

## Redefining Success

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Can you imagine being the son or daughter of Bill Gates? Consider for a moment being an heir to the wealthiest man in the United States. Few people could truly comprehend the life of luxury that his wealth could obtain—not to mention that you would never have to worry about repairing your computer if it crashed! But seriously, would it be a position to be envied? Contrast that with the son of a man currently living in Nicaragua—a boy who will never know anything but hunger and deep poverty. A boy whose life expectancy is shorter than average due to the physical hardships he will endure, but a boy whose father was baptized into the Church some five years ago during a mission campaign. Thanks to men and women willing to carry out the great commission, this boy is growing up in a Christian home. Who is really to be envied?

Oftentimes we limit our perspective of King David to a mighty warrior, a man “after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22), the man who wrote many of the Psalms, and the man who eventually took a “walk on the roof” and committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed in battle. But what lessons can we learn from David as a father?

### ***You Can’t Parent if You Are Never Home***

David’s battle conquests were numerous (e.g., 2 Samuel 8). His bravery was apparent from his youth, during which time he defeated a lion and bear (1 Samuel 17:34-35). He then went on to slay the giant Philistine Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45-51). Anyone even vaguely familiar with the accounts of David’s life will quickly recognize God had blessed his efforts on the battlefield. In fact, it happened that on one occasion when David was coming home that the women were celebrating and dancing with tambourines singing: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). But all of his conquests were not without some compromise—David was rarely at home with his children.

Try as hard as you may, you cannot be two places at once. How many times have children suffered as the result of parents who are away from home too long? Even preachers oftentimes find themselves “saving the world” at the neglect of their own children. There is a reason why the inspired writer of Proverbs penned the words “the rod and rebuke give wisdom,

**but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother”** (Proverbs 29:15, emp. added). How many times have we seen this played out in today’s society?

As parents we must not follow in David’s footsteps when it comes to career. We must remember that our primary mission field must be our own family first. And if we are going to be successful in getting our children to Heaven, then we must be at home to mold and shape them in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). **Christian parents must stop using worldly parameters for measuring success.** Remember, Jesus admonished, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Success is not confined to having a massive house, with late-model cars, and stylish clothes. **True success is teaching our children the way to Heaven in such a manner that they stay on that path even into adulthood!** Have we forgotten that the Son of God said, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost” (Luke 9:25)? I would add, “For what profit is it if a man gains the whole world by working himself all the time but loses his own children to the world?” Dads, how often do we truly consider our wife and children when we’re volunteering to work overtime?

**The time has come for Christians in America to turn away from materialism and embrace lives of contentment.** Part of being content is developing a family plan in which one parent is able to stay home to rear the children. Just prior to Paul admonishing Timothy to strive for contentment, he laid down a divine plan for young widowed females. He observed: “Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” Notice the divinely laid down order: young women are to marry first, then bear children (a divine plan of which our society needs to be reminded), and then guide the house. **How can mothers guide the house if they are never home?** In this age where feminism has become rooted in American culture, the suggestion for women to be homemakers is not a popular topic—but God’s Word is not concerned with popularity contests. God’s Word is concerned with giving humankind a pattern to get to Heaven.

The inspired writer of Psalm 127 made this observation in verse 4: “Children are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man.” **Sadly, King David spent too much time launching real arrows and not enough time launching his children.** Friends, we are God’s archers! Our

children are God's arrows! Are you diligently, with forethought and planning, launching your children toward that bulls-eye that we call Heaven?

### ***The High Price of Ignoring the Sins of Our Children***

How many times have Christian parents witnessed their children conducting themselves wrongly, only to overlook it or pass it off as “just a phase?” We have forgotten that it is O.K. to tell our children “No.” Oftentimes, because it is our own children, we refuse to identify sin as what it is—sin. In 2 Samuel 13 we read of an incident between two of David's offspring, an incident that David overlooked for which he paid dearly for failing to address properly.

David's son Amnon became infatuated with his half-sister Tamar. Tamar was Absalom's sister, and she was a virgin. Amnon and his friend Jonadab conceived of a plan in which Amnon feigned illness, in order that Tamar would come and prepare food in his sight. An unsuspecting David sent Tamar to Amnon's house, where Amnon then forced himself on her (v. 14). Instead of then taking her as his wife or owning up to his sin, Amnon sent Tamar away. Tamar's brother Absalom was furious. And the text indicates that when “King David heard all these things, he was very angry” (2 Samuel 13:21). But we never read of David addressing the sin of Amnon. Instead, he did what many parents do and simply stuck his head in the sand, hoping that everything would resolve itself. Instead of resolution, Absalom's anger eventually resulted in the murder of Amnon. David's refusal to deal with sin would eventually lead to Absalom's rebellion and David's exile. Consider how much better things would have been had David addressed Amnon's sin. **When your children sin are you more worried about what others think or how their sin has separated them from Almighty God?**

### ***Do You Know Who Your Children Are Hanging around?***

Ask yourself this simple question: Do I have the courage—the backbone—to step in and put a stop to a relationship if it is hindering my child's journey to Heaven? Do you know with whom your children spend their time? Who are they texting or emailing at night? In Samuel 13:3, we learn “But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab was a very crafty man.” It was the “crafty” Jonadab who helped Amnon devise the plot lure Tamar to his room. Paul's words are as valid today as they were the day he wrote them, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Corinthians 15:33). I suspect every congregation of the Lord's Church holds some gray-headed parents who wish they

had given more heed to this verse when their own children were young. Do you really know your children's friends?

### ***David Was Not a One-woman Man***

While the Bible records that David was a man after God's own heart, it also records that David was the first king to introduce polygamy into the Israelite nation. We know that David came from Hebron to Jerusalem and took concubines and wives (2 Samuel 5:13). He married Michal (1 Samuel 18:27), Abigail (1 Samuel 25:42), and Ahinoam (1 Samuel 25:43). At Hebron he married Maacah (who became the mother of Absalom—2 Samuel 3:3), Haggith (1 Chronicles 3:2), Abital (1 Chronicles 3:3), and Eglah (1 Chronicles 3:30). Plus we read of David having 10 concubines (2 Samuel 15:16). David was not content with "the wife of his youth," but rather he gave into his lust and passion. How many marriages have been destroyed by a simple "walk on the roof" that eventually led to adultery? Our children will pattern their relationships after what they see at home—and if they witness a mother or father who is unfaithful, they are more likely to follow in their shoes. One can't help but wonder if David's behavior at home ultimately did not lead to much of the heartache he suffered from his children's behavior.

### ***Conclusion***

Many congregations have "vital statistic" boards mounted in the front of their auditorium that records attendance and contribution. I would suggest congregations add a new line: "Number of children who abandoned the Faith this year." You want to talk about a vital statistic! That one remains the massive 2-ton elephant in the room that we don't like to talk about. What would it feel like to look up and see we met our budget, but we have lost 23 precious souls to the world? I think it would be a wake-up call to parents and Bible teachers about the real definition of success. Think of how a congregation's faith would grow knowing that year after year that line held the number zero. Friends, that's true success! Are you like David—a success at the office, but a failure at home? Isn't it time we rethink our definition of success?