

This Worldly Deception Can Keep You Locked in Despair

Yesterday I was driving and asked my 18-year-old son, Alex, what he thought Jesus looked like. While he was thinking of an answer, I told him my thoughts. “I think Jesus is an unassuming, ordinary Arab or Jewish man. I don’t see Jesus as a Hollywood glam hunk but someone whose “ordinary” appearance would blow us away. I think of Jesus as someone who could have been easily overlooked or dismissed until he got on the religious leaders’ radar when he started teaching in the temple. I think of Jesus as a short Jewish man with thick, curly black hair.”

Jesus is the pinnacle of success, yet consider that he never owned a home, never married or owned a business. His very life contradicts our worldly ideas of success. Of course He was the Son of God and could have called down angels anytime, yet He lived on earth in His full humanity.

I told my son I’m concerned by how obsessed our Christian culture is with worldly success. Prosperity preaching entwined with American Christianity can make you feel ashamed for having a job and trying to make ends meet. I’ve even heard ministers preach that your house or car is an indication of your faith. I’ve always been appalled when I hear this, because what do we say to the Chinese Christians who lose everything for the cause of Christ, or Christians being persecuted for their faith whose homes are taken? Does losing everything for the sake of the gospel mean they don’t have faith?

Another person who lost everything—his identity, his family and his wealth—was Joseph in the Bible. Despite his brothers selling him into slavery, God was still with him: “Now Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of

Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there" (Gen. 39:1-3).

Joseph's fortunes end when Potiphar's wife accuses him of rape. Joseph is sent to prison and God follows him there.

Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love, making him a favorite with the prison long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened there. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. "And whatever he did, the Lord made it to prosper" (Gen. 39:23b).

Joseph is a slave and a prisoner, yet God calls him a success. Joseph didn't own a mansion, have millions of dollars or build a following. Joseph had God.

What God calls success is a slave who can influence his master with his relationship with God. An influencer who has a relationship with God that impacts their boss's business or makes life better for those around them is a success, according to God. You don't have to own a mansion and be a high-powered CEO or famous celebrity.

You can be a slave and be a success.

You can be a Walmart cashier and be considered a success by God.

You can be a stay-at-home mom and considered a success by God.

Success is having God with you. When God is with you, you have everything.

Don't let American culture dictate your definition of success. Set the Bible as your barometer of a successful life.

(Disclaimer: I was influenced by Kris Vallotton's message called "Cultivating Prophetic Families" where he mentions this nugget of Joseph's life.) {eoa}

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