

Deep Dive: Blueprint for Success

The opposite of choosing failure is . . .

Blueprint for Success

- The blueprint for success that God gave to Joshua centered on what we have called the “24/7 priority” of God’s Word; the term is not used but the wording is explicit: “study continually . . . meditate day and night.”

Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.

Joshua 1.7-8

The Opposite of Failure

- What is the opposite of failure? It is not success; it is obedience—careful and conscientious obedience. In Deuteronomy, the word “obey” appears twenty-nine times; the word “careful” occurs twenty times; and the phrase “be sure” occurs eleven times.

Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 12.28

The Two Issues with Obedience

- It is possible to be careful and conscientious in obedience but be unacceptable in the evaluation of God. Self-righteousness was the problem with “blameless” Pharisees such as Saul of Tarsus. In his kingdom sermon, Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the conscientious law-keeping of the Pharisees, or we cannot enter.
- The second issue is assumed obedience: it looks like something real but, in reality, it is a hollow representation with no actual substance.

The Missing Dynamic

- The LORD God emphasized to Israel that He did not choose them for any outstanding qualities; He chose them simply because He loved them. With that choice, came revelation; God revealed himself very specifically to Abraham, then to Isaac, then to Jacob, and then to Israel.
- With revelation comes enablement. God's word is living—it is the embodiment and expression of His nature, his life, His character. It is life-giving: "The words I speak are spirit and they are life" (John 6.63).

- Moses warned Israel: “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it” (30.11, 14).
- The writer to the Hebrews warned—

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. (4.1-2)
- Under-exposure to the life-giving Word results in anemic spiritual life. When we prioritize the Word in our lives, it transforms us.

The 24 / 7 Priority

- Our busy lives and pressing priorities seem to have determined that God's revealed priorities are obsolete—that we can only compete in this world on its terms, not according to God's priorities.
- This is a satanic lie, revealed in the “be successful” temptations that Jesus faced at the beginning of his ministry. His response¹ emphasized the truth that we are no better, no stronger, no more successful than we are in loving and obeying the Word of God.

¹ Jesus responded to every temptation by quoting from Deuteronomy (8.3; 6.16, with Psalm 91.11, 12; 6.13)

So is this really realistic?

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6.5-8