



KEYS TO PERSEVERING SUCCESS

We want success too easily! Unfortunately, many people expect success to be granted on a silver platter; they fail to understand that true success requires a four letter word called WORK. One of the early Smith Barney investment firm commercials showed an old banker saying to the camera, “We make money the old-fashioned way. We earn it!”

A person may inherit a great sum of money, but that inheritance will not make the person a success. It just means the person has money. The same principle exists in church ministry. Many a young man has been described as “the next Billy Graham” solely because he had the ability to talk...or, more correctly, gab. Far too often people rely on their charisma, but charisma will take an individual only so far. One new employee explained his laziness to the boss by saying, “I get tired real easily.” Sound familiar?

Lee Roberson, our pastor during my Bible college days, gives us these cautionary words, “The University of Hard Knocks is divided into two colleges: the College of Needless Knocks and the College of Needful Knocks. There are some needless knocks which we receive. They do us little good and are the result of our own foolishness. Then there are the needful knocks which come to make us what we ought to be.”

How true! Ministry is not for lazy people. Ask any successful Christian and you will get the same answer: “You have to fight your way through many battles. One of the most difficult and never ceasing battles is with self. You have to overcome laziness, desiring the easy life, and compromising your biblical values. Then comes the easier but still hard part: the battle to minister through all sorts of obstacles.”

Some things NEVER change. Hence, your battle is the same as that faced by Moses, David and the Apostle Paul. I repeat: Some things never change.

First, people will be the same no matter in what era you live or what your age may be. Human nature has been contaminated by Adam’s sin. Frederick the Great says, “The more I see of men, the better I like my dog.” All of the Bible saints struggled at times with people in their ministry. What would those saints say to our complaints? “Been there, done that!” Thus, there are no green pastures to seek. Perhaps better pastures, but there is no pasture without troubled and troubling people. Just keep ministering!

Second, today will be replaced by tomorrow. Tomorrow won’t be a repeat of today. Don’t expect it to be. That truth may be a blessing or it may not be a blessing. But the world will change overnight. Awaken tomorrow with the expectation that something new, perhaps good or perhaps bad or perhaps neutral, is headed your way. Ask God for the strength to deal with whatever is new, whatever is old and whatever just “is.” After all, He is the God of tomorrow, too. Just keep ministering!

Next, peace treaties never last. It would be nice if the world could experience the peace of Christmas throughout an entire year. But that won’t happen. Wars will break out between nations, family members, employees, neighbors and church members. Don’t allow yourself to become discouraged by such conduct. Jesus kept His eye on the ball: the cross. Nothing deterred Him from achieving His purpose. Just keep ministering!

Fourth, churches are churches. I was so happy in pastoring my first church. My pastor-father poured cold water on my joy when he said, "Son, it's still a church." A church ought to be a collection of saints but my pastorates have included sinners in various stages of pursuing (or not pursuing) sainthood. Some loved Bible teaching whereas others did not want Bible teaching. Some were opposed to implementing the Great Commission or supporting missionaries. Sadly for the minister, there are no perfect churches. Indeed, sometimes the leadership marvels that the church is able to accomplish as much as it does given the obstacles. It's just the way it is. We have to live with this reality in order to minister successfully. Just keep ministering!

Last, our imperfections are more than we realize, but God's power to use us is also more than we realize. The Bible bluntly reveals the imperfections of God's saints. By contrast, none of my imperfections appear in my resume. I always put my BEST foot forward. How about you? But the imperfections are eventually realized. Success will never come if we dwell upon our imperfections. But success CAN come and WILL come when we surrender the ministry to God and God's power takes control.

Above all, just keep ministering!