man didn't change.

Adversity can be a greater blessing than affluence. Pressure, challenges, and difficulties can be the hands that mold us to be better people and better leaders. Hardship can be a greater gift than a life without pain or rejection. The very thing that most people desire and strive for — success — can be the greatest challenge they will ever face.

If you have what you feel is success in your life, understand that your blessings, gifts, and talents come from God. He has given you talents and favor for a purpose. Use them wisely.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil (Prov. 3:5-7).*

Many people define success in different ways than God does. What we own, how much money we make, or how much we have invested could mislead us into thinking that we are on top of our game in life. For this reason, the Bible instructs us:

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).*

There are masses of unhappy people who have incredible wealth. Money, possessions, titles, and financial security do not define success. There is nothing wrong with any of these, but when we have them we need to remind ourselves that they could be temporary, and certainly will not be something we can take with us when we leave this life.

God's favor, His blessings, and the success He brings are all because He is pleased with how we have chosen to live our lives and to make our decisions.

*If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm (Ps. 37:23).*

**Endnotes**

1. <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote414.html>.
2. Brad Radford, "Fall Guys," *The Gazette*, Life section, November 14, 2006.
3. James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2005), p. 20.
4. <http://www.legendinc.com/Pages/ArchivesCentral/QuoteArchives/Success.html>.