

# Success or obedience?

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? ”*

*And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

*He said, “Go and tell this people:”*

*‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’*

*Isaiah 6:8-9 (NIV)*

Success is the name of the game in our society. Play to win is the motto. Christian writers write books and magazine articles explaining how to be successful by having a great youth group, growing your church or having obedient children and a great marriage.

I believe that the Bible is full of instruction on how to be obedient to the Lord, how to be a good pastor, youth leader, parent, husband or wife. But to fulfil that role according to the teaching of Scripture does not guarantee “success” as the world measures it.

You may be a “perfect” parent and still have children who do not walk in the way of the Lord. Our Father in heaven is the perfect parent yet—as we read Revelation 2 and 3—we see how God’s children sin and fail to walk well with the Lord.

You may be the “perfect” pastor such—as Isaiah was—but you may experience a congregation like that in

Isaiah’s day. He preached his heart out and the people would not listen. Isaiah was obedient but not “successful” — as the world counts success.

You may be the “perfect” spouse like the Lord was to Israel but your marriage may end in divorce as God’s marriage to the nation Israel ended. Isaiah 50:1 (NIV) “This is what the Lord says: ‘Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?’”

Rebellious children, church ruined, marriage ending in divorce — yet the one party was not guilty of sin in God’s eyes. It seems like failure for certain, but God’s will was fulfilled — by the parent, the pastor, the spouse because they did what God called them to do.

Some of my readers are thinking their lives are a failure because a child rebelled against the Lord as an adult. So did God’s children — but do we call God a failure? For example, his son David com-

mitted murder and adultery. Of course we do not call God a failure because of the failure of His child. God was dealing with a sinner (David) and anything evil can happen when you are in a relationship with a sinner.

We are called to obey the Lord but we are not told in Scripture that if we obey the Lord that life will be “successful”. This is the point with Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry. God told him to go preach his heart out but no one would listen. Isaiah obeyed the Lord and by modern standards he “failed”. By God’s standards he was successful.

Be careful about how you view failure in your life. You may have succeeded in God’s eyes just because you lived a life pleasing to him.

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