

Success At Work & School

Genesis 39:1-6

I. Starting From The Bottom Grounds Us With A Servant's Heart (1)

1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

II. Genuine Success Is When The Lord Is With Us In All We Do (2-3)

2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

III. Our Goals Are To Please And To Serve Those We Work For (4)

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.

- Honor (1 Tim 6:1)
- Respect (1 Tim 6:2)
- Obedience (Col 3:22a)
- Sincerity (Col 3:22b)
- Hard Work (Col 3:23a; Prov 18:9)
- Divine Purpose (Col 3:23b-24; Eph 6:7-8)

IV. When The Lord Blesses Us, Those We Work For And Serve Are Blessed (5)

5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.

V. Trustworthiness Is The Key Virtue (6; cf. Ps 15:2-5; Lev 19:35-36)

6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance

Conclusion:

1. Is your Christian testimony evident at school/work?
2. What is your ladder of success propped on?
3. How can you make God central in your school/work experience?

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Introduction:

1. Modern Office Terms reflecting office ethics:

- Blamestorming = Sitting around in a group discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed and who was responsible
- Flight Risk = Used to describe employees who are suspected of planning to leave the company or department soon
- 404 = Someone who's clueless. From the World Wide Web error message: "404 Not Found" – meaning that the document could not be located. Used as in: "Don't bother asking him – he's 404."
- Prairie Dogging = When someone yells or drops something loudly

2. Success in the Workplace (and School)

- Horatio Algiers – pull yourself up by your boot strap
- Immigrants come to the land of prosperity
- Gum San – golden mountain

Q: How do you define success?

- Scholarship to a prestigious university
- 7 figure income
- Shiny car or large home
- Doctor's degree
- Success is fulfilling an intended goal

Confusion about what success is

- not your position in your company, but your positional righteousness in Christ
- not how many subordinates you have, but your subordination before God
- not how much money you have, but being faithful stewards of what we do have
- not the car we drive, but what drives us
- not what school we get our education from, but our pursuit of being educated about God & His Word
- not what we possess, but letting God possess us

	The Creator's Success	Corporate Success
Accountability	Please the Lord	Please the shareholder
Objective	Glorify God, Serve man	Financial profit
Manifestation	Character in prosperity or adversity	Survival of the fittest
Employees	Encouraged to use gifts and skills to be meaningful to others	Positioned for efficiency and profitability
Money	Means for good	Source of power
Advancement	Greater responsibility of service	Greater opportunity for power
Duration	Eternal investment and impact	Short term gain and pleasure
Security	Eternal security – God protects	Financial security – money protects

- **Success is fulfillment in God's character and purpose.**

3. Joseph

- Favored son of Jacob
- Sold into slavery by his brothers
- Brought into the house of Potiphar
- We don't know the time frame that Joseph was with Potiphar
- Joseph was 17 years old when sold as a slave
- We don't know the time frame – but Joseph was probably in his late teens or early 20's

I. Starting From The Bottom Grounds Us With A Servant's Heart (1)

1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

- Joseph was sold into slavery
- There is no lower place to be than to be forcibly removed from your family and freedom
- His security of family was removed
- His hope for the future was out of his hands
- He hit rock bottom in that pit with nowhere else to look but up
- There is an upward perspective learned only from the bottom
- Ie/ working manual labor jobs from less than minimum wage gives you a greater appreciation when you advance
- You've learned servanthood
- Joseph learned servanthood through slavery
- The Bible never condones slavery but relates to it as a reality in history
- Ie/ Rome, in the times of Jesus and Paul, had a population of 1 million people with 600,000 of them being slaves
- Egypt's pyramids, Sphinx and great cities were built by slaves
- Potiphar – captain of the guard
- The guard was an elite fighting team – like the Navy Seals or the Green Berets
- Potiphar was an elite soldier and leader – someone you don't mess around with
- Joseph probably had a tough and demanding boss in Potiphar

- He demanded excellence, toughness and dedication from his fighting force
- He probably was a demanding master to Joseph
- Joseph learned servanthood early on to remove any kind of entitlement from the favorite son with the multi-colored coat with dreams to dominate his family
- James & John had to learn that greatness wasn't about entitlement or power, but servanthood

Matthew 20:26 Whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant

Mark 10:43-45 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 **For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

- **Greatness in God's eyes is to emulate the Person of Christ and His Servanthood!**

II. Genuine Success Is When The Lord Is With Us In All We Do (2-3)

2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

- Who/what normally steals glory from God in our success?
 - Luck – lucky to get this job, lucky to get this promotion
 - There is no such thing as luck
 - Chance – because chances are that chances are ...
 - "Chance" is a mathematical probability – not an entity
 - Self – "Look what I've done" (not God through me)
- Jeb Magruder, who was imprisoned for his part in the Watergate scandal reevaluated his view of success: **"I climbed the ladder of success to the top only to discover that my ladder was propped against the wrong wall."**
- "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming." (John Wooden, basketball coach, UCLA)
- "Success is the progressive realization and internalization of all that God wants me to be and do." (Ron Jenson)
- "Success is the continuing achievement of becoming the person God wants you to be and accomplishing the goals God has helped you set." (Charles Stanley)
- Notice that Joseph's testimony was more **SEEN** than **Heard**.
 - Joseph didn't have to do a lot of talking.
 - His work was evident.
 - Potiphar **"saw"** that the Lord was with him.

- Are we more **talk** than **do** at work?
- People are watching to see if our Christianity is realized in how we live more than what we say

III. Our Goals Are To Please And To Serve Those We Work For (4)

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.

- “house slave” = a preferred spot over
- Bruce Waltke: “Joseph’s position as a house slave conforms to documented Egyptian practices. An Egyptian papyrus (Brooklyn 35.14.46) from 1833-1742 B.C. details the names and occupations of nearly eighty slaves in an Egyptian household. In that list, Asian slaves were given superior status and skilled jobs over the Egyptian slaves, who were usually assigned strenuous field labor.” (*Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 519)
- But Joseph was put over everything
- If we’re a small business owner, we’re pleasing and serving our customers.
- If we’re a major corporation, we’re pleasing and serving our shareholders
- If we’re in an office job, we’re pleasing and serving our employer
- If we’re in school, we’re pleasing and serving our professors/teachers
- “found favor” (*heen*)
 - Everything that Joseph oversaw for Potiphar flourished
 - The difference between “kissing up” and “finding favor” is motivation. “Kissing up” uses flattery to advance ourselves. “Finding favor” uses respect and trustworthiness to advance our boss, company.
- “attended him” - service

Some New Testament Applications For Servants:

A. Honor (1 Tim 6:1)

1 Timothy 6:1 Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all **honor**, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

- *Timao* = honor

B. Respect (1 Tim 6:2)

1 Timothy 6:2 Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

- “disrespectful” = *kataphroneo* – lit. to look down upon

C. Obedience (Col 3:22a)

Colossians 3:22a Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,

D. Sincerity (Col 3:22b)

Colossians 3:22b not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

- "eye-service" = working to impress while others are looking, but not working hard enough when people aren't looking
- You heard the phrase: "When the cat's away, the mice are at play"
- Someone else said "*When the cat's away, the mice will turn into rats!*"
- Groucho Marx: "*No man goes before his time - unless the boss leaves early.*"

Q: What do you do when the boss isn't around?

ie/ One international recruiting firm puts the cost of shirking work at \$100 billion to \$150 billion a year, another study put it as high as \$350 billion a year (Sherman & Hendricks, *Keeping Your Ethical Edge Sharp*)

- Suppose a hidden camera was placed on you this week to see if you're productive or not - how would you work?
- Does God have His camera on 24 hours a day? (God is omniscient and omnipotent)

E. Hard Work (Col 3:23a)

Colossians 3:23a Whatever you do, work heartily,

- Sir Thomas Buxton said, "Laziness grows on people; it begins in cobwebs and ends in iron chains." (abolitionist, member of the British Parliament)

Proverbs 18:9 Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.

- The latest State of the American Workplace Report estimates that disengaged workers cost the U.S. between \$450 and \$550 billion in lost productivity each year. (<https://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/management-and-training/4-strategies-for-dealing-with-a-lazy-employee/>)
- 2016 Employee Engagement/Retention Statistics
 - 32.6% of American workers are engaged (Gallup)
 - 25% of employees are highly engaged, 40% are moderately engaged (Aon Hewitt)
 - 24% of employees worldwide are "actively disengaged" (Gallup)

- 29% of millennials are engaged at work, 16% are actively disengaged, 55% are not engaged (Gallup)
- <https://blog.accessperks.com/2016-employee-engagement-loyalty-statistics#1>

F. Divine Purpose (Col 3:23b-24; Eph 6:7-8)

Colossians 3:23b-24 23b as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

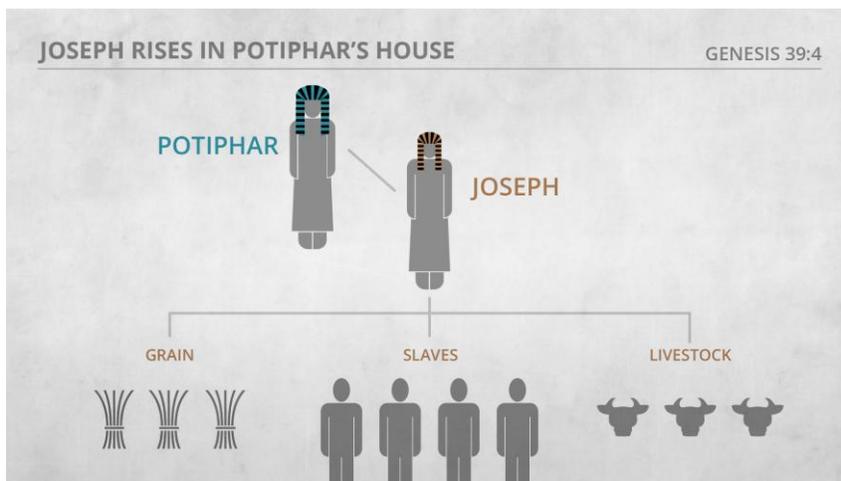
Ephesians 6:7-8 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.

- We work to serve and worship the Lord.
- On a church bulletin board: "*Work for the Lord. The pay isn't much, but the retirement plan is out of this world.*"

IV. When The Lord Blesses Us, Those We Work For And Serve Are Blessed (5)

5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.

- Potiphar promoted Joseph to be the overseer of his whole household
- God blessed Potiphar because of Joseph
- God blessed Potiphar's house and field



V. Trustworthiness Is The Key Virtue (6)

6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance

- "he had no concern about anything" – absolutely trustworthy
- "but the food he ate" = a figure of speech describing Potiphar's private affairs

- The Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics surveyed 43,000 high school students in public and private schools and found that:
 - 59% of high school students admitted cheating on a test during the last year. 34% self-reported doing it more than two times.
 - One out of three high school students admitted that they used the Internet to plagiarize an assignment

<http://www.plagiarism.org/article/plagiarism-facts-and-stats>
- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, employee dishonesty costs American business in excess of \$50 billion annually.
- Typical ethics violations at work:
 - Lying to supervisors
 - Unfair treatment of employees
 - Improper use of company resources
 - Conflict of interest
 - Stealing
 - Lying on reports
 - Sexual harassment

Psalm 15:2-5 2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; 3 who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; 4 in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5 who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Leviticus 19:35-36 35 "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. 36 You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Conclusion:

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