

SUCCESS
IS NOT AN
ACCIDENT

TOMMY NEWBERRY



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois

"I have great news for the reader—Tommy Newberry has written an incredible book! And he is absolutely right: What you think about yourself determines who you are; therefore, think strategically. *Success Is Not an Accident* helps us understand why success can be achieved by any person, in any situation, under any circumstance, but never by accident! You should read this book if you are setting big goals for enhancing your life and intentionally charting the path to make those big goals a reality. Let's impact our world!"

Dan T. Cathy, president and COO, Chick-fil-A, Inc.

"Tommy Newberry provides a powerful approach for attaining personal success in all of life's arenas. The philosophy and methods outlined in *Success Is Not an Accident* focus on the direct ways individuals can achieve their God-given potential. Tommy represents the very best in the crowded field of life coaching, and I have benefited tremendously from his work."

J. Rex Fuqua, president and CEO, Fuqua Capital Corporation

"This enjoyable, fast-moving book is full of great ideas and insights anyone can use to enjoy a better life."

Brian Tracy, author of *The Way to Wealth*

"If you are tired of responding to life and ready to start creating it, then I encourage you to read this book. Success doesn't happen by accident. It happens by making the decision to be the driver of your bus and charting your course to a destination called Success. Thankfully, Tommy Newberry provides us with a map that will take us where we want to go."

Jon Gordon, author of *The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy*

"*Success Is Not an Accident* overflows with life-changing, practical wisdom. I really like the stories, the succinct lists of action steps, and the powerful principles that translate purpose into practical reality. Read this book and you'll have crystal-clear strategies and tools for unlocking your God-given potential."

Dr. Tim Irwin, corporate psychologist and author of *Run with the Bulls without Getting Trampled*

"Authentic success happens only through focus and intentionality. I learned this truth from Tommy Newberry. We all have a responsibility to push beyond our comfort zones and maximize our positive influence at home, at work, and in the community. This book is easy to read and clearly shows you how to get from where you are today to where God wants you to be. I've benefited directly from working with Tommy, and you will too when you read and apply the lessons in *Success Is Not an Accident*."

Dr. Vic Pentz, senior pastor, Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a book is a monumental project. Although the author's name appears on the cover, it requires a team of dedicated people behind the scenes to make the undertaking a success. As I've learned over the years, few significant accomplishments can ever be completed alone, and this book is no exception. Though it would be virtually impossible to list all the people who have influenced me and contributed to *Success Is Not an Accident*, I want to recognize a special few who helped make this book possible.

First, I must thank the members of The 1% Club for their many suggestions, observations, and insights over the past fifteen years. I may hold the title of coach, but in reality I am still very much a student.

Thank you to Dick Parker, who helped me develop the original version of this book. Special thanks to my agent, Pamela Harty, who believed in me and in this project and helped make it all happen. Thanks to Carol Traver and Dave Lindstedt, from Tyndale, who caught the vision for this project and patiently provided productive feedback and sound advice. Thank you to my business partner, Steve Cesari, whose perspective and life experience added a new dimension to this updated version of *Success Is Not an Accident*.

Thanks to my parents, whose unconditional love, encouragement, and affirmation freed me to chart my own course and follow my dream. As the years go by, my appreciation grows for the example they set and the wisdom they passed down.

Boundless thanks to my wife, Kristin, who never let me forget how much she believed in me as I worked through the original manuscript, and more recently, as I completed the updates for this book and at the same time finished my next book, *The 4:8 Principle*.

Foremost, I want to thank God for my special combination of talents, gifts, and life experiences, as well as for the inspiration and creativity that allowed this book to become a reality.

INTRODUCTION

If you want to take your business, your marriage, or your entire life from good to great, *Success Is Not an Accident* will help you get there, perhaps faster than you ever dreamed possible. This book provides the launching pad you've been looking for. Whether you are seeking to grow your net worth or rebuild your self-worth, these principles and strategies will help you do just that. How can I be so sure?

The seven lessons in this book represent the foundation curriculum that I have been using in my coaching practice at The 1% Club since 1991. Together, the seven lessons represent a complete system for managing your life more effectively. In this updated and expanded version of *Success Is Not an Accident*, I have distilled and incorporated the most valuable insights from my clients, as well as the lessons I have learned in the process of coaching them. If you like, think of these lessons as the secrets of the top 1% of successful people. They're not really secrets, though. They just appear to be secrets because so few people pay attention to these principles or seriously set out to practice them. While the principles are quite simple, the results you can expect to achieve are quite remarkable!

The book you hold in your hands contains the absolute best ideas for getting from where you are now to where you really want to be in life. Just as professional and Olympic athletes have coaches, I want to be your success coach, your trainer for life. My passion is to help you

become a world-class human being, someone who pulls out all the stops in each area of life.

Success Is Not an Accident is not a book about living the way most people live. You don't need a book to do that; it happens by default. If you live your life like most people do, you will get what most people get and settle for what they settle for. Here's a taste of most people's experience:

- Currently, 49 percent of marriages end in divorce.
- More than 80 percent of people working today would rather be in another line of work.
- More than 50 percent of Americans are overweight.
- One out of three Americans will get cancer, and two out of five will suffer from heart disease.
- More than 60 percent of Americans, who live in the richest, most abundant civilization in history, will retire with little or no savings and will become dependent on so-called entitlements for survival.

No one plans to become mediocre. Rather, mediocrity is the result of no plan at all. Let me give you a simple but true formula: *If you want to lead an extraordinary life, find out what the ordinary do—and don't do it.*

When I first wrote and self-published *Success Is Not an Accident* in 1999, I was certain that the principles I was teaching would be helpful and exceedingly practical to any reader committed to putting them into regular practice. At the time of my initial writing, I had been coaching successful entrepreneurs and their families for more than six years. When I wasn't coaching, I found myself obsessed with researching the life stories of men and women who had put these timeless principles into action in their own lives. I consumed everything I could read or listen to that might help me better understand what makes some people unusu-

ally happy and successful. On the personal side, I had been married for three years and had been a dad for just two.

Since its initial release, *Success Is Not an Accident* has sold more than one hundred thousand copies, primarily through old-fashioned word of mouth, and it has now been translated into three languages. For the most part, this has happened quietly, gradually, and virtually unnoticed in the world of books and self-improvement. This “best-kept secret,” as many of my clients refer to it, has slipped under the radar and positively influenced thousands of lives with its simple, direct, and no-nonsense approach to maximizing one’s full potential. Now, ten years later, I am in my sixteenth year of what is commonly referred to as life coaching, and I’m loving every minute of it. I just celebrated my thirteenth year of marriage to my wife, Kristin, and together we are raising three boys—eleven and nine years old, and eighteen months. The challenges of life are more fun than ever. I feel very blessed indeed.

I have invested my entire adult life in studying and teaching the causes of peak performance. Since first writing this book, however, I have learned far more than I have taught. In working with entrepreneurs, CEOs, and business leaders in more than thirty different industries, as well as coaching hundreds of happy couples from numerous backgrounds, I have learned what it takes to turn around a business, a marriage, and a life. I have learned what it takes to get rid of the mental, emotional, and physical clutter that bogs down most people and robs them of the life satisfaction they crave. I have learned what it takes to experience the fulfillment that comes from living in sync with one’s God-given purpose. I have learned what it takes to double, triple, or even quadruple your income in as little as two or three years. Better yet, I have learned what it takes to work less and still earn more. Most importantly, though, I’ve learned that success is most definitely *not* an accident! With another ten years of field experience under my belt, I am more convinced than ever that success is absolutely predictable. Success happens for a reason!

When you incorporate the principles from each lesson of *Success Is Not an Accident* into your daily life, you will begin to experience the same explosive results my clients have repeatedly experienced. I have seen this happen over and over again, yet from time to time it still amazes me. I've seen the concepts you're about to learn work for busy sales executives as well as stay-at-home moms. I've seen the principles work in golf, baseball, martial arts, and other athletic endeavors. I've seen them work for ambitious high-school students, those fresh out of college, and those earning six- or seven-figure incomes. I've seen the system work for both male and female clients. I have seen it work for my single clients as well as my clients who are married with kids. I can assure you that this life-management system will work for you to the exact degree that you apply its principles consistently in your day-to-day life.

This book, in essence, contains a formula that has been proven to generate positive, predictable results. I encourage you to blend my formula with your personality to create your own unique personal-success system. I want you to put your own slant on the concepts in this book, as long as you strictly abide by the principles. In other words, focus on the spirit of the law rather than just the letter. Whether your aspiration is to start your own business, earn straight A's in school, move into your dream home, get lean, run a marathon, become a schoolteacher, generate millions in sales, put your faith into practice, or set a better example for your kids—the principles are still the same. And these principles of effective living are nonnegotiable. Universal principles work in our lives whether we like them, understand them, or even know about them. You can be confident that the principles taught in each lesson are built upon the firm foundation of truth. They are not untested theories or my particular opinions; instead, they are based on personal experience and extensive observation. The concepts that underlie this system are proven steps to both enjoying and succeeding in the game of life.

I've observed that when individuals stray from timeless principles, adversity of some kind is never far behind. You can discern this for

yourself with children and adults alike. Unwavering principles govern each area of our lives. When we attempt to bend, stretch, or otherwise pervert them, we set ourselves up for inescapable pain and regret sooner or later. The most successful individuals who ever lived have resisted the natural human tendency to make up their own laws of life. Likewise, if you want to develop all your potential, you must avoid the trendy “principle of the day” mentality that has permeated our society. The Bible gives a clear promise for those who remember God’s universal principles: “Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD” (Psalm 119:1, NLT).

The good news about universal principles is that they will always be there for you. No matter how often you abandon or slander them, they will still welcome you back, like the father of the Prodigal Son, with open arms. Naturally, you will still experience the repercussions of getting off track, but the right course will be only a principle or two away.

The principles supporting each lesson in this book can be compared to the fundamentals in baseball—moving the runner along, hitting the cutoff man, throwing strikes. The baseball team that adheres to the fundamentals most consistently wins most consistently. It is really no mystery. Even a talent-packed team of superstars will stop winning when they fail to execute the proper fundamentals. By refocusing on the basics, individuals as well as teams can break out of slumps.

View the lessons in this book as your playbook for successful living. They describe the essentials for living a remarkable life. Putting them into practice consistently is the prerequisite for designing a life worth living. This playbook also includes a variety of drills and exercises that will sharpen your understanding and application.

For the rest of *Success Is Not an Accident*, allow me to be your personal life coach. As I tell my clients, my job is to help you get the most out of yourself. My goal is to help you reach your goals. Throughout each lesson in this book, I will challenge you to be the best you can be. I’ve tried to write with an underlying tone of encouragement and accountability.

Sometimes, like any good coach, I may appear blunt or even harsh. Don't take it personally. I just don't want to let you off the hook. I do not want to see you cheat yourself and your family out of the fruits of your full potential.

Throughout this book, I will give you new information, new perspectives, new strategies, and new skills. I will break down the complex into the simple. Each lesson includes practical and usable methods for improving your performance. Sometimes, though, I won't be teaching you anything new; I'll just be reminding you of what you need to do and exactly when you need to do it.

I hope you will implement the entire system laid out in this book. If you do, it will change your life forever. Each lesson is a component of the entire system. While you will make significant gains by applying only one or two lessons, you will amaze yourself and others if you put the complete system into action. When you fully integrate the system into every area of your life, you will experience a surge of confidence, competence, and unparalleled optimism for the future. The responsibility for implementing it, though, is all yours. I cannot do it for you, and you cannot hire anyone else to do it for you. It is completely up to you.

Finally, in writing this book, I hope to further my personal mission of positively impacting people's lives by teaching the timeless, proven principles of successful living. I do not claim to be superior in any way. In fact, you probably have many natural talents and past accomplishments that are greater than my own. I simply have a burning desire to share the truth about success with others. These truths existed long before I came into this world, and they will survive long after I am gone. Even though others may call you lucky, if you put into practice the principles that follow, you need not be surprised when you succeed. Success is in your hands. The seeds of greatness lie within us all. It is only when we stop believing that a better life is possible that we begin to settle for less.

Please share your success stories with me by sending them to www.successisnotanaccident.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

ABOUT THE FORMAT

The format of this book is designed specifically to help you understand and retain the material. For example, many of the right-hand pages contain diagrams, call-out text, and drawings that reinforce the principles you are learning. Also, the opening page to each lesson includes a rundown of the benefits you will receive by incorporating the principles that follow, and a closing page suggests assignments that will help you integrate the lessons into your daily life.

This book was intended not just to be read but to be internalized. It will give you not only knowledge but also immediately usable strategies for living a balanced, significant life. As you read, make notes in the margin, underline key points, and highlight what you want to remember. Reread the pages that seem to be speaking directly to you. I also encourage you to teach what you most want to learn—nothing will accelerate your progress faster! Whether it is a peer, spouse, child, close friend, or business partner, find a receptive person whom you can regularly influence with the ideas from *Success Is Not an Accident*. I'll prompt you to do this at the end of each lesson.

With the encouragement of Tyndale House Publishers, I am thrilled to be introducing this updated and expanded version of *Success Is Not an Accident*. This book is written for you and for those like you, who look to God and themselves as the solution to their problems and the path to an exceptional, meaningful life here on earth.

The strategies and insights on the pages that follow can be the difference between an ordinary life and an extraordinary life.

Now let's get started.

LESSON 1

Choose Success

Your success blesses others!

In this lesson, you will learn to

- Clarify your concept of success
- Accept complete responsibility
- Eliminate excuses forever
- Become a doer, not a feeler
- Develop an abundance mentality



Success is not an accident! This is, without a doubt, the single most important lesson you must grasp if you want to maximize your full potential and enjoy all the fulfillment and success you were designed to enjoy. Success occurs in the lives of specific people for specific reasons. It is not something that randomly happens to you; it is something that you make happen. This is exciting news! Whether you want to strengthen your family life, improve your career, deepen your faith, or take your physical energy to a whole new level, you can do it. Ralph Waldo Emerson writes, “Let him learn a prudence of a higher strain. Let him learn that every thing in nature, even motes and feathers, go by law and not by luck, and that what he sows he reaps.”¹

There is no magic. This process is not complex or sophisticated. If you will invest the time to find out what other people have done to be successful, personally and professionally, and then begin doing the same things, you too will achieve similar results in due season. All your efforts will be worthwhile!

Hit the Bull’s-Eye!

Imagine trying to throw darts at a dartboard in a room with no lights on. Even in the dark, you would eventually hit the board, and if you continued for long enough, you would probably hit the bull’s-eye. But if you turned on the lights, gathered a large supply of darts, got some coaching, and invested ample time in practicing, you would significantly reduce the time it would take to hit the dartboard. When you finally hit the bull’s-eye, many people would call you lucky. But you wouldn’t be lucky. You would just have been willing to do more things to ensure that you hit the bull’s-eye.

This book was designed to help you identify the factors within your control that will increase the odds of your hitting the bull’s-eye in your own journey through life.

What’s Your Dream?

When you were growing up, did you ever dream of being a professional athlete? I wanted to be a baseball player. I can easily recall playing out

World Series scenarios in the backyard with my friends until it was too dark to see the ball. But what separates the kids who dream about playing in the World Series from those who actually grow up to win the pennant? Sure, it has to do with talent, ability, and a bit of good timing, but I also believe it has a great deal to do with sheer determination and work ethic.

If you had seen him playing Little League, you never would have guessed that Orel Hershiser would someday become one of the greatest pitchers in baseball history. But it was at the age of eight, while visiting Yankee Stadium in New York, that Hershiser set his goal. "It was while walking into that historic stadium on a crisp, windy night that I decided I wanted to be a big league baseball player," he said.² It's a dream many little boys have had, but it was a goal that Hershiser would prove to be serious about achieving.

STRIKE ONE, STRIKE TWO

As a freshman in high school, Hershiser started to develop a plan for reaching his goal. First, he wanted to make the varsity baseball team. But he fell short of his goal twice, and it was not until his junior year that he earned a spot on the varsity team.

When applying to colleges, Hershiser set his sights on playing for Bowling Green State University. But once again, things didn't turn out the way he planned. When it came time to try out for the team, Hershiser was academically ineligible. With his college aspirations hitting rock bottom, he left school. On the bus ride home, Hershiser made a critical decision: "The boy on the bus to Michigan was not the man I wanted to be."³ He would not be a quitter.

Hershiser returned to Bowling Green for the summer session and played for an amateur baseball team. In his junior year, he finally made the school's traveling team and became a starting pitcher. Now he hoped the scouts in the stands would notice him.

THE CALL

Hershiser was noticed. In 1979, the Los Angeles Dodgers picked him in the seventeenth round of the amateur draft. But as a Class A player,

his chances of making it to the majors were slim. Only 4 percent of those drafted ever make it out of the minor leagues. It took four and a half years of playing in the minors before Hershiser received the call he'd been working toward since he was eight. In 1983, he was called up to the big leagues.

NEW GOALS

As a major-league player, Hershiser continued to work hard at improving his game, and after five years in the majors, he set a new goal for himself: He wanted to be the youngest, smartest major-league pitcher ever.⁴

His new goal was realized in 1988. After recovering from knee surgery and an emergency appendectomy, Hershiser went on to have the season of a lifetime. He broke Don Drysdale's "unbreakable" record by pitching fifty-nine consecutive scoreless innings. He was named Most Valuable Player of the National League Championship Series and the World Series, and he received a Gold Glove and the Cy Young Award.

AFTER THE GAME

During the excitement of the 1988 season, Robert Fraley, Hershiser's friend and sports representative, told him, "You're about to make a lot of money. But that is not true success. Success will be measured at the end of your career, not at the peak. When you're finished with baseball, if you love God, if you're still in love with your wife, if your children know who you are, and if your reputation is still intact, then you'll be successful."⁵ Hershiser adopted his friend's definition of success and emphasized it in interviews: "When I'm finished with my baseball career, my most successful goal is not to make the Hall of Fame, but to see my family a success as a result of my influence in their lives."⁶

In June 2000, Hershiser retired from baseball with a record of 204 wins as a pitcher, nineteen years as a faithful husband, and fifteen years as an involved dad. He once said, "I'm proof that great things can happen to ordinary people if they work hard and never give up."⁷ And that is the reality of success.

Was Orel Hershiser just lucky? I don't think so! Consider these other heroes who succeeded:

Was Tiger Woods just lucky?

Was Bill Gates just lucky?

Was Roger Clemens just lucky?

Was Carrie Underwood just lucky?

Was J. K. Rowling just lucky?

Was Rick Warren just lucky?

Was Lance Armstrong just lucky?

Were the immigrants who came to America with nothing but determination in their pockets but who built a fortune by serving others just lucky?

Are the Super Bowl champions each year just lucky?

Are Olympic medalists just lucky?

Success is not an accident, and it's not based on luck. That statement is simple, and it's the truth. And the moment you fully accept it, your life and the lives of those you love will never again be the same. Success, however it's defined, is absolutely predictable.

Get Clear on Success

What does success mean to *you*? Answering this question is one of the first assignments I give my coaching clients in *The 1% Club*. Investing the time and effort to define success in your own terms is one of the most helpful mental and spiritual exercises you can undertake. If you are trying to accelerate your success, it only makes sense to first define the target, which in many cases is elusive and often misunderstood.

What exactly does success mean to you? I've observed that most people find it quite difficult to define. But if you don't have a clear pic-

ture of success, how can you honestly pursue it or expect to achieve and then enjoy it? Success has been defined many ways in literature:

- Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.
- Success is the accomplishment of God's will in your life.
- Success is making the most of what you have.
- Success is who you become.
- Success is living your life in your own way.
- Success is a journey.

These definitions vary, but I suppose there is a dose of truth in each one. The most successful people in the world are those who have taken the time to figure out exactly who they want to become and what they want to achieve. Then they invest the hours of their days in activities consistent with these ideals.

Successful people are those who have learned how to consistently apply God's laws in their lives. They ascribe their achievements to focus, hard work, strong relationships, perseverance, and the blessing of God. The unsuccessful or mediocre are those who have no obvious direction. These people tend to "go with the flow" or drift in whichever direction the wind happens to be blowing. Their lives are dominated by circumstances and overflowing with excuses. They blame their underachievement on bad luck. Life, they claim, has dealt them a bad hand, and they choose to fold.

ARE YOU SUCCESSFUL?

How do you define success? That is the real question! Do you equate it with wealth? Do you believe you are successful if you have a lot of friends, or is it social status that matters? Do you think you are a success if you own a nice home, a car, or other worthwhile possessions? If you're active in your church and tithe regularly, does that signify success? Does power bring success, or will accomplishing the next goal on your

list finally usher in success? Maybe success is early retirement, or maybe it comes when all the kids have gone away to college or have married and started their own families. What exactly is success to you? Before I push you any further, let me ask you a different but vitally important question.

DOES GOD EVEN WANT YOU TO SUCCEED?

Many people of faith wonder whether it's wrong to pursue wealth or certain types of worldly success. Some even feel guilty for wanting what others don't have. What about you? Do you think God wants you to succeed? Really dig deep and answer this question.

Here is my answer in the form of another question: Do you want your children to be mediocre?

Of course not! You want your kids to succeed! In particular, you want your children to have a personal relationship with Jesus, marry the right person, and pursue their purpose in life with excellence. That is a pretty good start, isn't it? Truett Cathy, founder of Chick-fil-A, refers to those big three parenting priorities as Master, Mate, and Mission. If you lead your kids to spiritual truth, equip them to select the right marriage partner, and encourage them to pursue and live their dream, then you've certainly used your time wisely. In short, you want your children to become everything they were created to become. And that is exactly what God wants for you as well.

Do parents encourage their children to strive for mediocrity? Do you hope your son or daughter grows up and gets an average job, tolerates an average marriage, and then raises average kids who perpetuate that same cycle for the next generation? I don't believe God makes "average." The dim light of an average life is something we inflict on ourselves. Sometimes we make things difficult that should not be difficult. We turn the simple into the complex and confuse not only ourselves but the people around us as well. Make no mistake: **Your heavenly Father wants you to succeed.**

We all have the standard, factory-installed desire to reach our full potential. Sometimes this longing is temporarily smothered by a lack of

Five criteria to help crystallize your unique definition of success



1 **CONTROLLABLE**
Make your definition within your control, not based on outside circumstances or other people.

2 **MEASURABLE**
Make your definition quantifiable so that you can hold yourself accountable.

3 **PERPETUAL**
Formulate your definition so that you can satisfy it on a daily basis.

4 **PERSONAL**
Choose your own definition; don't borrow one.

5 **PRINCIPLE BASED**
Establish your definition on absolute truths, not on subjective, timely, or situational values.

wisdom or a sequence of poor choices, but it is still there, waiting to be activated. Consider how we hope and pray for good things to happen in the lives of those we love. Consider how we always pray for ourselves and our circumstances to improve, never to deteriorate. This is our built-in drive for success, our drive to see the various aspects of our life advance. Have you ever prayed for your life to fall apart, a cherished relationship to end, or a dear friend to become ill? I would hope not! You are, after all, designed for success.

YOU ARE FREED TO SUCCEED!

Why do so many people struggle with the idea of success? Is it because they hardly ever hear their pastor preach a sermon about success? Unless the sermon is based on Matthew 5–7, commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount, in most churches we rarely hear teaching about biblical success. In the Sermon on the Mount, however, Jesus distills the spiritual principles that both precede and promote true success. Practicing these principles frees you to maximize your full potential and become everything God intended for you to become. After you finish *Success Is Not an Accident*, I encourage you to reread the Sermon on the Mount and contemplate how relevant and practical the sayings of Jesus really are. Unfortunately, these principles of success are often poorly presented or misrepresented in our day and age, leading some to conclude that “that success stuff just doesn’t sound biblical.” For example, are we supposed to set goals, or are we to take no thought for tomorrow? Are we supposed to build our confidence, or have no confidence in the flesh? Should we strive for greatness, or should we be content in all circumstances? Are we to improve our self-image, or should we deny ourselves? These apparent contradictions have paralyzed many Christians from maximizing their potential. However, upon deep examination, the notion that success is wrong or even contrary to biblical truth cannot be seriously defended.

Like much of the enemy’s handiwork, the tainting and shunning of success has been gradual and subtle. Put a negative spin on success, paint success as unbiblical, scare Christians away—then Christian leadership

will slowly dissolve in a society clearly in need of godly direction. What a clever scheme.

Success has been hijacked from the very people who believe in the original book of success—the Bible. Over time, the concept of success has been so polluted and distorted that bold, godly success appears to have atrophied. Its influence is hardly felt. Many well-intentioned believers appear to be running from the potential they were blessed with at birth. As a result, God-inspired men and women are having less and less effect on the America they built. Interestingly, over the last decade an entire movement and ministry has attempted to rebrand true success with the word *significance*. Is this really necessary? Are we that afraid of the word *success*? In my mind, and in the minds of my clients, authentic success requires significance. **Significance doesn't follow success. It is the sum and substance of success.**

While Christians have stepped back, the secular world has been setting the agenda through legislative bodies, school boards, and the politically correct establishments that regulate the guidelines believers and nonbelievers alike must follow.

A PERFECT SYSTEM

Fortunately, all the confusion surrounding success need not exist at all. God wants each and every one of us to succeed, provided that our definition of success is right. **God wants us to reach our potential and contribute to the world in tremendous ways.** Success in the general sense is God's way of sharing abundance. He uses your success to bless others while you benefit yourself. Success is a *multiplier*, not a divider, as the media often tend to represent. Authentic success spills over to benefit many more beyond the minority who accepted the risk of failure. When individual success is promoted, an entire society gets rewarded. When you act with integrity, your success will not harm others in the least. You and everyone else you know can become successful without anyone suffering harm, setbacks, or downturns. Only God could author such a perfect system!

Success is completely voluntary. You have permission. You have the

green light to succeed. What is success for a Christian? Remember, obedience to the rules and teachings of the Bible is just the minimum daily requirement. It is the starting point, the foundational standard. **True success, on the other hand, is maximum service to God.** Your heavenly Father desires that you be fully, in every single respect, the person he created you to be. I encourage you to reach for more than a life of mere obedience and “good living.” Instead, strive for an abundant life of success in the service of others. Are you getting out of life everything that God intends for you? Can you stand to be blessed above and beyond your wildest dreams? The Bible is full of those who are “more than conquerors,” and none of us should be content to be mediocre.

Although you probably agree that maximum service to God is a great definition of success, it’s a difficult concept by which to evaluate yourself. So, for the express purpose of this book, we’ll use the highly effective working definition of true success that we use in *The 1% Club*: **Success is the deliberate, measurable pursuit of prayerfully chosen, written goals.**

Stated another way, you are a success once you have seriously begun your expedition to maximize your full potential. Success, then, is not a single destination—and consequently, you can never completely arrive. **Success is, instead, an intentional approach to life that ensures you are a faithful steward of your gifts and talents.** This approach compels you to grow and develop. It forces you to desert your comfort zone, chisel your character, and chase the dream that God has personally arranged for you. Better still, success is an approach to life that is completely under your control. It does not depend on the outer circumstances of your life but on the inner condition of your soul. So with the above definition in mind, are you successful right now?

Did you pray about your goals *before* you set them?

Have you put your goals *in writing* for accountability?

Have you taken *measurable action* toward your goals?

A different way of viewing success is as an emotion we all want to experience consistently. We may be successful in the eyes of others yet not feel so successful inside our own skin. Or we may feel successful but not be perceived that way by others. Most of us go through life borrowing someone else's definition of success rather than coming up with our own! Through repeated media exposure, we find it easy to begin using cultural success markers.

Are you experiencing success right now? If you are not, take some time to re-examine your concept of success. Where does your definition come from? Whose definition are you using? I found that distinguishing between the words *achievement*, *happiness*, and *success* was a helpful exercise in formulating my own definition. Consider these three questions:

Can you be a success without achieving anything?

Can you be a high achiever without being successful?

Can you be happy without also being a success?

How did you answer these questions? Of course, your answer depends on how you define success. Is your definition challenging, attainable, and anchored in biblical truth? Or do you require all areas of your life to be perfect before you allow yourself to experience the emotion of success? Be aware that a common tendency is to set an almost unreachable standard for success while simultaneously creating a standard for failure that is easy to meet. As a result, you may routinely feel a lot less successful than is necessary. When you create a definition of success that allows you to experience the emotion consistently, you are also developing an awareness of success. And this heightened consciousness tends to promote even more and greater success in the future. Success breeds success. The working definition I proposed earlier invites you to experience success on your journey to your final destination.

Now it's your turn. Take a moment and develop a first draft of your personal definition of success by completing the short sentence below.

You can expect to revise it several times before you get it just right. Yes, I promise that it is okay to write in this book.

I experience success in my life when I (or, if I) . . .

Once you have your fresh, constructive definition of success, allow some time to internalize it and really believe in it. You have to buy into it to get it working for you. Remember, success is the ongoing, proactive process of making God's desires your desires, becoming today a little more like the person he engineered you to become. I believe you should consider yourself a success the instant you take measurable action toward a prayerfully chosen goal that you have placed in writing. As you will learn in lesson 3, God plus goals plus you is an unbeatable combination!

“Fair” Is a Fantasy

Another key step in striving for success is to get over expecting life to be fair. A level playing field is a self-indulgent and unproductive fantasy. In this world, it will never happen, nor should it. **Insisting on a level playing field disrupts your attention and distracts you from your ultimate objective.** Instead, as a high performer, you must deal with the reality of the present situation. You need to focus on reaching your goals rather than on the obstacles that stand in your way. This choice leads to accomplishment and progress, and it leads away from aggravation and alienation. Recognize that everyone has disadvantages, handicaps, weaknesses, and various other crosses to bear. A big part of life is learning how to transform your disadvantages into advantages. While directing your energy toward “making things fair” is often counterproductive, channeling your spiritual, mental, and physical energy toward achieving meaningful goals is a constructive investment of time.

Some people are naturally more intelligent than others. Some people are more creative than others. Some are born into poverty, and some into

wealth. Some receive great love and little else, while many others are given everything but love. Some people are considered better looking than others. Some people can run faster, jump higher, or hit a baseball farther than others. Some receive the best of educations and contribute little to the world, while others get little formal education yet leave a magnificent mark. Some have fast metabolisms while others must exercise twice as much just to keep pace. Some people are predisposed to migraines and sinus infections and others are not . . . and so on. This phenomenon is called life.

The truth is that life, if viewed as a card game, deals good hands, bad hands, and average hands. And whichever hand you receive, you must play! You can win with any hand, and you can lose with any hand. It's totally up to you how you play the game! Life is filled with champions who drew extremely poor hands and losers who drew terrific hands. **In life, you will never be dealt a hand that, with God's help, cannot be turned into a winning one.** Success is for you and for anyone willing to take the initiative and pay the price. If you put into practice the principles outlined in each lesson of this book, you will be well equipped to do whatever it takes to turn your hand into a winner! Go for it!

SOW, THEN REAP

Success is a planned outcome, not an accident. Success and mediocrity are both absolutely predictable because they follow the natural and immutable law of sowing and reaping. Simply stated, if you want to reap more rewards, you must sow more service, contribution, and value. That is the no-nonsense formula. Some of God's blessings have prerequisites! Success in life is not based on need but on seed. So you've got to become good at either planting in the springtime or begging in the fall.

The Bible says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7, NKJV). Unfortunately, many Americans have been misled into believing they will not be held accountable for their choices and that they will miraculously harvest something other than what they planted. I call this the Big Lie. This dangerously popular distortion promotes mediocrity and

underachievement. Consider the effort and expense Americans undertake to cure diseases and social problems while they do very little, if anything, to avoid them. It is popular today to treat the symptom of a problem, but it is often considered insensitive or intolerant to address the root causes. As a result, our society denies that effects really do have causes.

The truth is this: There are no exceptions to the law of causality. It is impartial and impersonal, and it comes to us in a particular order—

When you try to get something for nothing, you become nothing.



first sow, then reap. This God-given natural law was old when the pyramids were new. Like

gravity, it works twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, everywhere in the world, regardless of whether anyone has ever told you about it or whether you consider it to be fair. It is simply impossible to harvest something that has not been sown, though many squander their entire lives attempting to do just this, only to end up frustrated.

Success is the effect generated by right thinking and right actions. Success and failure are not accidents but consequences. **If you want to know what you sowed in the past, look around you and see what you are reaping today.** You begin your climb toward your full potential as a human being the moment you accept the truth that cause and consequence are inseparable.

The mark of a spiritually mature, mentally healthy individual is accepting complete responsibility for one's life. When you accept total responsibility, you recognize that you are the cause of all your choices, decisions, and actions. When you are anchored in the reality of responsibility, you are far more likely to act in ways that will not later become causes of regret, frustration, or embarrassment.

EVERYTHING COUNTS

Life offers all of us a special deal indefinitely. With every choice, we receive at least one free consequence. Everything you do or fail to do counts. Every action has a consequence, even if it isn't immediate. At

What are the likely consequences of each of these actions?

- jumping off a building
- doing aerobic exercise daily
- watching two or more hours of TV every day
- reading for one hour each day
- sitting in the sun without sunscreen
- investing 10 percent of your income
- using illicit drugs
- eating a diet of whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables
- eating fried foods
- running in front of a speeding truck
- robbing a bank
- lying to your best friend
- studying hard in school
- smoking
- writing down goals
- drinking excessive alcohol
- drinking just a little alcohol
- drinking no alcohol
- studying parenting
- reading a book on marriage
- touching a hot stove
- studying successful people
- praying
- purchasing depreciating assets
- spending beyond your means
- waking up at 5 a.m.
- waking up at 7 a.m.



*Remember, when you make a choice,
you also choose the consequence of that choice.*

this moment, you are either becoming more like the person God wants you to become, or you are not! There is no neutrality.

A number of years ago I was watching a baseball game on TV. The base runner, Deion Sanders, attempted to steal second base but came up about two feet short from the bag as he slid. He immediately sprang to his feet and backtracked toward first base. Seconds later, when it became inevitable that he was going to be tagged out, Sanders put his hands together in the football time-out sign. He yelled, "Time-out, time-out!"—to no avail, but to laughter from the fielder and the umpire. Sanders was tagged out. That is the way life is. Whether you're running the bases or pursuing your goals, there are no time-outs. The sooner you learn and apply this lesson, the better.

Nobody can stop the ticking clock. If you try to call time-out, you will always be tagged out. What you do Friday night counts, just as what you do Sunday morning or Thursday afternoon counts. An extraordinary life is simply the accumulation of thousands of efforts, often unseen by others, that lead to the accomplishment of worthwhile goals. **You are rich with choice, and your choices reveal who you really are.** More than any other single factor, you are where you are today because of the choices you have made. You've made decisions about what to learn and what not to learn. You have made decisions about who to spend your time with. You've made decisions to believe some things and not to believe others. You've made, or will have to make, decisions about whom you will date, whom you will marry, and whether you will have children. You've chosen to persevere or chosen to give up. You've made decisions on whether or not you will drink, smoke, or use drugs. You have chosen what you will eat or not eat. You've decided either to write down exciting goals for your life or just to wing it. You have made decisions to give in to fear as well as decisions to press on in the face of fear. You have decided to be the best and at other times decided to act like all the rest.

Consider for a moment all the decisions you've made in the last three years or even in just the last twelve months. These choices are made daily, hourly, and minute by minute. Imagine having made a different choice in some key area. How might your professional life be different?

How might your marriage be different? How might your health and energy be different? Give this some thoughtful reflection. **How might your life be different today with a handful of different choices?**

Let me encourage you to do something differently now: Make today the turning point. Whether it's your career or your home life, your fitness or your faith, you can start making wiser decisions and taking different steps today. Sooner than you may think possible, you will find yourself in a much better place than where you are right now.

What's Your Excuse?

I believe the slogan of the Paralympics says it all: "What's your excuse?" Questions are often the best teachers because they prompt us to think through an issue. When we're told something, we're likely to smile politely and then let our thoughts drift to another subject. Questions can be captivating because we're conditioned to answer them. So ask yourself, "What is my excuse?"

What images does this question evoke in your mind? As I ask myself, "What is my excuse?" my mind races to the

aspects of my life that aren't quite as I want them to be. The question reminds me of the excuses I've given others and those I've silently told myself. It makes me laugh a little at myself and reminds me that while I was making excuses, others just like me were making progress.

I remember the first time I heard the classic excuse "My dog ate my homework" from a third-grade classmate who didn't even have a dog. The entire class, including the teacher, broke out in laughter. I don't remember whether the excuse was effective, but I do remember the laughter and the embarrassed expression on my classmate's face. Looking back, I realize how appropriate the laughter was. Excuses should be laughed at, not dignified. Excuses and responsibility cannot coexist. It's very easy to say, "I'm not responsible," and so hard to say, "I am responsible." If there is anything in your life that is not the way you want it to



My father taught me that the only helping hand you're ever going to be able to rely on is at the end of your sleeve.

—J. C. Watts

be, you and only you are responsible for changing it. You must believe that it is up to you to create solutions to the challenges of life. Whether they are big or small, you're still responsible. Each time you give an excuse, you diminish your respect, your credibility, and your integrity. Each time you make an excuse, you reinforce your propensity to make even more excuses in the future, and excuse making becomes a habit. The irresponsible person believes finding the solutions to the problems of life is someone else's department.

Whenever you act irresponsibly and feel the need to make excuses, your brain goes into overdrive, attempting to rationalize your lack of results. Unless you make a commitment to the choice of excuse-free living, you will always be able to find excuses.

THE EXCUSE-FREE ZONE

Commit to making your home, car, and office excuse-free zones. If a situation arises in which previously you would have made an excuse, substitute the words, "I am responsible." Look only to yourself for the cause of your problems. If you are not happy with an aspect of your life, accept that you are responsible for it. Either you passively allowed it to happen or you actively created it. This is not an invitation to beat up on yourself but an encouragement to see the truth of how and why you got to where you are. Only when you acknowledge the truth can you be freed to build a future that is far more attractive than the past.

Whenever something doesn't work out the way you hoped, claim responsibility and ask yourself, "What could I have done to avoid the problem?" Imagine opening your refrigerator and taking out the orange juice. Following the instructions on the label, you begin to shake the carton vigorously—only to have the cap fly off and orange juice spew all over you, the counters, the floor, and even a little on the ceiling. At this point, you have two options:

1. You can immediately blame the numskull who didn't screw on the cap after he used it and demand that he help you clean up, or . . .
2. You can remind yourself, "This mess could have been avoided altogether if I had only checked the cap before I started shaking the carton."

The Excuse Exploder

Whenever you think of an excuse, ask yourself if there has ever been anyone in similar circumstances who succeeded in spite of them. When you move beyond the whining and justifying, you'll find that the answer is almost always yes. Somebody somewhere has usually had it far worse than you and still succeeded. And the moment you want a goal more than you want an excuse, you can succeed as well. Refuse to appoint yourself a victim. Victims don't have to take action; they're too busy dwelling on injustice and being bitter. Remember, you will always be able to come up with an eloquent excuse, but no excuse has a shelf life of more than twenty-four hours.



Of course, it would have been nice if the previous person had secured the cap, but the power to prevent this situation was in my hands.”

Taking responsibility for your life is like being a good, defensive driver. If your car is totaled in an accident, you can't take much comfort from the fact that you had the green light. Blaming the other driver won't help much either; it will only defer your attention from what you need to learn. The question that will resonate in your mind is, “What could I have done to prevent this?” Stay empowered and in control by analyzing all unpleasant situations from the perspective of what *you* can do to avoid their recurrence in the future.

Excuses are contagious, self-defeating bad habits. Where you find one person making an excuse, you'll find others infected with “excusitis” as well. You don't like to hear excuses from other people, and they don't like to hear yours either! Stop excuses before they start by creating an environment conducive to success. Make it easy for yourself and others you depend on to succeed by anticipating and eliminating all excuses in advance. This is the true measure of how intensely you desire your goal.

The only thing more damaging to your success than making an excuse is making the same excuse twice. Remember, there is never enough room for both butts and brilliance. You must make the choice. Do I want my “Yeah, but,” or do I want my goal?

Feelers and Doers

The world can be divided into two kinds of people: feelers and doers. Feelers take initiative only when they feel like doing so. In other words, they feel their way into action. If something makes sense at the moment, is convenient, is justified, or is just easy, then they do it. If they don't feel like doing something that will advance their goals, they won't do it. If a feeler feels like exercising, he will. If he doesn't feel like exercising, he won't. If a feeler feels like doing her daily devotions, she will. But if she feels like sleeping in instead, she will sleep late. If a feeler feels like nurturing his marriage relationship, he will. If not, he won't. His decision-making ability is wired to his short-term emotional appetite. He is a

prisoner of the desire for instant gratification, and he will suffer the long-term consequences of this short-term perspective. Feeling-driven thinking, as popular as it is in our culture today, is shallow thinking. It signals weak character, lack of conviction, and spiritual immaturity. Fortunately, feeling-driven thinking is just an unproductive habit that can be changed.

Doers, on the other hand, act their way into feeling. After determining what needs to be

done based on their goals, doers take action. They just do it. If they don't feel like taking action, they consider that emotion a distraction and take action in spite of it. They refuse to let their craving for short-term comfort divert them from their long-term goal and the blessings that go along with it.

You become a doer by making a deliberate decision to do so. You become a feeler by default, by neglecting to consider this aspect of your character at all. In the absence of a decision to do otherwise, we are all prone to giving in to the worst side of human nature. We are all likely to engage in actions that produce only immediate payback.

The alternative to a life restricted by our feelings is an unlimited life characterized by deliberate and decisive action. The antidote to a safe life of comfort and mediocrity is a bold life of character and courage. You can train yourself to live a life of action by shifting your thinking from short-term to long-term. This means you must consider the long-term ramifications of every action you take. Ask, "If this act were to turn into a habit for me, would that be in my best long-term interests?" If the answer is no, then don't do it. When faced with an important decision, ask yourself, "In light of where I've been, where I am today, and who I intend to become in the future, what is the wise thing to do in this situation?" Even simpler, you could ask, "What's my goal, and will this clearly move me in the direction of my goal?" Or, "How might this decision affect me twenty years from now?" Another question is, "How might this decision affect me one thousand years from now?" That one



High achievers are motivated by pleasurable outcomes. Underachievers are motivated by pleasurable methods.

should get you thinking! Remember, feelings come and go, but consequences last forever.

The quality of our decisions is determined first and foremost by our perspective, or frame of reference. If our time horizon is long, then we will likely reap the effects of wise choices. If our horizon is short, then we will inevitably suffer the negative consequences that correspond with short-term thinking.

Abundance or Survival?

You can walk up to the ocean of abundance with a thimble or a tanker truck. Unfortunately, most people choose the thimble, never knowing that there is an alternative. Remind yourself that **God is the infinite source and ultimate provider of all good things**. Our heavenly Father has poured an inexhaustible supply of abundance onto this earth, ready for us to multiply it even further if we are willing to take the initiative. Most people do not seize the initiative simply because they have learned to think in terms of survival rather than in terms of plenty. This attitude is often referred to as a scarcity mentality and is inherently pessimistic. People with a scarcity mind-set are excessively aware of what they *do not* want in life and hesitant about what they *do* want. They have long mental lists of why things can't be done and why it is of no use to even try. "Why set a goal when you cannot possibly achieve it?" is a typical response of these deficit thinkers. A scarcity or poverty mentality sends one into survival mode, where just getting by becomes the goal and, consequently, the ceiling. Of course, those suffering from this stagnant outlook are seldom aware of it.

An abundance consciousness, on the other hand, is anchored in faith, possibilities, and huge thinking. In this state, we concentrate on how and why things can be done. An abundance thinker dwells on the opportunities that exist now as well as those that should exist. An *abundance* mentality precedes all extraordinary accomplishment, and it is your birthright. Get away from what is *realistic* and consider the seemingly impossible possibilities. Stop asking what a good goal would be and start asking God what your most magnificent goal should and could be.

The Bill of Responsibilities

- I. You have the responsibility to ask only for opportunity.
- II. You have the responsibility to seek and find your true place in life.
- III. You have the responsibility to write down compelling goals for your life.
- IV. You have the responsibility to invest your minutes and hours wisely.
- V. You have the responsibility to visualize the attainment of your goals in rich, vivid detail.
- VI. You have the responsibility to talk yourself into success.
- VII. You have the responsibility to choose a high-energy lifestyle.
- VIII. You have the responsibility to develop every area of your life to its maximum.
- IX. You have the responsibility to provide more value and contribution if you desire more rewards.
- X. You have the responsibility to persist until you succeed.



No matter how prosperous your mind-set is, it can be even more prosperous. **Remember, your success blesses others.** As you increase the quality and quantity of your service to others, your rewards increase as a natural consequence. As you become more abundant in your thinking, you become like a formerly color-blind child in a fabulous garden, suddenly able to see the rich images that have been there all along. You can tune in to scarcity, or you can tune in to abundance. Again, it is your choice. When you take responsibility for your actions, accept that life isn't fair, get rid of excuses, become a doer, and develop an abundance mentality, you will break down many of the barriers keeping you from true success. You will be well on the way to maximizing the potential that God has given you.

Lesson 1 Questions for Reflection

What does success mean to you? Are you successful now? Do you feel successful? How do you define true success?

What is mediocrity? What examples of it have you witnessed recently? How do you prevent mediocrity from attacking you, your family, or your business?

What messages about success are promoted in our culture through the media, political leaders, churches, school curricula, and so forth, and how do they shape your thinking?

Who in your life would most benefit if you raised your standards and demanded far more from yourself?

Describe your life and passions ten years ago. What was your focus? What were your challenges? What were your hopes and dreams?



Whom can you influence with the ideas from this lesson in the next forty-eight hours?

LESSON 1 ASSIGNMENTS

- 1 | Write out your personal definitions of success and mediocrity.
- 2 | Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. On the left-hand side, write down everything in your life that you can control, either partially or completely. Label this column “God and Me.” In the right-hand column, write down those aspects of your life over which you have absolutely no control. You can label this column “Let God.”
- 3 | Write out ten of your strengths or positive traits.
- 4 | Write out ten of your past accomplishments, big or small.
- 5 | Write out ten of your greatest blessings to date.
- 6 | Write out ten blessings you expect to be grateful for nine years from now.
- 7 | Describe your ideal day nine years in the future. Begin with the moment you wake up and follow through until you drift off to sleep, and include as many emotion-provoking details as possible.

APPENDIX

Thought Triggers

General

- 1 | What do you want to do, have, or become?
- 2 | If you knew you couldn't fail, what great cause would you pursue wholeheartedly?
- 3 | What is your God-sized dream?
- 4 | What is the most significant change you'd like to create in your life?
- 5 | Whom would you like to meet and have lunch with?
- 6 | How could you significantly increase your service and contribution to others?
- 7 | What's on your "Before I Die" list?

Spiritual

- 1 | What are your spiritual disciplines now? What should they be?
- 2 | Would you like to read the Bible from cover to cover?
- 3 | Would you like to teach a Sunday school class?
- 4 | Are you living the life God gave you?
- 5 | Who's holding you accountable in your spiritual walk?
- 6 | What's standing between you and a closer relationship with God?
- 7 | What will have to happen for you to experience peace of mind?

Physical

- 1 | How could you become a better steward of your body?
- 2 | What foods produce the most energy for your other goals?
- 3 | How could you take better care of your brain?
- 4 | How many hours of physical, mental, and emotional energy do you want to have each day?
- 5 | How fit do you want to be at age 75?
- 6 | What are your favorite types of physical exercise?
- 7 | Would you like to have your workout room in your house?

Marital

- 1 | What is the goal of your marriage?
- 2 | What books or audio programs could increase your wisdom about relationships?
- 3 | How could you reduce or eliminate stress in your spouse's life?
- 4 | What are the strengths of your marriage? Weaknesses?
- 5 | What romantic experience could you enjoy together in the next year?
- 6 | What is the most unconventional thing you could do to take your marriage to the next level?
- 7 | What are your most productive habits as a couple?

Parental

- 1 | What is the goal of your parenting?
- 2 | Who, besides you and your spouse, influences your children on a regular basis? Is this okay?

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