

SUCCESS
WITHOUT
SUCCESS

GEORGE BURGESS

 *Whitaker House*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the risen Christ for He freely offered up His life to save a sinner like me. As undeserving as I am, He has likewise allowed me to write this book to His glory, thereby proving once again, our Lord is a God of grace and mercy! May Jesus Christ be praised!

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PERSPECTIVES OF SUCCESS

FRAME ME MORE AND MORE INTO THE LIKENESS OF THY SON, JESUS CHRIST, THAT LIVING IN THY FEAR, AND DYING IN THY FAVOR; I MAY IN THY APPOINTED TIME ATTAIN THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE...UNITE US ALL IN PRAISING AND GLORIFYING THEE IN ALL OUR WORKS.¹

GEORGE WASHINGTON
FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
—FROM HIS PRAYER JOURNAL

In the summer of 1956, movie starlet Marilyn Monroe was on top of the world. She had just married playwright Arthur Miller and was entering her most successful years as an actress. Because of her enormous popularity she was well on her way to becoming a film legend. Tragically, in the summer of 1962, her success ended when she was found dead in her Brentwood, California, home. The coroner's

report stated that she had died of a barbiturates overdose.

In the winter of 1942, award winning inventor Edwin H. Armstrong had reached the pinnacle of his career. He held patents on the three basic electronic circuits central to modern radio, radar, and television. He had already been awarded the highest honor in U.S. science, the Franklin Medal, and was considered by many to rank with such electrical greats as Alexander Graham Bell and Guglielmo Marconi. Sadly, during the winter of 1954, Armstrong took his life by jumping from his apartment window in New York's River House section.

In the spring of 1941, internationally renowned banker Leon Fraser had emerged as the key spokesman for the banking community of the world. He was revered as an essential element in advancing the cause of an international monetary cooperation. Woefully, in the spring of 1945, he returned to his boyhood home of North Granville, New York, to take his life.

These are only a small sample of the many men and women who have reached the heights of worldly success, only to abandon it. The cup of success was sweet and refreshing at first, but they soon realized its emptiness and despair. These three individuals are a microcosm

of mankind's lifelong struggle to succeed. We see man vigorously pursuing a form of success which lacks the substance of true success. He foolishly spends his time, energy, and resources to obtain a success that is here one moment and gone the next.

At every turn we see the multitudes making their way toward the humanistic summit of success, hoping they will partake of the true fruits of victory. When analyzing the shallowness of man's earthly endeavors, we can't help but feel a sense of sorrow for the many who have willfully chosen to waste their lives investing in a success, without true success.

Perhaps you have never listened to the quiet pleas of those such as Marilyn, Ed, and Leon, people whose examples sorrowfully cry out a warning to us all. They gave everything to obtain a man-centered success, only to find their reward being a handful of emptiness.

As we seek to better understand the true meaning of success, let us learn from the tragic examples of Marilyn, Ed, and Leon. Let us together wrestle with the concept which guides and motivates every aspect of our lives. As we explore this most important subject, let us allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse and conform us into the very image of true success.

The word *success* is one of the most exhilarating terms in our language. Just the mention of it tends to produce joyous thoughts of self-gratification. The concept is easily grasped on the surface, yet when closely examined it is very complex. In formulating our personal views of success, we draw from our past experiences, attitudes, emotions, and the body of knowledge we have accumulated since birth. Our understanding is also influenced by vocation, religion, and even nationality.

The various factors that go into the development of one's view naturally produce diversity among men. This diversity is compounded by man's limited ability to discern between genuine and counterfeit forms of success. Such confusion causes most people to spend their lives pursuing a form of success which fails to transcend the feelings and values of mere men.

MAN-CENTERED

We may consider the meaning and purpose of success from one of two perspectives. The first and most common is the man-centered or humanistic view. Its main objective is self-exultation. More specifically, it centers on the fulfillment of some form of mental, emotional, material, or religious accomplishment.

Because of its subjectivity, the criterion for success tends to vary from person to person. In the absence of universal absolutes, one man's success may be another man's failure.

Scripture clearly tells us the man-centered approach is doomed to eternal failure. This becomes evident when we consider the message of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 (NAS): "*Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What advantage does man have in all his work, which he does under the sun?*" In a forthright manner, the Preacher declares that there is nothing man can do in the flesh which transcends the realm of vanity. He further illustrates his point by directing our attention to the single area where most spend the vast majority of their time—the work arena—where many find a sense of worth and even personal satisfaction. Through it some have built solid reputations or amassed large sums of money. In one brief statement, the Preacher proclaims to mankind that all labor is vanity.

Throughout his proclamation, the Preacher informs us that regardless of our expert craftsmanship, credible reputation, or the amount of money gained, all labor for the purpose of self-exultation is vanity. As if to discourage us from seeking out any other means of self-gratification, the Preacher goes on to