

DETERMINING SUCCESS

In this fast-paced, have to have everything yesterday society, it can be easy to develop a misguided definition of success. The majority of the religious world, and sadly, many in the Church of Christ determine success by the size of the building they meet in, how new the pews are, and how many “members” (names printed in a role book) they can claim. These are all deceitful measures for success. Many “churches” can boast of their 300-500 person attendance for Sunday morning worship, but attendance, in and of itself, does not determine success. The reason is because many have followed after the denominations and coaxed individuals into their auditoriums with entertainment, gimmicks, and gadgets. The elders of Israel came to Samuel and asked for a king so that they could be like all the other nations (1 Sam.8:5). God did not consider this move to be just “changing with the times,” rather God concluded, “they have *rejected* Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7, emphasis B.G.). Filling every pew in a building is nowhere near what God deems as success if the truth is compromised so that impenitent and unfaithful brethren and fornicators are welcomed into fellowship in order to do so (1 Cor. 5). Many have “over-inflated” their results and diminished the role of their “tactics” in order to assert success.

With an unreasonable definition of success, it could also be just as easy for good, hard-working, faithful Christians to become discouraged. The Apostle Paul was a very successful Gospel Preacher. However, he was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, and starved (2 Cor. 11:24-27), his life was threatened and he was chased out of cities (Acts 17:5-10), and he was considered to be an enemy because he preached the truth (Gal. 4:16). Today, very few people would consider this to be the results of a successful ministry or a faithful preacher. What made Paul successful *was not determined by other men* nor their actions; his success was based upon his obedience to God. This same mentality of success is manifested in the false doctrine(s) of Premillennialism. These doctrines suggest that Jesus did not succeed in establishing His Kingdom because the Jews rejected Him. Jesus’ success is not determined by the reaction of men, but rather on the fact that He fulfilled His Father’s Will (Mat. 5:17; 26:54, 56). In like manner, our success is not based upon the deeds or response of others; success is founded upon our obedience to the standard of God’s Holy Word.

We need to consider all that is done in harmony with God’s laws (Col. 3:17) to be a success. This congregation has glorified God with our good works (Mat. 5:16). Though small in number and a newly planted congregation, we have enough capable and qualified Bible class teachers to have a quarterly teacher rotation and a ready pool of willing substitutes. We have an ample number of men who have the ability to lead singing and preach the Gospel. We have a professional web page with an archive of sermon videos. We transmit our worship services live via the internet for anyone to see. In May, after being in existence only eight months, we were able to host a Gospel Meeting which netted visitors at almost every service. We have handed out over 200 fliers inviting members of our community to study the Bible with us on Wednesday nights. Our work is authorized by God and therefore pleasing to and considered a success by the Almighty. We are promoting the glorious Church of Christ and doing so by only offering the soul-saving message of God’s Word (Rom. 1:16-17) and the fellowship which accompanies obedience to the Gospel (1 John 1:7). Let us continue to sow the seed, pray that it reach good

and honest hearts (Luke 8:15), and remember these words penned by Paul, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:6-11). It may be tomorrow or it may be years from now before we know the results of the successful work to which we are dedicated. We may never know. What we do know is that any work which is authorized by God and done in harmony with His Will gives glory to our Heavenly Father and is a success.

- *Brad Green*