

A Success Story

Welcome back for another great evening with our little family. I love to think about groups of God's children getting together in homes all over his planet doing what we are doing here today—enjoying each other's company, sharing our lives and stories, and learning whatever the Holy Spirit wants to teach us. Not only do I love to think about it, but I know God loves it too.

Hey, I have a question. Have you ever wondered--what is success—real success? We'll have a chance to discuss that in just a few minutes, but first let me tell you the story of Marion Hill.

Marion was born in a fairy tale royal palace in Hungary. Her first spoon was solid gold. As she grew, was sent to a school in Vienna where she became an actress and married a medical student named Otto.

The couple went to live in Hollywood, CA. There, as they “set up house,” he began to act in movies, gave up his medical practice and later became the internationally famous movie director Otto Preminger. Marion's beauty, wit, and charm bought her everything a woman desires, and she became a famous international hostess.

But for Marion, this life of worldly success did not bring happiness. She became an alcoholic, drug addict, and had numerous affairs. Her life became so sordid, that Otto divorced Marion, who tried to commit suicide three times, even failing at that. Finally, she moved back to Vienna, childhood hopes dashed.

There at a party she met another doctor, named Albert Schweitzer, the well-known medical doctor, musician, philosopher, theologian and missionary. Schweitzer was home on leave from his hospital in Africa. Marion was so fascinated by Schweitzer, that she asked him if she could talk to him alone, and then for almost 6 months met him weekly. She begged him to let her return to Africa with him! Schweitzer surprised everyone by agreeing. Marion, the young princess, who was born in a palace went to a little village in Africa, and spent the rest of her life emptying bed pans and tearing up sheets to make bandages for putrid sores on the poverty-stricken nationals.

When she died, Time Magazine, quoted from her autobiography these words: “Albert Schweitzer says there are two kinds of people. There are the helpers, and the non-helpers. I thank God He allowed me to become a helper, and in helping, I found everything.”

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Fellowship

1. When was Marion the biggest success? Why?
2. Describe someone you think is successful. What defines their success?

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Discipleship

A large group of European pastors came to one of Evangelist D. L. Moody's Bible Conferences in the late 1800s. Following the European custom of the time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But of course, this was not Europe and there were no hall servants!

Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his brothers. He mentioned the need to some Bible students who were there, but was met with either silence or excuses. Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room, the world's only famous evangelist began to clean and polish the shoes. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend in the midst of the work revealed the secret.

When the foreign visitors opened their doors the next morning, their shoes were shined. They never knew by whom.

I wonder if this episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and **that** was the basis of his true greatness. As we'll see in our passage today, God values success! But His view on success looks a bit different than ours.

As you discussed what defines success, what did your group come up with? Maybe you mentioned money and things it can buy; having fun and being able to enjoy the "good life"; rewards and recognition at work or in the community; having people know your name and give you respect, feeling honored to count you as their friend.

Jesus will show us today that yes, the signs of success are two-fold: recognition and reward...but let's get the broader picture from Mark 10:35-45.

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

"We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, [HYPERLINK "http://www.blueletterbible.org/cgi-bin/tools/printer-friendly.pl?translation=nivp&book=Mar&chapter=10" \l "#"](http://www.blueletterbible.org/cgi-bin/tools/printer-friendly.pl?translation=nivp&book=Mar&chapter=10) 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Like so many of us, the disciples had grown up with a certain definition of what makes a life successful. In that culture, the powerful Roman forces were the ultimate success stories in the eyes of many. Their power, authority and the fear they instilled allowed them to do whatever they wanted! People recognized them, and that fame brought them freedom to enjoy living life their way. Guiltily, I wonder how I would have responded had I been in the other disciples' shoes...indignant with James and John's request, or slightly jealous I hadn't come up with the idea first? It goes against our inborn nature to serve.

During the American Revolution a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a small defensive barrier. Their leader was shouting instructions, but making no attempt to help them. The rider asked why this was, and he retorted with great dignity, "Sir, I am a corporal!"

The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. The job done, he turned to the corporal and said, "Mr. Corporal, next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help you again."

This servant was none other than George Washington, America's first president.

Servant hood will not carry us to the most glamorous of jobs! I remember when our church was showing an evangelistic movie, and we knew the crowds would be large. We decided to hold two separate showings, so we needed a bathroom cleaning crew to volunteer to clean toilets and replace paper towels between the two services. Maybe your service includes parking farther away in the church parking lot and leaving the closer spaces for those who are visiting or can't walk well. My dad takes a trash bag on his daily walk to pick up garbage. Servant hood is a mindset that no job is "beneath" me or that I am "too good" to do!

The last words we speak to our kids before they leave home are filled with important instruction and meaning. When my son's days were numbered at home, I meticulously planned what I would remind him of as our days together were drawing to a close. Likewise, Jesus had a powerful lesson He taught the disciples at their last meal together and we can read it in John 13:3-5.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Now if washing dirty, dusty and stinky feet was not below Him, why do we think servant hood is beneath us? It's also interesting to note, in verse 3, that Jesus knew: 1) Who He was 2) where He was going, and 3) His future reward. His purpose, for the time being, was to labor and serve...but the reward and recognition were not far behind! May God bless you as you follow the Shepherd's example to value greatness and success...in the Kingdom of Heaven!

3. From John 13:3-5, what parallels can you make to servanthood today?

4. How can verse 3 and knowing who and whose we are motivate us to serve?

5. Does servanthood bring recognition and reward? If so, when?

6. Re-read Mark 10:35-45. How were James and John's ideas of success flawed?

7. What would it look like for you to pursue Jesus' idea of greatness?

What costs would that involve? Think about your relationships, career, time and money. What would be the benefits?

8. Read Luke 16:13-15. Do you feel the struggle of wanting both what the world has to offer and spiritual growth? How will your thinking be different after this lesson?

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Ministry

9. Jesus emphasizes humility and sacrifice. This can be hard to apply. Talk about ways in which you expect others to serve you. Think broadly: family members, janitors, waiters/waitresses, store clerks, work colleagues....

10. When others serve you, in what ways do you “lord it over them” (Mark 10:42)? In what ways do you show respect for them?

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Evangelism

11. How can you serve someone this week to show Christ’s example? How can you give Him the glory so they will see His love for them?

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Worship

12. Gather into groups of 3 or 4 and pray for each other as we attempt to obey Christ this week! Commit to remembering each other and check up on how each one is doing with question 10 midway through the week.