

**From the Book**  
*Lasting Success*  
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Chapter Twelve

**Success**  
(Personal Success Sequence)

In all thy ways acknowledge him,  
and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:6

Trusting God, emotional balance, and success go hand-in-hand. Working according to God's plan, believers can indeed become extraordinary overcomers!

When speaking of lasting success we are referring primarily to the eternal inheritance of heaven that God provides to believers. There are merging factors, however, that cause God to bless the activities of the faithful during their earthly pilgrimage, and we have the duty to do our best while we are here. The blessing of forgiven sin and direction from the Holy Spirit cost us nothing. For God, though, the price was very costly. The mandate for doing our best goes back to the beginnings when God said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion . . ." (Genesis 1:28).

If through the years we have been storing in our minds the world's way of thinking, then our souls are surely darkened. God can only give light and remove the chaff when Christians search His Word. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," so that we can "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-20).

### **God's Plan for Success:**

**1. Recognize that God's Word is true and practical in all matters.** The principles for success are taught in Proverbs 2:1-11. Our desire should be to have the ability to see each situation, to know the ramifications of the options available, and to make the choices that will give the best outcome. When God and His Word are our number one priority, we will "be filled with the knowledge of his will" (Colossians 1:9b).

Successful people are not double-minded. When we have the mind of God through Christ, our mind then serves as a marvelous discerner. The consequences of the alternatives become apparent and good decisions can be made.

**2. Have a challenging goal in mind.** My friend's goal to be a dentist, mentioned in chapter eight, was an important first step in the chain of success. A goal, however, is only legitimate if it meets a vital stipulation: *will it bring honor to God?*

One time a man asked me if I was the guy who had retired by age 50. I answered, "Yes, but that was not my goal!" Why was it not my goal? Because it was not a proper priority. If it happened, it happened; but if that achievement had been paramount in my life, I would have failed to achieve three far more important goals. I would have failed to be in fellowship with God, I would have ruined my marriage, and I would have failed my children. The battle of overcoming the problems associated with high goals is God's, not ours. "But rather

seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luke 12:31).

Do not be afraid to break free from the past. It is important that we uncover and reject the imprisonment caused by feelings of inferiority. Ethel Waters had it right – “My daddy told me that God don’t make no mistakes.” It is important that our goals be realistic. With God’s help, we can look to the accomplishments of others to find and adopt goals that blend with our own talents.

Success involves both leadership and followers or what could be described as responsible leadership support. Leadership means being in control where you are responsible, and maintaining the initiative according to God’s Word. Leaders find true happiness in serving others and are accessible. Leadership involves getting people to do the right thing because they want to. Success never arises from tolerance for half-truth or half-effort. Successful leadership also requires accountability and a willingness to learn from one’s own mistakes. This is where leadership support becomes especially beneficial. It is important to have others around who will caringly expose a leader’s mistakes to him in private.

Humility and a fixed focus are two characteristics of servant leaders who excel. If you are walking with God and have learned to be a supportive and loving spouse, you are already a success. If you are succeeding as parents in building character and discipline into the lives of your children, you are already a big success!

### **3. Consciously place a high value on your time and goals.**

We avoid wasting time by avoiding bad decisions. God helps us see to it that His first choice for our lives is also our first choice: “This book of the law [rules for success] shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way

prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

Success in managing one's emotions brings personal joy and God's power needed to succeed—two characteristics that become readily apparent to others. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them [for God's glory]; that thy profiting may appear to all" (I Timothy 4:15).

*"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee" (Proverbs 2:10-11). Discretion is the capacity to choose from many options the one that will give the best result. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly [but instead with the righteous], nor standeth in the way of [with] sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3). These ideas for our success are dependable because they are God's!*

**4. Understand Step-by-Step What Is Needed to Achieve the Goal.** Reaching extraordinary goals involves study, thinking, planning, and action. Every profession, mission, and trade requires an awareness of and concentration on the steps, such as those listed in this chapter, which are helpful in order to succeed. Take no shortcuts. Build on a solid foundation. (See common traits of good leadership, page 4.)

Success follows clearly within the boundaries of Bible doctrine. Obedience to God's Word gives understanding: "He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment [consequences of options available], and equity; yea, every good path" (Proverbs 2:8-9). David, who had pridefully numbered Israel and

had a sordid affair, got right with God! After a soul-wrenching repentance, he started all over again and became a man after God's own heart." "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts" (Psalms 119:97-98, 100).

We want God's will. It is very important to maintain a to-do list (prayer list) of needs requiring a solution and to re-prioritize this list daily. Fellowship with God is the link that empowers the divine God-to-man co-operative. Biographies of achievers always include a continuous series of obstacles that had to be overcome in order to reach goals. We want God's opinion on how to overcome barriers; that way, we will not have to keep trying to solve the same problems over and over again.

Storing truth in our minds is the fundamental key to success. Whatever your goals may be, continually think about them in a positive way. Study God's Word and ask Him for wisdom. The principal point is expressed in Proverbs 2:1a: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words." Receiving God's Word means having the truth engrafted into one's subconscious values library (attitude). This "receiving" – storing a new conviction – was what I was unconsciously doing when advising my friend about becoming a dentist. Storing (believing) in my own mind the words I was using to convince him changed my own attitude, goals, and life (See pages 59 and 62).

**5. Reckon the goal to be accomplished.** Proceed with unwavering conviction, step-by-step, doing what needs to be done. Our time is very valuable, of course, and some obstacles will arise that are not worth our time. Faith in God's provision generates ongoing determination. "He

[God] layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly" (Proverbs 2:7).

The cost of mediocrity is much higher than the price in commitment and work associated with success. Once, when addressing students at an elite school in England, Winston Churchill gave the following exhortation: "Never give up; never, never give up; never, never, never give up." He then concluded by saying, "Never give up," and left the room. This principle is important to remember because considerable time usually passes before success becomes apparent. The testimony of extraordinary achievement always presents a continual succession of difficulties. God usually does one of three things. He may guide you around the difficulty, remove the difficulty, or give you a new and better goal.

One of the obstacles I encountered when starting my business was opposition from a club of three real estate company owners who conspired to keep new competitors out of the real estate marketing business. I had started an insurance agency, and it had quickly become apparent that realtors were taking homeowner insurance clients away from me. It then seemed wise for me to become a realtor too.

By God's providence, I went to a good man who patiently taught me real estate law. This man was not a part of that club. I then took the state exam and put up a real estate company sign. All of a sudden a battle I had not expected was on!

The club invited me to meet with them, and they sought to assure me that I would fail. The club's biggest hindrance to my progress as a real estate broker was their rule restricting competition. I was limited to hiring only salespeople who were the primary wage earners in their families. For a beginning company, that was an impossible hurdle.

The threats of the club had two consequences. I became filled with determination, and, contrary to my original plan, I decided to de-emphasize insurance and build a substantial real estate sales company.

God is always there to help you when you have a righteous cause. To make a long story short, by God's direction, within two years there was an anti-monopoly bill before the Iowa legislature. The Iowa Association of Realtors notified our local board that if they did not get off Dave Norris' back, they would be expelled from the Association.

At the next meeting of the local real estate company owners, they were informed of the Iowa Association's ruling, and the local board president said, "This is all because of that doggoned Dave Norris!"

After informing the members of the ruling, the president asked me if I would like to make the motion to change the rule. I answered, "No, I'm going to obey the rules; if you want to change the rule, that's fine with me."

Within a few years, these same men elected me to be their president. We were able to usher the entire business community through rather odious crises. At that time, the editor of the local newspaper had turned it into an anti-business, anti-free-enterprise publication. With the support of another company owner, Chuck Gray, I convinced the real estate company owners to quit advertising in the paper and to tell the community why. When we were voting on the matter, one of the realtors argued that we had no right to dictate what the editor was to do. I assured him that he was right but that, by the same principle, the newspaper had no right to tell us where to spend our advertising dollars. Within about four weeks I received assurances that the editor had changed his mind. Apparently, he had decided that respecting the work of the Ames, Iowa, business community had some merit after all.

After I retired, the man who had taught me real estate law, Larry Baldus, spotted my family at a local restaurant. He came over to chat, and in the course of the conversation he said, "Norris, one thing I remember about you—you always sat next to your enemies (those conspiring to keep me down) when we had those meetings." That, of course, is the work of God upon the heart and emotions of a sinner saved by grace.

Success is the ultimate reward for those who continually acknowledge God. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).