

# Five Keys to Success in Life

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

Luke 18:1-8

*Dr. Danny C. Murphy*

**GREETINGS:** To President Staton, Provost Raber, Fellow Board of Trustee members, Administration, Faculty, Staff, Parents, and the graduation class of 2017, I greet you in the name of the matchless, magnificent, marvelous Savior, Jesus Christ.

**INTRODUCTION:** Prior to becoming the General Presbyter, I served as the Associated General Presbytery for Trinity Presbytery. Shortly after assuming the position of Associate General Presbyter for Mission, Congregational Development, and Evangelism for Trinity Presbytery, I found myself accidentally locked out of my office. I attempted to use the keys that had been given to me, but I was unsuccessful in my attempt to open the door. For you see, I didn't possess the key that would allow me to successfully open the office door. And, the truth of the matter is that we tried all kind of keys. However, I wasn't successful in opening the door to my office until I had in my hand the right key.

The widow in our text possessed several keys that enable her to unlock the door that was preventing her from successfully achieving what she wanted in life. Now if you want to thrive in life and not just survive in life, then it's important that you know these keys. If you want to succeed in life, then it's important that you apply these keys to your life.

What keys did this widow use to achieve such great success? Well, according to Luke 18:1-8, there were at least five keys to this widow's success. Let's look at them.

## ***One Key to Success in Life is...***

### **I. Be Willing to Go Where You Haven't Gone Before -: vs. 2-3.**

<sup>2</sup> "There was a judge in a certain city...who was a godless man with great contempt for everyone. <sup>3</sup>A widow of that city CAME TO HIM..."

At some point in this widow's life, she recognized that if she was going to be successful, then she had to do something that she had never done before and that is to go where she had never gone before.

Now she could have stayed where she was and bemoaned her situation. She could have stayed where she was and bewailed her predicament. But the Bible let us know that she reached deep down into the recesses of our soul and grabbed hold to a pioneering spirit. And, when she grabbed hold to that pioneering spirit, she got up and went where she'd never gone before. She went to an unjust judge.

Now, as we reflect on the keys to success in life, a question that should be asked and answered is this: Are you a pioneer or a settler?

What's the difference between a pioneer and a settler? Well, that's a good question. And, I'm glad that you asked.

### **Pioneers...**

- Are constantly willing to accept new challenges and to move in new directions.
- Are willing to embrace change. In fact, they anticipate change and plan accordingly.
- Their motto is: Is there any way that we can do what we're doing better?

### **Settlers...**

- Have found their comfort zones.
- Don't want to deal with things that are going to require them to have to stretch themselves, especially if it means that they'll have to give up some of their comfort to help meet the needs of others.
- Are advocates of the status quo. They don't like change. They want things to remain the same.
- Their motto is: If it isn't broken don't fix it.

Because this widow was dissatisfied with the inequalities she experienced in her life, she was motivated to do something about it.

One of the essential motivating factors for moving you from where you are to where God wants you to be in life is a sense of dissatisfaction with your present situation.

If you're pleased with or comfortable with or contented with your present situation, then you'll never be willing to move from where you're at in life to where God wants you to be in life. It's only when you're displeased, discontented, or dissatisfied with where you find yourself in life will you be self-motivated enough to make the necessary changes that you need to make to move you from where you are in life to where you've never been in life.

So, one of the keys to success in life is to be willing to go where you haven't gone before.

### **Another Key to Success in Life is...**

#### **II. Be A Dreamer -: v. 3.**

<sup>3</sup>"A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, *APPEALING* for justice against someone who had harmed her."

This widow didn't just see things as they were. Instead she had a dream. In other words, she envisioned things as they one day would be. Thus, motivated by her desire to fulfill her dream, she got up from where she was and went to where she had never gone to work toward making her dream, that preferable future a physical reality.

While she was still in kindergarten, my daughter, Dionna, who is now 33 years old, had a burning desire to ride a two-wheel bicycle. At an early age, she had me to take the training wheels off her bicycle. And every evening when I got home she would have me take her outside so that she could learn how to ride her bike without the training wheels.

So, each evening I would take her outside. She would get on her bike and start peddling, with me holding onto the back of the seat to make sure that she didn't fall. Picture this, if you will, she's peddling and I'm running behind her, hanging onto her bicycle seat. And, I'm encouraging her. I'm saying, "You're doing, baby! Look at you! You're riding without your training wheels. I knew you could do it!"

Well, one evening I came home, and while I was sitting at the computer trying to complete some work that I had to get done, Dionna' walked over to me and says, "*Dad, it's time to take me outside to teach me how to ride my bike.*" I told said to her: "*Baby Girl, I know it's the time that we usually go out to ride your bike. But, dad has a lot of work to do. As soon as I'm finished with this I'll take you outside so that you can ride your bike.*"

Well, she went outside to play. A few minutes later she came storming into the house through the kitchen door, that leads into the garage, shouting, "Dad, dad, come here! I've got something to show you in the garage." I immediately jumped up thinking perhaps another rattlesnake had curled up inside our garage. So, I'm running behind her. When we get in the garage, I'm looking around and listening for the sound rattlesnakes usually make. To my surprise, however, Dionna' gets on her bicycle that is stationed at the edge of the incline that leads out of the garage, she pushes off with her two little feet, rolls down the incline and peddles across the yard. And she's been riding a two wheel bike every since that day.

Why did she do that? It's simple. She **desired the dream**. Even though I wasn't available, her desire to ride a two-wheel bicycle prompted her to try and go riding without me!

Tell the person sitting next to you: "*Don't ever give up on your dreams.*"

### **A Third Key to Success in Life is:**

#### **III. Be Goal-oriented**

<sup>3</sup>*"A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, appealing for JUSTICE against someone who had harmed her."*

This widow woman knew exactly what she wanted out of life. There's no faulty ambition here. There's no misguided motive here. If you were to ask this woman, "What do you want? She would readily say, "I Want Justice!"

You see, to be successful in life it's important for you to have goals.

Now it's important for you to define your goal very clearly. You'll never reach a vague goal. Vague goals don't attract. Vague goals don't have any drawing power.

You might say, "One of my goals is to lose weight." Great, *How Much weight? By when?* It's better to say, "I am going to lose 25 pounds by December 15, 2017." Be specific.

To all my graduates, you're here this evening because you were specific about your graduating goal. Instead saying, "My goal is to graduate one day." You were specific. You said, "My goal is to graduate in May 13, 2017."

Some of you were even more specific. Some said, "In May 2017, I'm going to graduate Summa Cum Laude in May 2017. Where are my Summa Cum Laude.

Some said, "I'm going to graduate Magna Cum Laude.

Others said, "I'm going to graduate Cum Laude."

Still others said, "I'm going to graduate Thank you Laude."

In addition to defining your goal, you must describe the profit. You see, every goal has to have a payoff, a reward, or there's no motivational pull to it.

You have to ask: Why do I want what I want? It's necessary for you to settle the value of the goal in your mind.

Moreover, since Morrie Schwartz in *Tuesday's with Morrie* said, "Giving makes me feel like I am living." Or, as we say here at Presbyterian College, "While We Live, We Serve", we must ask ourselves...

- How is this going to benefit others?
- How is it going to positively impact the lives of others?
- How is it going to make a real difference in other peoples' lives?

It's important for you to settle to the value of your goal in your mind because in reaching your goal you're going to encounter problems. Count on it. You can take that check to the bank and cash it.

You're going to go through some tough times. If you don't know why you want what you want, if you don't have a payoff or reward, if you don't know what the benefits are going to be, you're going to give up when things get tough. You'll cop out. You won't reach your goal because you're going to give up.

And the reason you'll give up is that you won't think the CAUSE is worth the COST. You won't think the PRIZE is worth the PRICE, all because you don't know what the prize is in the first place.

Success in life requires that you set goals. You have set short-range goals, mid-range goals, and long range goals. And, as you seek to reach your goals, *"Keep Your Eyes on the Prize."* Turn to your neighbor and say, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize."

***Still another Key to Success in Life is:***

#### **IV. Be Positive**

*"The judge ignored her for a while..."*

Someone once said, *"If the going is easy, beware. You may be headed downhill."* Once again, throughout your trip toward improvement and success in life, you will encounter difficulties.

There will be ups and downs. Every road of sufficient length has twist and turns and hills and valleys. Am I right about it?

Now the way to make all this work for you is to bring a positive and winning attitude with you. With the right attitude, you can be handed a failure, see it for what it is - a learning experience, and move on to accomplish greater things to the glory of God.

And I'm here to declare to you this evening the choice is yours my sisters. The choice is yours my brothers.

And, since the choice is yours, I want to encourage you to always embrace your God-given power to choose. You see, when human beings make up their minds, when they exercise their God-given ability to choose, they have the remarkable ability to make something out of nothing.

- They can take WEEDS and turn them into GARDENS;
- They can take BRICKS and turn them into BUILDINGS;
- They can take TREES and turn them into PAPER
- They can take PENNIES and turn them into FORTUNES; and
- They can take DESOLATE PLACES and turn them into DREAM VACATIONS!

Your attitude is totally up to you. Yes, bad things may happen in your life. Yes, the pitcher for Team Circumstances may have a tremendous curveball waiting for you right after this worship service and you can't control that.

- You can't control what others may think about you.
- You can't control what others may say about you.
- You can't control what others may do to you.

But, you can control your attitude. Therefore, choose to be POSITIVE.

### ***A Final Key to Success in Life is:***

#### **V. Be Persistent**

<sup>3</sup>*"A widow of that city came to him REPEATEDLY..."*

Someone once said, "Plan you work and then work your plan."

This widow didn't simply establish a Goal. Instead, she went one step further and developed a plan of action to reach her Goal.

- It wasn't an intricate plan.
- It wasn't a complicated plan.
- It was a very simple Plan.

After all, she wasn't a powerful person in the community. She didn't have or occupy any positions of influence. She didn't have any significant downtown connections.

Thus, her plan was a simple plan. Her plan was simply to keep on coming to the judge's office. She was there from the time his office opened in the morning until the time that it closed in the evening, and she was there day after day after day after day.

You see, the final key to this widow's success was perseverance. This widow woman was persistent. This widow woman didn't only have a Plan, but she repeatedly or persistently carried out her plan. Her commitment to her plan was so strong unto...

- No matter how long she had to wait;
- No matter how many times she was ridiculed;
- No matter how many people laughed at her;

She just repeatedly kept on coming.

There was once a young man who...

- In 1831, started a business and failed so miserably until he had to file for bankruptcy.
- In 1832, he tossed his hat into the political arena, as a candidate for the legislature. He was defeated.
- In 1834, he started another business. Once again, before the year ended he filed for bankruptcy.
- In 1835, his sweetheart and the woman he was going to marry died.
- In 1836, he had a nervous breakdown.
- In 1838, he entered the political arena again. He was defeated in the election.
- In 1843, he was defeated for the U.S. Congress.
- In 1846, he was defeated again for the U.S. Congress.
- In 1848, he was defeated once again for the U.S. Congress.
- In 1855, he campaigned for the U.S. Senate. He was defeated.
- In 1856, he campaigned for the U.S. Vice Presidency. He was defeated.
- In 1858, he campaigned again for the U.S. Senate. He was defeated again.
- In 1860, he was nominated for the presidency as a "favorite son" from the State of Illinois. And, later that year Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America.

Yes, my sisters and brothers, Persistence Pays. It paid off for:

Abraham Lincoln	Harriet Tubman
Susan B. Anthony	Babe Ruth
George Washington Carver	Hank Aaron
Thomas Edison	Ida B. Wells
Eleanor Roosevelt	Rev. William Plumer Jacobs

And, it'll pay off for you!

Therefore,

- Don't ever allow criticism to Discourage you.
- Don't ever permit opposition to Dishearten you.
- Don't ever let failure ultimately Defeat you.

Yes, be persistent because payday is coming: Be persistent. Because if you keep your hand in God's unchanging hand, in Deuteronomy 28:1-14, God says...

- I'll bless you wherever you go.
- I'll bless you whatever you do.
- Your enemies will attack you one way and I'll scatter them seven ways.

Be persistent. Because if you keep your hand in God's unchanging hand, God says..

- I'll bless your coming in.
- I'll bless your going out.
- I'll make you the head and not the tail.

For if you keep your hand in God's unchanging hand and on keeping on...

- Your despair is going to turn into hope.
- Your sorrow is going to turn into joy.
- Your pain is going to turn into gain.

For if you keep your hand in God's unchanging hand and on keeping on...

- Your scars are going to turn into stars.
- Your midnight is going to turn into daylight.
- Your stumbling blocks are going to turn into stepping-stones.
- Your trials are going to turn into Triumphs
- Your difficulties are going to turn into victories.

So...

- Don't give up.
- Don't give out.
- Don't give in.
- Don't throw in the towel.
- Just stay in the race.
- Maintain your pace. Until you hear God say, "Well done, well done, well done good and faithful servant, well done!"