



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Character Shapers Series, Lesson 53

Lesson Title: Seeking Success

Take Home Point: When seeking success, seek Jesus first.

Warm-Up:

I formerly attended a church in which many members were pacifists. These people were sincere in their belief that this was the teaching of scripture and made every attempt to live that way. As a result, many of them were disturbed that a portion of the taxes they paid went toward funding military equipment and activities. On a particular Sunday, the pastor of that church made an interesting statement in his sermon on stewardship: "I can tell you two ways you don't have to pay taxes." That certainly caught everyone's ear! He continued, "First, you can choose to limit your income to a level below what is taxed. Second, you can give away enough of your income that your deductions eliminate a tax liability. The real problem is that you want to reduce or not pay taxes but maintain your current standard of living, and you don't get to do that!"

Read: Luke 19:1-10; 1 Timothy 5:5; Ecclesiastes 5:10

Observation (What happened?):

How did Jesus respond to the declaration Zacchaeus made?

According to the author of Ecclesiastes, what is the fate of one who loves material wealth?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think Zacchaeus was now eager to give to the poor and provide restitution to those he cheated?

Why is enough income not enough for many people?

Insight:

From God's perspective, what should be our real measures of success? What do we use as our measures? Are they different? If they are different, why and what will we do about it? These questions aren't just philosophical musings, they are foundational questions, the answers to which will significantly influence how we live. God has provided measures of success in his word, and they do not match at all what the world attempts to get us to accept as standards for success. God wants us to do his will (Psalm 40:8). He wants us to know and live the truth (Proverbs 3:15). He wants us to honor him (Isaiah 26:8). He wants us to have a merciful, compassionate heart for others (Matthew 9:13). He wants us to love him (1 John 5:1-5). He wants us to accept and live out his forgiveness, peace, and rest (Matthew 11:28-30). He wants us to have a relationship with him that lasts for eternity (John 7:37-38). If you do these things (and it is quite a list!), how do you think God will consider the expenditure of your life, energy, and material blessings while you lived on this earth? That will be real, eternal success!

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How do you measure success in your life? What standards in what areas of life do you use?

Find a way this week to give something to someone over and above your normal giving.

Kingdom Quest year 2