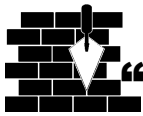


THE UNNAMED MAN - “How Do *You* Spell Success?”



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Intro Scripture-Luke 12)** Two factors are vital in interpreting parables: (1) Parables, by definition, have only one main point’ they are *not* allegories or stories with plots, etc. (2) The context in which the parable “emerges” in scripture is crucial. For example, the “parable of the good Samaritan” was told in response to the question, “Who is my neighbor?”
In the case of this passage (“parable of the rich fool”), the contextual “key” is in verse 15:
And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”
2. **(Intro Scripture)** The word translated, “be on your guard” (NAS) is most frequently used for protecting something or someone by careful attention. Jesus’ statement here is sobering because it indicates that “greed” or “covetousness” is, in a very real sense, seeking to overtake us. This *is not* a command to “not be greedy.” It is a warning to not allow myself to be overcome by greed.
3. **(Q1b)** In truth, measuring my success by “how much” of something I have is really not wrong. In fact, it is the correct way to measure success. But, the issue is, *what is the “something” and who said it was valuable?* This is the heart of this entire chapter. If I am accumulating or hoarding wealth, possessions, intellect, beauty, skill or achievement, I have succumbed to “greed” even though I have been deceived into thinking otherwise.
4. **(Q4)** The answer your women give to this question, if they are being honest, will alert you to where their thinking and convictions are on this subject.
5. **(Q5b)** There is a story told about a man who was told by an angel that he had six months to live. The angel’s parting words were, “*You are allowed one suitcase for heaven. Pack wisely.*” The man liquidated all his possessions and bought gold bricks with them. He found a suitcase large enough to hold all his gold just in time. After he died, he was escorted to meet the Lord. God said, “*I see you’ve brought your one suitcase. Do you mind if I look inside?*” The man, feeling quite proud and prepared, said “*No, not at all!*” The Lord slowly opened the suitcase, and then puzzled, turned to the man and said, “*Pavement? You brought pavement?*”
6. **(Q7-Phil 3:7-8)** Paul’s choice of words here is significant. “Loss” carries with it the idea of damage, not just deprivation (cf. Acts 27:10,21). It appears that Paul saw his old view of success as a liability—a debit—rather than a credit or asset to his new faith!
Also, his use of Greek verb tenses is important here. In verse 7 Paul uses the word “count” two times. In the first instance, he uses a perfect tense which refers to an action that has stopped, but the effect of it lives on into the present. The second time he uses “count” he uses a present tense which means Paul is *continually still* having to make that choice in what really matters to him. In other words, even though there is a time when one “drives a stake down” about what is their “measure of success,” that stake will have to be continually re-driven. It is not a once-for-all decision, even though it has a starting date.
7. **(Q9-Isaiah 53:3)** There is the possibility that this verse is a prophetic description of Jesus *after* being beaten, which might help to explain why people would turn their faces away from him.
8. **(Q9-Matt 13:54-57)** Jesus shows that it is possible to be wise and powerful and still not be a “celebrity.” This is an indication that the approval of others involves *more* than the things we use as our measures of success. It is based on their own willingness or unwillingness to “ascribe” success to me.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q7)** Three Greek word for “rubbish” in Phil. 3:8 is a word that can mean “dung.” This is a *very* strong contrastive statement from the pen of Paul! However, Paul *is not* calling his past devotion, training, education and upbringing “dung.” He is saying that *by comparison* to knowing Jesus and growing in Christlikeness, that’s about what they amount to. He is *exalting* sanctification, not trashing achievement. But, the challenge to us today is to have *the same sentiment*, not merely some theoretical agreement in theory.
2. **(Q7)** Some might be tempted to view Paul’s change in values and the measure of his success as a step backwards in terms of effort or what it “takes” to achieve these things even though the goal of Christlikeness is more noble. But, it is obvious from verses like Gal. 4:19 and Col. 1:28 that Paul actually re-channeled all his tremendous passion and energy into this new “measure of success.” Any slothful, lazy or recreational approach to spiritual growth in Christlikeness has *no* support from the life and writings of the Apostle Paul!
3. **(Q7 - Col 1:28)** Paul makes a strong case in this verse and elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10) for “synergism” (two working together) in regard to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. It is *neither* “all me,” or “all God.” Paul clearly says *he* was tireless working, using the strength that *God* graciously provided.
4. **(Q9 - Luke 8:1-3)** It is tempting to point-out that even though Jesus depended upon the support of others (i.e. he was *not* self-sufficient), it was precisely those same others’ self-sufficiency that made the provision. This is certainly true, but the point here is not poverty versus wealth as choices. It is whether or not wealth is an appropriate “measure of success” for a believer. This issue must always be kept in the forefront while discussing this chapter.
5. **(Q9 - Luke 9:58)** Again, it is tempting to lose sight of the point here. One might argue, “*Of course Jesus didn’t have a home! That wasn’t why he was here in the first place!*” True. The next question then becomes, “*Why am I here, in the first place?*”



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Intro Scripture)** In Luke 12:16, the farmer saw only one option for his surplus. What were some others that apparently didn’t come to mind?
2. **(Q3)** Do you see a relationship between your answer to Question 3 and Luke 12:13?
3. **(Q5)** Verse 20 must be understood in light of verse 21. What does verse 20 have to do with verse 21?
4. **(Q7-summary)** People sometimes use the phrase, “one holy passion” to refer to the most sought-after and important spiritual goal in someone’s life. What was Paul’s “one holy passion”? What is *your* “one holy passion”?
5. **(Q9)** What are the various components of “appearance” that we use to communicate success or our worth to others?
6. **(Q7-Prov 9:8)** This verse also teaches something very profound that’s not so obvious. What does it say *your response* to rebuke reveals about you?
7. **(Q7-Prov. 10:19)** What are some different ways or contexts in which you can “talk too much”? (E.g You can talk too much on one *occasion*.)
8. **(Q7-Prov. Eph. 4:29)** How are words “that fit the occasion” different from a cliché? How often do you use words “that fit the occasion?” How often do you use clichés?