

The Recipe for Success

(Joshua 5)

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Introduction

A quick Google search on the recipe for success turned up this advice...

- 1) Choose a career you love.
- 2) Give it your best.
- 3) Seize the opportunities in life.
- 4) Be a team player...

That was the advice of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Another site gave this recipe for success..

- 1) Study while others are sleeping.
- 2) Work while others are loafing.
- 3) Prepare while others are playing.
- 4) Dream while others are wishing..

Another person offered this simplified recipe for success..

- 1) Work
- 2) Sleep
- 3) Repeat..

Yet, what would the Bible say is a recipe for success?

What must a person do to achieve great things for the Lord?

Well, the Bible's definition of success would be a lot different than the world's definition of success...

Success in the Lord's eyes is simply knowing and being known by God...

It would have nothing to do with material possessions or a good job or a nice home...

Yet when great things needed to be done in the Bible, what did the Lord require of the people he called to do those great things?

In other words, what was the Lord's recipe for success in the lives of His people?

Well, tonight we get an example of God's recipe for success as we follow Israel into the promised land...

The days of waiting to get into Canaan are over.

Israel has crossed the Jordan River.

They are in the land, but the work of taking the land hasn't even begun...

Now, God has promised to give the inhabitants of the land into the hand of Joseph, yet what must Israel do to ensure success in taking the land?

Well, I am going to give you 3 ingredients to a successful taking of the land that we are going to see in Joshua 5 tonight...

And these ingredients will serve us well even today as we seek to be successful in what we set out to do for the Lord..

Let's find the first ingredient in verses 1-9...

Success comes as we...

I. Obey the Commands of the Lord (1-9)

As we get to chapter 5, Israel has made camp at Gilgal, which was only a few miles east of Jericho..

The whole land of Canaan is in front of them for the taking, but the inhabitants of the land aren't going to go down without a fight...

So, let's find out what Israel is doing as they have now put themselves in the land...

Verse 1..

5 Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until [a]they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.

2 At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." 3 So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at [b]Gibeath-haaraloth. 4 This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. 5 For all the people who came

out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. 6 For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, [c]perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

7 Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua [d]circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way.

8 Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were [e]healed. 9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called [f]Gilgal to this day.

So, here we are in the desert region in the middle of nowhere, and Joshua sets up to do surgery on every man under 40 in Israel..

And not just any kind of surgery, but for a man, the worst kind of surgery...

Joshua is setting up to circumcise the best soldiers he has..

Not only will this be a painful surgery, the risk of infection is even greater as these men don't even have a permanent residence to rest and recover..

Instead, they will be forced to heal up in camp..

And heaven forbid, that any of the people of the land decide to attack in the days following this mass surgery...

If that happens, only the women, children and older men will be able to fight...

So, what is this all about?

Why would God command this to be done now?

Well, we get our answers to those questions right here in the verses..

First, this had to be done because there had been no circumcisions of male Israeli children in 40 years while they had wandered in the wilderness..

It seems that the discipline of the Lord had prevented Israel from circumcising their baby boys that were born in the wilderness...

But now that the wilderness days were officially over, and the nation had arrived in the land promised to them, it was time for Israel to get a fresh start...

And the first step in the right direction was to circumcise all the men who had yet to undergo the ceremonial procedure...

Now, for the men that's bad news...

They are here in camp...

The best of knives probably aren't the sharpest of knives...

Joshua is almost 90 and he is the one holding the knife...

This isn't good news, but it was the right thing to do..

Circumcision was simply a sign of God's covenant with Israel...

It set them apart as a people devoted to the Lord..

It symbolized their devotion to God...

It served a hygienic purpose as well to keep the men and their wives free from infection and disease...

But it also symbolized the need to cut away sin from the lives of those in Israel..

And now that Israel had paid the temporary consequences of wandering outside the Promised Land, it is time to cut away sin as the people enter a new land to possess..

But there was also something else here that we can apply to our lives as well...

These men were simply obedience to the command of God..

In case you were wondering, this isn't an easy command to follow...

There isn't any anesthesia....

This is painful and it takes time to heal..

But here is where we need to see the devotion of these young men to their God..

God told Joshua to do it, and these men kept the command to be circumcised..

The first ingredient to success is a to live a life obedient to the word of God...

Obedience brings blessing.

Disobedience brings cursing..

That is the principle of God from the very beginning....

And if Israel wants blessings as they enter the land, they need to demonstrate their obedience to God, and it started with circumcision...

Now, the young men of Israel have been circumcised....

According to verse 8, they were given time to heal, and now it is time to make ready for war...

But before they march to Jericho, there is more business to attend to in verses 10-12...

II. Remember the Goodness of the Lord (10-12)

Verse 10...

10 While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. 11 On the [g]day after the Passover, on [h]that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. 12 The manna ceased on the [i]day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

As Israel walked out of Egypt, 40 years prior to this day...

God instituted the celebration of Passover...

Look at Exodus 12:23-27...

23 For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you. 24 And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. 25 When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has

[z]promised, you shall observe this [aa]rite. 26 And when your children say to you, '[ab]What does this rite mean to you?' 27 you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord [ac]who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but [ad]spared our homes.'” And the people bowed low and worshiped.

Most of you know the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt...

Pharoah, the ruler of Egypt, would not let Israel leave...

So God sent plagues upon the land of Egypt, and though they got Pharoah's attention, he was refusing to let Israel leave the land...

Yet, God sent a final plague upon Egypt where the angel of death was sent to kill all the first born sons in the land of Egypt...

And since Israel lived in Egypt, the plague would also lead to the death of their first born sons unless they mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a lamb...

So, Israel picked out a lamb without defect and killed that lamb in the days leading up to the plague...

They took the blood of the lamb and marked their door posts...

And when the plague passed through Egypt, the angle of death passed over the houses marked with blood and the first born of Israel survived...

But God never wanted Israel to forget his goodness in delivering them from this plague, so he established a celebration of Passover every year...

And you can see how long this celebration was to be observed in verse 24...

FOREVER...

Now, according to the book of Amos and Numbers, Israel celebrated Passover only once as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years...

However, verse 25 is clear..

As Israel entered the Promised Land, they were to observe Passover...

And now they are in the land in the 5th chapter of Joshua, so it is time to observe the Passover...

But this is also the right time for another reason...

Since no men who were uncircumcised were allowed to take part in the Passover according to Exodus 12:48, Joshua's circumcision of these men has now it possible for them to celebrate Passover...

And so that is what the nation does in verse 10, and make note here...

To take a young lamb and kill it would be a real sacrifice considering that the flocks of the people were probably quite low after wandering 40 years in the desert...

Yet, when God commands it, the people obey and Israel eats the Passover meal in the land that God had promised to Abraham in 1405 BC...

The writer of the book of Joshua also makes mention of another truth in connection with their arrival in the Promised Land in verses 11-12...

Not only did the people eat the Passover now that they were in the land, they also began to enjoy the food of the land....

In the days after the Passover, Israel began to enjoy some of the produce and bread of the land...

Now, the question is...

Where did they find these things?

The most likely answer is that people in Gilgal and outlying areas had fled into the safety of the walls of Jericho as Israel approached...

They abandoned their homes and farms and barns, and this provided Israel with nourishment as they prepared themselves for war...

And if you are wondering about the fairness of this..

Listen to what God says in Deut 6:10-12..

10 "Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of [d]slavery. 13 You shall [e]fear only the Lord your God; and you shall [f]worship Him and swear by His name.

Do you know who the houses and produce and bread of the land belong to?

Well, they belong to God, and if God needs to feed his people, he causes other people to run for the safety of Jericho and leave their barns full of bread and produce for the hungry bellies of Israel...

And so Israel is in the land, and they are already enjoying the food of the land that they didn't plant or work or harvest or even prepare...

This is the goodness of God..

What do you have that you truly earned for yourself?

Even if you worked for it, did God not provide the health that allowed you to work?

We all are like the young birds that have just been hatched...

Our necks are pointed upward, our mouths are wide open, and we are dependent upon the Lord to fill them with food...

And God does it day after day after day...

We marvel that he feeds the birds of the air, but the greatest wonder is that he feeds the mouths of those who have sinned against Him every day...

Yet, that is the case with us, and it was the case with Israel, who though disobedient to God in many ways, were fed manna by God for 40 years in the wilderness..

Yet, when manna is no longer needed, God supplies the fruit and vegetables and bread from the land that God gave to Israel..

Now, what is the point of verses 10-12...

The need to remember the goodness of God is a way to prepare ourselves for success...

We talked about this last week with the memorial stones in the river and the ones set up on the west side of the Jordan River....

Israel had a short memory, so God made sure they didn't forget His goodness with the building of altars and memorials all over Israel...

And by establishing festivals and celebrations of His goodness and commanding Israel to observe them...

The future is bright when we consider the glories of God's past provisions...

As Israel heads into a land filled with enemy armies and much in need of God's future deliverance and protection and provision, what does God want them doing?

He wants them sitting down to a passover meal that points to his past deliverance of them....

And he wants them eating the food of the land to assure that he is continuing to provide for them in the present....

In order to see success in whatever we do, we must live in obedience to the Lord and remember the past and present goodness of the Lord, but there is a final ingredient in the recipe to success...

III. Trust in the Presence of the Lord (13-15)

Verse 13..

13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" 14 He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" 15 The captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

So, the circumcisions are over...

The Passover has been celebrated...

It is now time to prepare the men for war...

But before the men are made ready, Joshua is also made ready for war in verses 13-15 when he meets someone who calls himself.

"The captain of the host of the Lord.."

Now, what do we see here?

I would suggest to you that this is none other than an OT appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ...

If you look at the OT, we see a number of occasions where an angel of the LORD made appearances..

Now, I am not convinced that everywhere we see the phrase, the angel of the LORD, in the OT, that it is in fact Christ..

But I believe that to be the case here...

And why is that the best interpretation?

Because Joseph is commanded to worship here and the angel accepts the worship...

Yet, nowhere in the Bible are we told to worship angels...

In fact, in Revelation 22, John is rebuked for trying to worship an angel...

Therefore, it seems best to see this captain of the Lord's hosts as none other than an OT appearance of Christ Jesus...

Now, what is Jesus doing here?

He is standing there with his sword drawn...

Now, I have to give Joshua a little credit here....

God has told him to be strong and courageous, and only a brave man would walk up to man with a sword drawn and ask....

“Ok, whose side are you on?”

Yet, that is exactly what Joshua did...

And once the angel tells Joshua that he is simply the commander of the Lord’s army, Joshua falls to worship...

Now, what is this all about?

Why the appearance of Christ?

Why now and why here?

Let me give you a couple thoughts...

#1 - Joshua would never forget this meeting...

Though God had told Joshua that he was his man for the job...

Though God had assured Joshua of victory in the land....

Though God had promised Joshua that He would go with him...

God went above and beyond to booster Joshua's faith...

For some, our faith needs encouragement at times..

We are faint hearted...

WE are prone to doubt...

We are easily discouraged...

We are weak and tempted to question God's presence...

Joshua was clearly in need of a reminder of God's presence with him...

And so the father sent the Son to encourage one of His people...

Little did Joshua know that this commander of the Lord's host would die for the forgiveness of his sins...

Little did Joshua know that this mighty warrior would become the ultimate Passover lamb who would smear his blood over Joshua's life to cover his sins...

Little did Joshua know that Jesus would one day lead His people to victory over our greatest enemy, which is sin...

All Joshua knew as he stood near Jericho is that a battle with the people of that city was directly in front of him, and now the Lord's captain was leading them into battle...

The second thought I would share is this...

#2 - This is an encounter that we need to remember..

And here is why...

The Lord is with us...

Not in some poetic, church talk...

But in a very real sense...

WE tend to see God and Christ as way out there in heaven, but the reality is that if our eyes were open, we would see the presence of the Lord with us..

We would find encouragement as we live in this world...

We would find confidence in the Lord's help...

We could rest easy knowing the Lord never leaves us...

And again, this isn't some pretty church talk or empty words...

Charles Spurgeon once said this...

“It is the saddest of realities that though God is everywhere, we have train ourselves to see him anywhere.”

And isn't that the truth...

We think we leave God at church when we walk out the door...

We think we leave God's presence when we say amen in our prayers...

Yet, the reality is that God is ever present wherever we go...

He is there even though our eyes fail to see him....

Someone once said this...

“If you want to overcome a sin that nags you, imagine that you are committing it in the presence of Christ....Oh, wait a minute...you dont have to imagine that, you are committing it in the presence of Christ.”

You see, we never leave the presence of God..

He is there when we sin, but he is also there when we need his help...

Joshua was about to engage in one of the greatest challenges that any man has under taken....

We will never face anything close to the challenge that Joshua faced....

And yet, both Joshua and we have the same help...

WE have the Lord going with us...

He is not sitting in heaven watching what we are doing...

He is not on the sidelines seeing what will happen...

God goes before us...

He is in the operating room...

He is in the job interview...

He is holding our marriages together....

He is there giving us the words to say to someone
who just lost a loved one...

He is beside our beds tonight as we sleep...

Joshua is headed into a heathen land with people
that want to kill him....

It's a good thing that the One who holds his life in
his hands is leading the way...

Conclusion

Paul Bear Bryant is often considered the greatest football coach of all time...

He led the Alabama Crimson Tide to 6 national championships...

He was a man known for many quotes...

One of his most famous was this...

“If you believe in yourself and have dedication and pride and never quit, you will be a winner. The price of victory is high but so are the rewards.”

I am not here to criticize Bryant, but this is the mentality of the world in regards to what it takes to be successful....

Quotes like this are a dime a dozen...

Encouragements to work hard and not give up...

And believe in yourself are the wisdom of the world...

This is their recipe for success, yet the Bible would disagree with this formula...

The Bible would say, “stop believing in yourself, and start believing in the Lord.”

The Bible would say that winners in this world are not the product of their hard work, but the product of God’s mercy and grace....

The recipe for Israel’s success was obedience to the Lord, the remembrance of God’s goodness, and the dependence upon the Lord’s strength to lead them into battle and not their own...

The main ingredient for success is not us, but the Lord...

Israel is learning that before the battle begins, and we would be wise to learn it now...

Let us pray.