



September 1, 2010

Gleanings

Success for Working Women



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Solutions that Transform

"Working moms redefine success" was the title of a recent MSNBC news story (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/38692477/ns/business-careers>). The writer notes that 51 percent of the workforce is now female and the number of working mothers who are the sole support for the family is at an all-time high.

In the article, a new definition of success is offered by a forty-nine-year-old female law professor who is the mother of two children. Her definition is: "Within the profession I've chosen, I made it. I'm respected by my peers, at the top of my salary scale and I'm able to pick my kids up at 3." Success to this woman is "making it," which means being respected, being well paid, and being able to play the role of mom after school.

How would one determine if this definition of success is correct? This begs the question of standards, that is, a way to define that something is correct.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the definition of *standard* is "something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/standard>).

Who has the authority to define success for a working woman?

Everyone embraces a source of authority. There are two options: your source of authority is either internal or external. If it is internal, then you are your own god and therefore the definer of reality for yourself. If it is external, then there is a being greater than you who possesses the authority to define reality for you.

If you are the source of authority, defining reality for yourself, you are a humanist. A humanist is a god to himself or herself.

If you look to a source of authority outside of yourself, then you are a theist. A theist believes in a god who is separate from man. So assuming that you are a theist, whatever you believe about God—in terms of his character and nature—will define your standards.

Prior to the introduction of the Darwinian theory of evolution, a widely accepted source of authority was the God of the Bible. The standard of life based on the Bible is called a biblical worldview.

According to a biblical worldview, everything in life—marriage, parenting, business, public policy, etc.—is measured against the Bible.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the world has moved steadily away from a biblical worldview. To illustrate this, consider the following examples:

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- Since the 1840s, the public school movement in the USA has been progressively disconnecting all learning from the Bible. From a biblical worldview, if God created the universe, then all knowledge must begin with the knowledge of God. When education is disconnected from God, education will be increasingly ineffective (see Proverbs 9:10).
- Since the 1930s, Keynesian economics, driven by a presupposition of no day of reckoning, abandoned the biblical worldview of currency, debt, wealth, and fiscal responsibility. This has led to debt-based economies worldwide and is a major reason for the current economic calamity (see Proverbs 13:22; 21:20; 22:7).
- Since the 1960s, sexual relationships outside of marriage have been increasingly accepted. Murder, in the form of abortion, has been legalized to support this new standard of consensual sexual

relationships outside of marriage. Sexual relationships outside of marriage and murder are contrary to a biblical worldview (see Galatians 5:19ff, James 2:11).

- Since the 1970s, the culture has been seeking to redefine marriage as a casual relationship of convenience between any two beings. The Bible defines marriage as a committed covenant relationship between a man and a woman (see Proverbs 2: 17; Matthew 19:6).
- Since the 1990s, homosexuality is increasingly viewed as simply a lifestyle choice and therefore a human right. The Bible teaches that homosexuality is unnatural, that is, God did not create humans to be homosexuals. Furthermore, God uses homosexuality as a tool of judgment against those who reject the revelation of God in creation (see Romans 1:18ff).

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All of the above examples—increasingly ineffective education, debt-ridden economies, legalized murder, casual sexual relationships, disintegration of marriage, and the rise of homosexuality—are illustrations of what can happen when people abandon a biblical worldview. Without a biblical worldview to guide us, there is no credible standard for right and wrong, which means that the standard becomes relative.

If the standard for right and wrong is relative, then anyone can make up a definition for anything. The aforementioned definition of success offered by the female law professor would be acceptable. In fact, any definition of success would be acceptable.

But for those who choose to embrace a biblical worldview, the standard is the Bible.

The best biblical definition for success that I have found is in John 17:4. Before His death, Jesus prayed to the Father:

"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." [NIV]

In the latter years of Jesus' life, he was homeless, jobless, and penniless. Furthermore, he was viewed as mentally deranged by his family, hated by religious leaders, and ignored by political leaders. Ultimately, he was arrested, tried, convicted, and executed. These are hardly the traits of a successful person—at least from a human perspective. But from a biblical worldview, Jesus was the most successful human being ever. His success was simply this: he did the will of the Father. He did what the Father created him to do and he did it God's way.

May I offer a biblical definition of success?

Success is doing the will of God according to the ways of God.

The *will of God* refers to the specific individual purpose of God for each human being. The *ways of God* refers to the mandate that we are all under to live all of life according to the Bible, that is, a biblical worldview.

If you believe that God works with intent and purpose then it follows that God has a reason for creating every person and every organization. So the definition for success, both personally and organizationally, must be to *do the will of God according to the ways of God*.

Now compare the definition of success for a working woman from the aforementioned article against a biblical worldview. Remember the definition: "Within the profession I've chosen, I made it. I'm respected by my peers, at the top of my salary scale and I'm able to pick my kids up at 3."

For this definition to be aligned with a biblical worldview, then I would suggest that the following must be true. The woman must

be divinely called to her profession and working where God has assigned her;

have biblically discerned, and be in alignment with, God's means and methods for her profession;

have discerned, and be in alignment with, the will of God regarding the means and methods for educating her children; and

not be focused on money and prestige, as these can be idols, but be focused solely on doing the will of God according to the ways of God.

If the above statements are true for the woman, then her definition of success appears to be biblical.

In the final analysis, success is not about us. It is not about fame, fortune, or influence. It is about obedience to God. For all of us, life is short and we will give an account to God for what we do while we are alive. Therefore, it is incumbent on each of us to diligently submit every aspect of our lives to biblical scrutiny. After all, this is and will be the ultimate standard. Success in life is not about redefining life to suit us; it is about alignment with the will and ways of God. This is true success according to a biblical worldview.



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