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Subject Asked: How do you measure success?

How Done: In class writing, then re-written in a test after learning grammar skills.

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“Living on top of the world, living on top of the world, fifty grand in my hands, fifty grand in my pants” (Rap Artist).

This was the last rap song I remembered, being unsaved in JA, at a friend’s house in New Kingston. It clearly depicted to me and everyone else, that it’s all about the “bling bling,” “dinero,” “Benjamins,” or whatever monetary success is termed in your society. Meaning, 90% of our society believes that success is determined solely by money.

I beg to disagree, for I’m not rich and can be considered poor, but definitely successful: Not even in terms of achievements, accolades or affiliation, but what success is really determined by, _____ (soon to be found out).

I bring to attention the richest and wisest man that ever lived, King Solomon. If you’re a reader of the bible, you’ll know he really had wealth. He had numerous palaces, thrones, cups and all utensils in gold; servants and maid in abundance; live stock and land innumerable; one thousand wives and concubines, even princesses of great nations like Egypt. In other words, as the bible said, there was none comparable to him in riches; not before or after him. He not only had wealth, but he was the wisest man that ever lived; writing thousand of songs and poems.

However, after much “success,” the wisdom that God gave to him began to speak to him – on what he was feeling. He said, “all is vanity, all is vanity.” He also stating that all a man is to do is eat, drink and be merry. He had found out that with his increase he wasn’t necessarily “better off” than those less fortunate, but sometimes even more miserable. He found out that success wasn’t in monetary gains or “any” gains, but success lies with the intangibles. For instance, if you can have wealth, pseudo honor and power, but with misery, lack of family or community, then you don’t really have success. If you have success and can’t enjoy it, why have it? Therefore, monetary gain is not success, it is fleeting, a responsibility and even deceptive. No wonder we are encouraged, “if riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psalms 62:10).

Why?

Another scripture answered that, “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that [gives grace]” (Rom 9:16). Or better yet, “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all” (Ecc 9:11). This means that the very “success” that anyone has is not because they themselves willed it or strove to achieve it, but God that gave it, even if they are “heathens:” And if God gave it, he can take it away.

Success is things that are desired by the celebrities and ‘the rich and the famous’ – joy, happiness, peace, contentment and fellowship. Success is having no fear, even of death. Success is being you and not forced to wear a façade. Success is saying at the end of the day, I have no regrets, even allege mistakes, I lived.

Christ came and taught us that success. That is, Christ, who was actually God come as man, showed us what success really is. Rather than coming as a rich king with wealthy apparel to redeem and fellowship with man, he came as a poor carpenter born in a manger. He walked in inexpensive clothes and rode a donkey. Could he afford more? Of course, he’s God. But he taught us that life, and it more abundantly, is not what we naturally perceive it to be. It’s not castles, dominion or earthly riches. It is actually being free from this misconception. This misconception that holds us bound and dictate to us how to dress, where to go, who to talk to and what to eat. It forces upon us masks, facades and roles we cannot bear. “Following the Jones,” leaves no room for what is real – joy, happiness, peace, contentment, fellowship and best of all relationship with God, through Christ.

That is success – life! Life that Christ came and taught us. Yes he had everything, but did he show it or choose to take it? No, he chose the other way, real success, which is godliness. One scripture said that gain is not godliness “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1Tim 6:6). Godliness is real life and life is purpose. You were born with life, thus you were born with a purpose. “Following the Jones” kills that purpose and thus kills that life. Imitating and striving to be like the guest on the show “lifestyle of the rich and famous” is the misconception that monetary gain is success; which also eludes your purpose.

To simple illustrate that gain is not godliness, just last night (summer 2005) I was in a World Religion Class and Dr. Rieger taught us something about the Buddha that was startling. Not to lift up or concede with this religiosity but show that gain is not godliness. The Buddha was born in luxury, second tier in the caste system, his father being very wealthy and of the ruling class; before becoming an adult he had three palaces at his disposal and over 40 young girls (or 40,000). Yet one night at age 29 in the middle of the night, he got up, bid farewell to his wife and kids and went off in the forest, never to return to that lifestyle. He took a vow of poverty and sought real happiness. From this we can see that what many are chasing after, it won’t give them what they want. He had it and gave it up. Little did he and many others who are trying to be like how he was, rich, that this happiness can only be found in a life surrendered to Yahoshua Ha Mashiah (Jesus Christ).

The only way you can have success is to have life that Christ gives, and to have this life is to have purpose, and to have this purposeful life you have to be born again. Having done so you reap the benefits of life, which the bible promises are “power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7) and “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rom 14:17). Lack of these things with monetary gains or chasing it, is a trap the Devil has you in. He came to “Kill, steal and destroy,” but Christ came that you “might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Having being born again myself, I consider myself successful – apart of the regime that is affectionately termed “King’s Kids.”