

Secret to Your 2016 Success Is Not a Secret!

Remember New Year's Eve almost 12 months ago? Were you holding high hopes it would be your best year yet?

Amid the jubilant celebration, were you lifting praise to God for anticipated success and breakthrough in your life?

Looking back over the year, do you have to admit things just didn't turn out the way you had hoped? Unexpected setbacks ... financial reversals ... disappointments ... failures ... mistakes ... betrayals ... need we go on?

As 2015 comes to a close, it's a great time for reflection and learning from errors, plus pursuing God for direction and fresh motivation going forward.

A primary component for success in the coming year is remembering the importance of perseverance. Jesus told us in the parable of the sower that it was only by perseverance that an individual reaps the desired harvest (Luke 8:15).

President Calvin Coolidge once said, "Nothing in the world will take the place of persistence. Talent will not; the world is full of unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

Presidential hopeful Ben Carson grew up in Detroit's poverty with a mother who had only a third-grade education. He went to Yale, became the youngest head of pediatric neurosurgery at John Hopkins and is called a "living legend" by the Library of Congress. His advice is simple: "Successful people don't have fewer problems. They have determined that nothing will stop them from going forward."

Actor Sylvester Stallone, whose latest movie *Creed* is gaining him Oscar recognition, says his first film, *Rocky*, was birthed out of desperation, yet he persevered. In his career he admits, "I failed 94 percent of the time!"

The apostle Paul told the early church in Thessalonica, "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5).

Here's the deal: With some exceptions, success and achievement are only achieved through persistence. Adversity comes to us all, but will we press on when we're tempted to throw in the towel?

Let's draw inspiration from these examples of people who could've quit but succeeded by persevering.

10 People Who Persevered

Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks, founded his company in 1971. I've been in that original store. Do you know that 16 years later, the company had fewer than 10 stores? He persevered through the difficulties, and today, Starbucks has more than 21,000 stores in 63 countries and more than 160,000 employees.

Rush Limbaugh was fired four times and told by a senior executive at ABC radio, "If you want to stay in this business, you had better go into sales because you just don't have the talent. You're never going to make it!" Recently Rush celebrated the 25th anniversary of the No. 1 talk-radio show in America, which reaches over 20 million people each week.

Meryl Streep began her career trying for the lead in *King Kong* by Dino De Laurentiis. After her audition, the director said: "Why did you send me this pig? She is so ugly! Belch!"

Overcoming the insult, she persevered and today has three Academy Awards, 16 Oscar nominations, 23 Golden Globe nominations and is called the "undisputed best actress alive."

John Grisham had 30 publishers reject his first novel until a publisher finally relented to print 5,000 copies. John bought 1000 of them and tried to sell or give them away. Overcoming the obstacles, he persevered and, today, has sold 275 million books worldwide.

Tony Robbins was raised in a home with an alcoholic mom and four different dads. His childhood was “incredibly violent” as he cooked the family meals. His mother chased him out of the home with a knife and all alone he worked as a janitor. Today, his motivational seminars help people overcome fear and made him a best-selling author, speaker and life coach to people like Oprah, Bill Clinton and the late Princess Diana. His conglomerate brings in \$6 billion a year and his foundation has fed 42 million families. “I did it purely by persistence!”

Katie Couric auditioned for her first job at CNN and the network president said he never wanted to see her on the air again. “I was told time and time again, I’d never make it in broadcasting.” She persevered.

James Dyson labored for three years trying to get a manufacturer to consider his vacuum cleaner without a bag. Rejected repeatedly one of them told him, “A vacuum without a bag will not sell!” Persevering, James launched it himself, and in 18 months, it became the No. 1 selling vacuum cleaner! He’s now a billionaire. “I love mistakes!”

Tyler Perry lived in poverty, never completed high school and attempted suicide. Flat broke, he lived in the backseat of a compact car with his 6’5” frame. Finally he snapped out of it by praying, persevering and using his creativity to become the actor, producer, director, author and entertainment mogul he is today. *Forbes* magazine called him “the highest-paid man in entertainment,” as he made \$130 million in a year!

Oprah started in Baltimore as a news anchor and was terminated. Elvis was fired after his first performance and

told, "You're never going to make it as a singer." Walt Disney was let go from his first job for not being creative enough. Woody Allen flunked his first film course in college.

Ken Taylor was dejected. His children were bored during his Bible reading. So he pursued a dream for 16 years to paraphrase the Bible in an easier-to-understand language. Committed to being scrupulously faithful, he was so stressed that his vocal chords deteriorated, and he could barely speak for 15 years. Eventually, five publishers rejected his work so he published it himself, running off 2,000 copies and promising all royalties to God. Tyndale House publishing was born, and today, the Living Bible has sold over 43 million copies worldwide.

Proceeding into the new year, let's remember these words: "Brothers, I do not count myself to have attained, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let those of us who are mature be thus minded. And if you think differently in any way, God will reveal even this to you" (Phil. 3: 13-15).