

SUCCEEDING IN LIFE SERIES

THE POWER OF CONCENTRATION

There are principles that are involved in achieving success in life. These principles are applicable both in the ministry and in the secular world. Some of these principles you may be aware of. But it is good for us to cover these that are in the word of God. Let me define success as being able to do what God tells us to do and bear fruit.

The fact that God says in Deut.28 that I want you to be the head and not the tail tells me that God wants His people to succeed in the secular world. When God says that you shall not borrow but you shall lend tells me that you shall never be in debt at all. Being in debt is not a sign of success. Debt is part of the curse of the law. Success does not necessarily only mean success as the world sees it that involves prosperity and abundance. God equates that in Deut. 28 He states that His people's obedience to the law will produce these results of prosperity and abundance. That does not mean that you take the contrary principle and say therefore those who are on the way are not successful. That would be taking God's word out of context. For example we do know that God wants us to be saved. The opposite of being saved would be being lost and going to hell. That doesn't mean that you condemn every one who has not be born again saying that they are surely going to hell. Some of them are sincere. They are seeking after God. The Holy Spirit could be dealing with them regarding their salvation and they could be on their way to being saved. So in the same way we must not have a one track-condemning mind that condemns people who are on the way and becomes negative in terms of evaluating others.

As you learn this principle don't run down on other people. Remember that everybody is on the way. We are all on the way on the road to success. It is God who ordains success both in the ministry and in the secular world. God told Joshua in Joshua 1: 8 that He wants him to succeed. And you do all these things you shall have good success.

This morning we are going to touch on the first principle of success. And that is the principle of concentration. People who are successful have an ability to concentrate on the matter that they do, whether it is small or it is great. The opposite of concentration is distraction. Distraction is something that is inherent in fallen man. It is inherent in children. Children have to be taught to concentrate in order that when they grow up, they can succeed in life. But some people never grow up. All through their life they are distractible and they are distracted. They go from one to the other and they seem to be a failure over and over again. It is because they never learn this principle of concentration. They are always easily distracted, floating from one area to the other.

Have you noticed something about children? Children's ministry needs a special anointing and skill. It takes effort to get the attention of the children. And the attention spent on the children is such that you have to keep changing from one thing to another to help them to concentrate on one subject. For example when you are teaching children you have to use a visual aid. When you talk about sin and how man fell. And when you teach on Genesis 3, you may have to bring a real tree and put a fruit there so that the attention is captured. Then take a fruit from there and let one of them to eat it. So they began to participate. There are five senses that are involved and it helps them to concentrate. Children inherently do not know how to concentrate.

The power of concentration is something that is learned, something that is acquired. And it also depends on your upbringing. If for example your parents never taught you to concentrate on a subject or an object, then you would grow up not correcting that trait of being distractible. You are going all over the place doing a lot of things but achieving nothing. Do you know that there are some adults who have grown physically but have never developed their souls? They go about doing a lot of things but never seemingly succeeding in anything. It is because they never learned

the power of concentration.

The power of concentration involves three areas. In order to concentrate on doing an object, you first of all need a desire for what you are concentrating on. You have to develop a desire to achieve that which you have set for. The desire must be great for the concentration to be there. Those who are able to concentrate always have a tremendous desire in those areas. There is some motivation factor involved. Lets look at James 1: 6-8 *But let him ask in faith with no doubting. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man supposed that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* It compares someone who is double minded as a person who is easily distracted. Not only will you fail in God's word, it says he is unstable in all his ways(verse 8). That means in the secular world he will also fail. Some people think that if they fail in the secular world then they can come into the ministry. I am sorry to tell you the ministry involves a lot of principles that are necessary to make you a success in the secular world. Many times those who failed in the secular world still fail in the ministry because they do not learn those basic principles of success that are required in this life.

In this life we are born into it is a world that is fallen and going on a negative stream. This world and everything that is going on in this world is like a stream. The bible calls it the cosmos or the world system. And the world system is flowing in a negative direction. When you are born into this world all you have to do is to do nothing and you will automatically be lost. All you have to do is to do nothing and you will never get saved. You will never find the truth. All you have to do is sit and do nothing and you become a failure. Surely there is something wrong in this world. To fail all you have to do is to do nothing. There is no effort to fail. All you have to do is quit and the stream carries you to that side. But in order to succeed is like a fish swimming up stream. You need to have life in you. You need to be able to move and wriggle your fins and your tail and go against the current.

At first when you begin to do the right things that will move you against the current of failure, do you know that there is a point where the force applied equals the force that is against you? At first you are being carried down stream. And then

you begin to swim up stream. As you start applying the right principle and force there is a point where you slowly build up the force to go against the current. And there is a point where the force applied equals to the force against. At that point you are stationary. You are neither going up stream, you are neither going down stream. It seems to the world that you are not heading anywhere. That you are not succeeding. Do you know some people began to apply the principles of life and like the fish they began to wriggle their fins and wriggle their tail. And they began to start moving. But the force they are applying doesn't seem to work yet because they have just reached a point of canceling and neutralizing the negative force. At that point many fishes look around and said nothing is happening. Why is it not succeeding yet? They forget that they need to apply twice the amount of force.

The first force is to neutralize the negative force going against them. The second force is to go against it and start moving forward. For example if there is force and wind that come in this direction at thirty miles an hour. And supposedly that you are moving against the wind, do you know that you have to apply a force of thirty miles an hour in order to remain where you are? At that point many look around them and say why is my job still not successful. Why is my business not successful? Why is the ministry still not successful? They forget that they have to apply twice the equal force in order to even start moving, more than what is opposing them. Supposing they apply a force of forty miles an hour and the opposition is thirty miles an hour. Do you know that you only move at ten miles an hour?

Now all of us experienced a negative stream in different degrees. For some people when they are born into certain circumstances and certain situations, the negative stream of failure is pushing them perhaps at five miles an hour. For some others it could be seventy miles an hour. See when we were born into this world we were not all born in the same set of circumstances. Some of us are born into broken homes. Some are born into good homes. Now naturally the ones who are in the broken homes and the ones in the good homes, the ones in the good homes have more chance of success than the ones in the broken homes. But yet some people in the broken homes seem to come up better than those in the good homes. It is because they have to apply a greater pressure to overcome that failure than the other one who is much easier. But yet all things being equal those guys who are born in good homes, whose parents train them properly would have a better chance of succeeding. It is because if the negative wind going against them is only ten miles

an hour and if they apply a force of twenty miles an hour they would start succeeding at ten miles an hour. The other guys over here may be facing a negative wind at forty miles an hour. And so if they apply the same force to succeed at twenty miles an hour, they would still be failing. So some of those people here have to apply tremendous pressure even to succeed. Even if they apply forty miles an hour, they will still just neutralize the negative wind on their life. They have to apply fifty miles an hour just to be at the same speed as the other guy.

Some children who have no opportunity in their homes to study properly may come from poor families and broken homes. They have a lot to do and they have only half an hour to study everyday. The other guy has about four hours. So the set of circumstances are unequal but the amount of pressure to succeed still needs to be applied. And what happens is this sometimes these people fail they give way. But when some of these succeed inside them is an ability to move at fifty miles an hour. And for this guy it takes only twenty miles an hour. Then as these two began to go into the same type of negative wind. The wind in your life changes. So sometimes in life they both began to face a wind of thirty miles an hour. This guy has only the ability to flow at twenty miles an hour. The other guy has developed an ability to exert a force of fifty miles an hour and it took him that to succeed. In school it looks like both of them are moving at ten miles an hour. From the outside it looks equal. But from the inside is not equal. This guy is developing more strength. Now they are both brought to face the same negative stream and suddenly this guy here overtakes the other guy. Because this guy still applies a force of fifty miles an hour while the other guy is only used to twenty miles an hour. Suddenly this guy fails. So understand that there are different winds that blow against different people at different times.

Some of the winds are from the devil going against your life. Sometimes the devil gets a hint of what God is going to do in your life. He puts a greater pressure on your life. But something wonderful happens - God always gives grace to overcome. No temptation had overtaken you which is not common to man. In every temptation God has always provided us the grace of finding a way of escape. And the escape is not to bring you out but to bring you through. God does not necessarily save you out from the lion's den but He saves you through the lion's den because in the process you learn something. We are talking about the negative wind of failure that blow in life.

We need to develop a tremendous concentration power in order to succeed in life. Some people's concentration are so poor that if you put them together in the same class of people all things being equal, they will perform less than the others do. And the greater your concentration power is on an objective, the greater the possibility you would be able to succeed in life. It is one of the important principles to learn. It takes getting rid of childish behavior that will cause you to be distracted by every whim and fancy that comes along. Once in a while you want this, once in a while you want that. You are distracted on the left and on the right. And here you are on the road to heaven and on the road to success; the devil comes along and offers you a plastic carrot that looks like the real one. And you get distracted. And you keep going off the way.

It is just like the book written by John Bunyan "The Pilgrim Progress". It explains how you are supposed to progress in one direction towards the gates of salvation. But the devil always comes and distracts him. Bring him to a city here, a city there. Distraction comes along. We need to develop an ability of concentration.

Jesus Christ said this in John 17 about His own life. In His prayer to the Father Jn.17: 19 *and for their sake I sanctify myself that they may also may be sanctified by the truth.* Jesus said for the sake of my disciples I separate Myself, I sanctify Myself, I dedicate Myself. Jesus lived for only one purpose and one goal and that is to produce fruits in the lives of man, to impart into the lives of men, to implant into them the word of truth. He said that the truth You have given Me I have given them. He was not distracted at all. There were many things that could have distracted Him. But He had the concentration power to the extend that He sanctified and dedicated Himself for that objective. That He will achieve that objective no matter what.

Some people asked me whether when Jesus was on this earth He said He could do anything and everything. Could Jesus invent the motor car? I went back and ask the Lord. And the Lord said that He could but that was not His objective for coming. If He spent His time inventing cars, He may not go to the cross to die. But when He

came, He lived and died for one objective: to fulfill the plan of salvation. And He gave His whole objective to that. Do you notice in His days if you read the Jewish book like Flavius Josephus' book, in His days they had a lot of tourism going on also. In those days they got the ancient wonders of the world. These were great attractions here and there and great places to see. There were great things to discover in the land of Greece where the Roman Empire is based on. There were a lot of interesting things that could occupy the young intellectual person in those days.

Jesus never even left the borders and boundaries of Israel. He never seems to be interested in a lot of things that human beings were interested in. He lived and died for one purpose. That was His concentration power. That is why in thirty-three years He could finish all His work. Many people who reach the age of seventy only have their work half done. It is because their lives are filled with distracted detours; things that have nothing to do with their objective or their life.

We need to develop the power of concentration and it involves three areas. It involves a great desire for what your objective is. Your desire can be nurtured by seeing what is produced in other people's lives. For example your desire for healing can be increased by seeing the sick healed. Your desire for the gifts of the Holy Spirit will increase when you see others operate the gifts. Your desire for example in the secular world to be a great lawyer will increase when you see another great lawyer. Our desires are also influenced by what we see and what we hear. And God also can impart our desires. God guides us through His desire. But not all desires are necessarily from God. Some of your desires came from man. Some of your desires came from yourself. Some of your desires came from the devil. And some of your desires came from God. You have got to differentiate it. Parents in bringing up children have their own desires for the children that may be God's will or may not be God's will. Some children grow up with desires imposed on them by their parents.

Some of your desires could come from what people desire you to do. Your parents desire you to do or your friends desire that in you. Do you know that when friends mix with you they desire you to do something? And sometimes it is the devil that puts the desire in you. Especially if it is the wrong desire that is not in line with the

word of God. So all your desires have to be screened by the word. If you have a great desire to be the greatest bank robber, something is wrong, repent. Some good desires can come from good influences. That is why it is good to associate with good people and right people, because they will instill the right desire into the lives of people. That is why it is good when you take a man of God home to stay in your place. Some of them began to inspire your children to godliness.

Desires come from the word of God, it comes from the will of God, and God's Holy Spirit placed in you. It comes from what you see demonstrated around you. Mk.11: 24 says *whatsoever things you desire when you pray*. Do you notice that the desire is great? I was reading a book by Frances Hunter. In one of her books called "Are You Tired" she spoke about her struggles in her life with diabetes and how finally the Lord healed her. Then she also had poor eyesight. Then she began to think the Lord healed her there. "How is it that my eyesight was never healed?" Then she asked the Lord. This was what the Lord said. She wore glasses. She could see reasonably. So the Lord said to her if you desire the healing for your eyes as much as your healing for your diabetes condition you would receive. So it was not dependent on the Lord. The Lord wants to heal. But her desire for healing is not as much because she could make do with glasses. It takes a tremendous desire to want a healing in a certain area. So much that you go for it like a bulldog. Do you know something strange about bulldog? When they bite you they don't let go. That is the character of a bulldog. Have the desire and faith of a bulldog. But don't look like a bulldog. If you have the character of a bulldog, desire will help you to concentrate.

In order to have the desire, you have to explore the benefits of what you are going to achieve. For example if you are called to be an evangelist, you want to have a great desire to be one. Then you have to compile a lot of research where you could see the lives of evangelists. The more you see them the more a desire develops in your life. Or if you desire to be a great businessman for God, then you have to research and see what businessmen have done in the kingdom of God. It will inspire you. It will put desires in you. That is why God puts different ministries in the body of Christ. And have you noticed that usually that people who are sharing and speaking. The one that causes an inspiration to you are also those that sometimes have to do with those areas you like to do. For example if I invite anointed businessmen from the States who are tremendous people who spend time with God. Then you begin to watch their life and see how they are able to succeed

in the Christian life and in the business. Then it inspires you. And there are some things that you want to do that nobody may have done. You get back to the word. And in prayer God will give you dreams and visions and desires. Things that nobody may have done. But God develops a desire in you by giving you dreams about it by giving you desires and visions about it. Not spectacular vision but normal vision.

Sometimes when I pray in the spirit seemingly without any effort all these things come to my inner vision about the work of the ministry. Some of them have never been done before. They just come and I know who brought that. It was the Holy Spirit. And I know why He brought that. It is to inspire a desire in me so that the more I began to see it the more I desire it. And the more I desire it, it goes to the second step. You will be willing to sacrifice to get it.

Concentration takes sacrifice. You will notice that Abraham had to sacrifice the luxuries and the ease of life with his kinsfolk. To go into a strange land where nobody knows. Do you know he came out better than them. And when Lot quarreled with his herdsman, Abraham said you take what you want. And he sacrificed what seemingly was the best. Lot took the best land. After Lot left him immediately God appeared to him and said look to the north, south, east, west, everywhere is yours. So if I want to be good in music and I have six hours free time and you have six hours free time. You may use five of your hours of free time to spend it on something else for example you love cooking. You want to be a fantastic cook. So you spent five of those hours researching that. And this guy wants to be a musician. You have equal time. In order to be musician this person may have to sacrifice the time that this person may use for something else. There has to be sacrifice involved in order to concentrate. In other word it could be time for your favorite TV program. Something that you just enjoy. And some of you may be watching the news or the newspapers. You may take an additional two or three hours of your life doing that. This guy here wants to achieve to be a musician. He gives up that time. This is a law of life. To achieve and be good at something, you have to give up some other things. So in order for us to be good at something you have to sacrifice other things. You have a choice in how you spend you time.

See the first step is desire. Desire will cause you to be willing to sacrifice.

Let me give an illustration in the natural. When I was a teenager I discovered chess. I found out that I could be quite good at it. But I wanted to be not only good at it; I wanted to be the best in it. And so what happened was while all the other teenagers are falling in love and going out on dates and movies I spent my time reading chess books. The result as long as I was there playing chess they could not topple me. But it takes sacrifice. I sacrificed the other part of my social life in order to be good at that. In the same way when I come to the ministry I applied the same principle in life that I have learned. In order to be good at something, you have to sacrifice other things and concentrate on that. Time that people will waste you will make use of that time to concentrate on that area. And so you will notice that when it comes to the ministry I don't waste time.

Do you notice those who succeed either in the secular world or in the ministry, always have the ability to concentrate on doing what they want? They developed that. They have an ability to pull out from other areas. And I have met different type of people throughout these many years of ministry. And I have noticed this those Christians who could neither succeed in the secular world and neither succeed in the ministry are those who like to sit down, chitchat and waste time. They live a mediocre life. They lived and die without doing great things for God. And I want to inspire you. I want to instill in you to rise up to do great things for God. If your objective is to achieve something positive then you have to sacrifice and make a choice to give up something and go into something.

Lets turn to Galatians 1. I am trying to point to you some of the things why Paul succeeded. Verse 13 *For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism.* Paul was talking about the time before he was born again. When he was an enemy of Christ. It says here that you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism. *How I persecuted the church of God beyond measures and tried to destroy it.* Then in verse 14 *And I advance in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.* Do you know why Paul succeeded in the ministry? Before he came into the ministry he learned some of the principles of life. He was a go-for-it man. If he was to be a road sweeper he will be the best road sweeper. There was something about that kind of character that will make you a

success in the ministry. When he was a Pharisee he says he was the Pharisee of the Pharisees. If he was to be a bus driver, he would be the best bus driver. That is what it takes to succeed. And he had learned the power of concentration. When he does something he would do it with all his desire. And he will give up a lot of things. You have to give up a lot of things to be good at something. You can't be doing everything and learning nothing. Paul said among all those of my contemporaries I did better than them. Because inside him when he does something he will do it with all his heart. There was a zeal in his life. That is why when the Jews went to crucify and persecute the Christians, he was the best persecutor in town. It is interesting to see that people who are able to concentrate in the secular world when they are born again they come into the kingdom of God, they seem to grow faster than some of the lazy Christians. Why is that so? Because they put all their time and energy into achieving something in the same way as they did in the natural way. It is called a life principle that they have learned, the power of concentration. Why was he desirous? Because that is something in Paul that says he wants to serve God. That desire was instilled in him. He says I was called even while I was in the womb. And that is something we need to realize is the life principle.

If you neglect to develop this you will never succeed whether in the ministry or in the secular world. You will be both useless in the world and in useless in the ministry of God. I am sorry to say this but it is a fact. It is something that must be faced and dealt with. And later when Paul was born again, he wants to be the top Christian. The moment he was born again he started preaching. Like a bulldog he went for it. He went right to the extremes of the Christian life. He went to right to the apex, right to the top. And if Paul was called to be an apostle, he would go for it. He gives his life for it. If he was to know and study the word, he will give his life for it. That is the principle of concentration in life. Now you know why some people cannot succeed in the ministry. That is why we do not want people who say I failed in the secular world. I think God call me to the ministry. They forget one thing. God may call them but when they failed outside is not because God call them. They failed because they never develop life principles. Don't blame your failures on God's call. God doesn't just call you because you are a failure somewhere. That is what my traditional parents use to think. When they heard I was going to the ministry, they said wait till you cannot do anything then only you go in. That is what the world think. We need to send the cream of the crop inside. We don't want to send to the ministry those who have not developed life principles

and are failures in the natural world. Let me tell you if God has a call in your life and you had not come out yet, you should be preparing yourself. If you can succeed in the secular world, you can be a success in the ministry. Success does not depend on whether God called you or not in the ministry. Success in the secular world does not depend on that. It depends on how you develop life principles. Which is No.1 the power of concentration, the ability to concentrate on something. If God did not call me into the ministry and I am still in the secular world, my goal was to be rich and famous. I wanted to be rich by being an accountant and I wanted to be famous by being the first grand master in Asia. The power of concentration is necessary to succeed.

The third part of the power of concentration is faithfulness. The third area on the power of concentration is faithfulness. Let me say this. Faithfulness, whether you are recognized or you are not recognized, faithfulness in private where nobody sees you as well as in public. Faithfulness in season and out of season. The only people who have developed that are those who have the power of concentration. They are faithful. Joseph was a faithful man. That is why he was promoted to the top servant in Potiphar's house. We know that he was promoted to the top. But how do we know it was that principle? You noticed that when Potiphar's wife and history tells us that she was quite a beautiful woman and Joseph was a handsome man. Potiphar's wife came to ask him to commit adultery. And Joseph said how could I sin against God? And the most marvelous thing is this. She came to him everyday. Everyday she came and tempted him. Just think about trying to be faithful. Some men will fall at the first time. But he was tempted everyday.

Look at Genesis 39:7 *Now it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph and she said, "Lie with me."* Then in verse 10 *so it was as she spoke to Joseph day by day that he did not heed her.* Everyday the temptation was in the house. His master was not around. You have to be faithful privately and publicly. You have to be faithful when nobody sees you because let me tell you that there is always One who sees you. God whose eyes run to and fro on this earth, He sees you and He rewards faithfulness. But there is something developed in his character. He was faithful in small things and big things. If some of you are given mediocre jobs and you are not willing to be faithful even for some time, you will never get the best job. Some people are jobless. They are waiting for the best job to come. If you are not willing to be faithful as a road sweeper, you will never be faithful anywhere

else. If you are given a job even if it is washing a toilet, if you cannot be faithful there I can guarantee you will never be successful in the ministry. The life principle is this: If you cannot be faithful in small things, you will definitely never be successful when it comes to a bigger things. Joseph was faithful in the house. Later he was faithful in a bigger organization the prison. Then later he was faithful in the whole land of Egypt. Faithfulness to the people and to the Lord. Faithfulness in husbands to their wives. If you are faithful to your wives in your house, we will know that you will be faithful in the church ministry. If as a husband you cannot be faithful to your wife, then if you cannot take care of your whole household, how can you take care of the household of God? If you cannot be faithful in small things don't talk about the bigger things. If you cannot be faithful as a good wife you will never be faithful as an intercessor for God. Faithfulness in small things develops a power of concentration. It develops something in you. That is how the power of concentration is developed. It is not that straight away you can concentrate on a project that takes about six, seven hours. If you are able to concentrate on small things and finish it, don't leave it half done, then you will be able to do other greater things. It is so small but it develops something in you. If you are given a simple job and you cannot finish it, I doubt you will be able to finish other things. Your habit of not finishing something will pass on and develop a characteristic in your life. You will probably live and die with your ministry half finished. The reason why we touch and share on this subject is because the people of God are to be the head and not the tail.