

Preparing For Success

- *Joshua 3:1-5*

- **Thank you choir for your songs of worship this evening. Thank you church for coming today & seeking to worship God & put Him first not only today, but I trust each & everyday throughout this year.**
- **The title of the message for this evening is just simply, Preparing For Success.**
 - One thing I want to do in my personal life & in the life of family is be successful.
 - I want more than anything for this church to be successful in what we do for the Lord.
 - I want our leaders & our Sunday School classes to be successful.
 - I want our young people; I want you adults to be successful in what you do.
- **And you want the same for yourselves & your family. But how will we know if we are successful or not? How would you define success this evening? What does success look like? Perhaps a better question is what does the Bible call successful?**
- **In our scripture this tonight, Joshua is leading his people into the unknown as they prepare to cross the Jordan River & enter into the Promised Land.**
- **READ SCRIPTURE**
 - Joshua commands the people to do several things in this passage of scripture.
 1. Wait on the Lord.
 2. Follow the Lord.
 3. Repent & sanctify themselves.
 - Remember in OT days, the ark of the covenant was a visible reminder to them of the Lord's presence & His power. And so Joshua instructs them to wait unto they see the ark & not to stray from the presence of God on their journey.
 - They had never traveled this path before and Joshua wanted his people to be successful & protected on their journey, so it was essential that they wait on the Lord.
- **May I say tonight, I truly believe that God desires for you to be successful this.**
 - Now wait, I am not preaching a prosperity message, but I do believe according to scripture that God will bless His people if they follow after Him.
 - We say we want God's blessings on our lives, but how are we seeking to get those blessings? God is a loving God & He is gracious to us; but many of the promises of God are contingent on us obeying His commands. This promise is no different.
 - You say, "Pastor, will the Lord meet my needs this year?" I earnestly believe He will ... if we will obey Him & give Him first place in our lives.
- **Tonight, we are 3 days into the New Year; many resolutions, plans & commitments have been made for the coming year b/c deep down we are seeking to succeed & be successful this year.**
- **As a child of God, or perhaps you have never accepted Christ, may I encourage you to prepare your spiritual life for success.**
 - I hope as a church we have a banner year.
 - I hope that many souls are saved this year.
 - I hope some families are brought closer together, some marriages are mended & some relationships are restored.
 - I hope this is a year where we may great strides in our personal relationship with God.
 - But if these things take place, it won't be by chance, it will be b/c we have made some preparations.

- **What is the formula for a successful year in our walk with the Lord? How can we grow individually in our walk as well as collectively as a church? What are some priorities we need to establish in our lives & in this church?**

1. God's Word Must Be A Priority

- I won't spend but just a moment here b/c this ought to be clear-cut in your life already.
- You can't neglect the Bible & expect to find true prosperity & happiness in your relationship with God.
 - This Book helps you to meet the disappointments in life, to stand firm against the dangers of this life & to overcome the temptations that are sure to come.
- If you read the Word of God, it will help you to be able to live a clean, pure, and holy life before God.
 - You can build your life & your faith upon this Book.
 - It is a Book that we can trust in.
 - This Book will guide your life.
 - This Book will give you peace when nothing else will.
 - This Book will help you find comfort in the day of grief.
 - This Book will bring Light to your life & will change you if you will open its pages & allow God's Word to speak to you.
- I still remember as a child getting a Bible from Preacher Earl & this was the inscription he wrote ... "This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book."
- If you are going to be successful this year, if you are growing to grow in your walk with the Lord, it won't happen without making His Word a priority.

2. Prayer Must Be A Priority

- To have physical life, it is necessary that you breathe the air that God has given to you. To have spiritual life, we must pray, for prayer is to the soul what air is to our lungs, it gives us life.
- The reason the church is not on its knees today is b/c we have become too independent, and we are attempting to live a life independent of God. But we will never be successful without the power of God on our life.
 - We are weak, but God is strong.
 - Daniel, one of the strongest & most powerful men in his day, understood that without prayer & more specifically the power of God on his life, he was nothing & could do nothing.
 - When faced with the decree from the King to cease his praying, he understood that his God was all powerful. His priority was not the King's decree, but it was to honor God & serve Him.
 - David, the great man of God, understood that the secret of his greatness was not in his physical power or his strength, but it was in prayer.
 - Psalm 55:17 – "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."
 - Even Jesus Himself could not deny the power of prayer.
 - He prayed when it was popular, and when it wasn't.
 - He prayed at the times of rejoicing & He prayed during the times of His temptation.
 - He prayed when He fed the multitude & He prayed when He raised Lazarus.
 - There in the Garden, in no doubt was one of the most trying times of His physical ministry, Jesus found Himself not alone worrying in the Garden, but He was praying.

- Even on the very cross that He bore our sins & shame, as Jesus hung there we find Him praying to His Father.
- So let me remind you if you are going to be successful this year, it will in part through the faithfulness of your prayer life.

3. Christ-Like Living Must Be A Priority

- All of your Bible reading & your prayer time will be for nothing unless it is backed up by a Christ-like life.
- You see, here in lies the problem of many church people today & their effectiveness for God.
 - If you are a Christian this morning, you must decide today to quit compromising with the world.
 - We have people who call themselves Christians, doing things that they know are wrong, going to places that are questionable, and they are hurting their growth as a Christian.
 - And as if our own walk being damaged isn't enough, we have a world that needs to hear about Jesus; they may never pick up a Bible & read it, but they are reading your lives loud & clear.
- May 2016 be the year where the church rises up & makes walking with God a priority every, single day. What does it meant to walk with God?
 - Faithfulness to church.
 - Why did Christ establish the church? Was it not so that men might find Christ and then, having found Him, that they might have an avenue or a place to do God's work on earth?
 - Church is a place where the Word of God is preached, it is taught, lives are changed, and others are sent to spread the Glorious Gospel.
 - I want to be a part of that. YOU should want to be a part of that if you know Christ. The work of the church is the most meaningful work in the world.
 - Church attendance is something that God commands each of us to be found faithful in.
 - I heard one Preacher say, "In all the years I have been preaching I have seen many cases of backsliders, but I never knew of a single one that was backslid that attended Church regularly Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night."
 - Church, make these services each week a priority in your life this year. God deserves our best, especially in our worship.
 - Faithful Service
 - Some people are more faithful to their job that they despise, their friends that betray them, or a hobby that has no eternal value, than they are a Savior who gave His life for the redemptions of their souls.
 - If you are able to find dependability & faithfulness from anyone, it should be the church.
 - Be faithful this year. If its teaching, be faithful.
 - If its singing in the choir, be faithful.
 - Working with our kids or youth, nursery, greeters, ushers, whatever it is, BE FAITHFUL.
 - Living A Separated Life
 - This means living the purest, cleanest life you know how to live.
 - It means walking with God & trying to be more like Him each day.
 - It means not only recognizing, but daily placing Him as Lord of your life.

4. Giving To The Lord Must Be A Priority

- Hold on, don't tune me out yet. When you talk about giving, this is often times where you lose people, but listen to me tonight.
 - Give The Lord His Day
 - This is our time to give thanks to God for the finished work of redemption. This is our opportunity to worship Him & praise Him for all that He has done, is doing, and will do in our lives.
 - There is nothing like starting off the week in God's House, with God's people on the Lord's day, Amen?
 - Give The Lord Your Devotion
 - What if we got back to intentionally living for God each day?
 - I told our S.S. this morning about getting out of the "routine" and actually making each day a priority & a focus to serve God.
 - What if we used the talents & abilities not just at school or at work, but what of we put them to work in the ministry?
 - What if we recognized each day as an opportunity that God has given to us to influence others with the love of Christ?
 - Give The Lord HIS Tithe
 - I know that money is a sensitive issue with people, even the people of the church. But I have always been of the opinion that if you are doing your part, you'll not be offended at the mention of tithing.
 - The Bible tells us that there is a strong correlation b/w giving & spirituality. No man is strong spiritually unless he has learned to give God his part.
 - Paying your bills & giving God what's left over is not putting Him first. In the Bible, God always claimed the first-fruits (1/10), b/c this belongs to Him.

5. Spreading The Gospel Must Be A Priority

- Let me just ask you a simple question tonight. As you look back over the last year or even the last several years, or even for some all the way back to the day you got saved, can you remember one soul that you have pointed to Jesus Christ?
- What if this year, each of us committed to winning 1 soul to Christ, leading one person to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? Do you think that would change our lives? Do you think it would change our church?
- This could be the year where God does some amazing things through this church ... IF we allow God to use us & we are faithful to Him.