
THE LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS

Hank Tate

SUCCESS — We think about it a lot. I remember when I was a young man, thinking about how I wanted to be a “success”. I visualized all the things I wanted to do...all the things I wanted to get. Mostly what I wanted to get. My dad remembers, with sadness, the time, soon after college, when I told him I was going to be a millionaire by the time I was thirty. Things have changed. I’ve changed.

Over the last few years, the Lord has graciously and lovingly taken me and our family through the desert financially. For this I praise him and from this I want to share with you some insights he has shown me. The Lord has given me a new understanding of what success is — from His viewpoint.

I believe that He has also taught me some of his principles on how to achieve success...His success. I want to share with you the LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS.

We are going to pretend for a few minutes. I want you to visualize the content of your life as a little red wagon which God has given you to pull through life. What you carry in it will be different from other people because God has made you unique. All of us are special creations...totally unique. But God’s goal for you is that you put in the wagon (your life) those things that HE wants you to carry forward through your life.

That is how we are going to define success tonight. Success lies not in achieving what you aim at but in aiming at what your ought to achieve. Getting into your wagon the things that God wants in your wagon.

The dictionary defines success as “ a favorable result; the gaining of wealth, position, or other advantage: ”

The world defines success as an ending...God defines success as a process. God defines it as who we become and how it accomplishes his main goal...that the His name be glorified. The world defines it by what we get...what we accumulate. God’s purposes are different. He warns us against the collection of things:

Matt. 6:19-21 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The issue is not the things but the focus. Does everything we have belong to Him... is it committed to His purposes rather than our pleasure. But back to our wagon. This wagon has no wheels! We must install the wheels before the wagon can be pulled. Well...before it can be pulled easily. You see, we each will pull our wagon through our life, but some of us will be dragging it with no wheels...or missing wheels. That’s not too much fun! The axles keep catching on the rocks, or the wagon tips over because of a missing wheel.

The wheels to OUR LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS are the four principals of success that God lays before us in his Word. Those principles were founded by Him to make our wagons pull easily through life. He never said there wouldn’t be bumps, but the wheels – His wheels – HIS principles of success

will keep us from getting stuck in the bumps and ruts.

1ST WHEEL - “PREPARED”

The first step to getting a wheel on our wagon – the first principle – is to be PREPARED. This particular wheel really has two halves to it. Each fits with the other to make a complete smoothly rolling wheel.

FACTS = First Half of Wheel

The first half of being prepared we’ll call FACTS. To be prepared we must have the knowledge required to accomplish the goals set before us. This principle of gaining the facts is the focus of education. Gaining the knowledge and skills required to be successful in your field of endeavor. Several verses speak to the importance of getting your education, and the Bible makes it very clear that it is the responsibility of each individual person to seek out and obtain the necessary knowledge ...not your parent’s or some other teacher’s responsibility to force it into you. Each of us, no matter what our age, must pursue our own continuing preparation.

Prov. 19:2 It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.

Prov. 18:15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

Prov. 23:12 Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.

Prov. 10:8 The wise man is glad to be instructed, but a self-sufficient fool falls flat on his face.

Prov. 22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.

Prov. 24:3-5 By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength;

Luke 14:28-30 “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

PERCEPTION = Second Half of Wheel

The second half of the PREPARED wheel is equally important. The wheel won’t roll without it. It is PERCEPTION. One of the things I must acknowledge every day in my business is that PERCEPTION is almost more important than fact. How people see us. How people see what we do, will carry more weight than the factual content.

To produce a report that has good research and correct facts, but which is presented with misspellings, poor printing, crumpled paper, and smudges will give the impression to the reader that the

paper is not a high-quality report. How something is presented forms the initial image of how people will interpret the validity and strengths of the facts you are trying to present.

The same is true of you as a person. We all wish that people would make judgements about us by our hearts, but such a desire fails to recognize reality. We form our first impressions about others by their appearance, their posture, their smile...or lack of one, their manner of speaking and vocabulary.

1 Sam. 16:7 ... The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

All these things are the package that you present yourself in. Be sure the package conveys what you want it to!

Young people in particular face a great temptation to define their appearance and personal presentation by what others of their peer group consider to be of value. There is intense pressure over what kind of clothes to wear, and what kind of tennis shoes are "in".

But be forewarned. The doors to our future success are not controlled by youth. The school age peer group has no say here. Your attention should be to present yourself in a positive light to those who are in authority over you as you travel your road to success. Those in authority over you are the ones who control the doors to your success. The reality is that adults view personal presentation in a very different light than youth. Visualize for a second a teenager showing up at a store where he would like to get a job and finding himself in line behind two other kids. The first has scruffy jeans with a hole in the knee and a loud T-shirt with a heavy metal rock group. The second guy has long scraggly hair with an earring and is smoking. The third shows up in slacks or a pressed skirt, and a pressed shirt with neatly brushed hair .

Let me tell you, as an employer, what I would see. The first kid with the scruffy jeans and T-shirt I would assume has little respect for neatness...could I trust him to keep my store clean. The second, with the earring and long hair, has communicated that he rejects authority and tradition...could I depend on him to follow my operating rules and procedures, or would he rebel against my values as a businessman concerned with serving customers. But "ah ha" here is a kid who shows that he understands the value of neatness, he is probably more organized than the others, my customers would probably feel more comfortable around him, and he will probably respect and listen to my teaching more readily than the others.

Are any of those assumptions necessarily true in fact. Possibly not. Either one of the first two could have been brilliant and capable, and the neatly dressed teenager could in fact be lazy and untrustworthy, but the package plays a major role in my decision as an employer.

That scenario repeats itself over and over throughout life. God does look on the heart...but men very definitely look on appearances. Remember that in all you do you are representing an image of Christ as well.

1 Cor. 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Pet. 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

The reality of this principle of perception is inescapable. Yet sadly there are millions of youths, and adults, in this world who

never realize that their choices regarding their appearance, dress or language. The choice for a man to have long hair or an earring can be freely made in this country. Sadly, however, most do not recognize that they are also making a choice to remove themselves from about ninety percent of the job market if they make those choices. Like it or not our choices of how we handle the issue of perception will severely affect how easily our Little Red Wagon can be pulled.

2ND WHEEL - "LISTENING"

The second wheel of the wagon is marked "listening" and represents the importance of listening to others. There is such a temptation in life to feel that we should be self-sufficient...able to do everything ourselves without help from others. Our pride easily rears its head and keeps us from accepting and hearing the advice or criticism of others. God warns us very strongly that we must not only listen to rebuke and correction, but we need to actively pursue it.

Prov. 10:17 Anyone willing to be corrected is on the pathway to life. Anyone refusing has lost his chance.

Prov. 9:8-9 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

We must surround ourselves with counselors. Individuals who are willing to tell us the truth...even if we really don't want to hear it.

Prov. 11:14 For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

Prov. 24:6 for waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers.

But be warned that choice of who you choose to listen to...who you choose to spend your time with is vitally important.

Ps. 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Prov. 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Prov. 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child,...

3RD WHEEL - "FAITHFUL"

The third wheel is called "Faithful". God's third principle of success.

Prov. 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

The Hebrew word for faithful in this verse means "stability, firmness, truth". The character trait which indicates that men, and God, can depend on you. God doesn't call us to be successful. He calls us to be faithful. There are several pieces that make up this area.

DEPENDABILITY: What you say you will do.

Num. 30:2 When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

Ps. 15:1 LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? ... 4 ...who keeps his oath even when it hurts, (NIV)

Prov. 12:22 God delights in those who keep their promises and abhors those who don't.

INTEGRITY: Being honest in your words and actions.

Ps. 97:10 Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Prov. 2:7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

INITIATIVE: Doing what needs to be done without having to be told.

Luke 12:47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.

Matt. 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

In the parable of the master who leaves three of his servants with talents, two do something with the talents...they know what their master's true intentions are and they do it...even at risk of failure. Note that the good servants are rewarded for their faithfulness...not their success. A faithful man may make many mistakes and have numerous "failures", but, as long as he is faithful, he is moving on the road to success.

4TH WHEEL - "SERVANT"

The fourth wheel is marked "servant". God's fourth principle for success.

From the world's standpoint the way to be successful is to look out for "old number one"...yourself. God's viewpoint is totally different. God defines leadership and success in terms of servanthood. This theme is repeated over and over in the Bible.

Our aim should be service, not success.

Phil. 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Matt. 20:25-28 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."



We now have the wheels on the wagon. A description of what our focus should be.

We each need to become a **PREPARED LISTENING FAITHFUL SERVANT...**

Say it again! We need to be a **PREPARED LISTENING FAITHFUL SERVANT...**

But we are still missing something. The wagon is not going anywhere unless we put our hands on the handle and pull it. We must put effort into making it all work. The last area then necessary for getting our LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS through life is...

THE WAGON'S HANDLE: "PATIENTLY FOLLOWING GOD"

Three words make up the handle of the wagon..."Patiently following God." Words that convey a full message. The energy that makes all the other principles work. Let's look at each word:

PATIENTLY

Ps. 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Ps. 27:14 Don't be impatient! Wait for the Lord, and He will come and save you! Be brave, stouthearted and courageous. Yes, wait and He will help you. (LB)

Ps 37:34 Don't be impatient for the Lord to act! Keep steadily along His pathway and in due season He will honor you with every blessing. (LB)

One of the biggest things I've learned in the last few years is that God's timing is not necessarily our timing. His vision of life is from an eternal standpoint, and we have only a limited window on what He is doing with us. There may be many of what we, and the world, would call "failures" before we reach that place where God plans to use us.

After all look at the life of Joseph. He had a dream. It gave him a vision of God doing something special, something big with him. But then he found himself thrown into a pit by his brothers and sold into slavery. Do you think he was happy? It was a revelation to me to realize that Joseph was most certainly crying his young eyes out as he sat on that camel traveling off into slavery in a foreign land. He surely thought God had forgotten him. But did God have a plan. Yes!! It was so big that Joseph could not have conceived of it. But first God had to get him from Canaan to Egypt and in the process make him the kind of man God needed.

God is most interested in preparing us, and that preparation does not come easily. Let me encourage you to know that, if God is going to do something mighty with you, he will take you through the classroom of affliction.

THE LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS

Rom. 5:3-5 But more than this we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

The word "endurance" used here implies a certain attitude that we must have in the midst of suffering if we are to move on to the "character" described. This attitude of endurance is reflected in numerous verses such as:

1 Thess. 5:16-18 Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

We may feel unimportant. We may feel that what we accomplish is minor...because we never see the ultimate results. God does not miss the little things that have eternal value beyond our comprehension. The Sunday School teacher who led a rebellious little boy to the Lord had no dream that Billy Graham would bring millions to the Lord.

We may find ourselves doing a lot of "waiting" for God's timing. Oswald Chambers tells of five missionary contemporaries who each felt God leading them to the mission field. After special and miraculous provision, each of them arrived at their individual mission fields to find little success. For six years each labored with no fruit. But in the seventh year the flood gates opened, and many came to know the Lord. The observation was made that if success had happened immediately, it would have been easy to think it was the individual who accomplished the success...not the mighty hand of God. In all things He wants to get the glory.

We also need to recognize that there may be times in our lives where, from the world's viewpoint, we appear as failures. Yet from God's viewpoint we are in the middle of accomplishing His goals through us.

Look at David. Anointed by Samuel to be King. He knows he is supposed to be King. Yet he immediately finds himself running from cave to cave fleeing Saul. Most people, looking from the outside, would have looked at him at that point in time and said he was a failure, or that God was punishing him for something.

Look at Paul. When he became a Christian, he gave up all that his friends considered important. He became a failure in their eyes. Even in the church's eyes his late ministry could have been questioned. God said, "Paul I'm going to send you to speak to Kings" and then he is stoned, chased out of town, arrested, imprisoned, shipwrecked, and snake bitten. If you were in the church in Rome and heard that this man was coming to see you, would you have thought that he was sent by God or being punished by God. How could anyone in such circumstances be in God's will.

Don't be misled by the prosperity theology that if you are in God's will everything will go well and you will prosper. Don't be disappointed and dejected when things go "wrong" and think that God has abandoned you and you have become a failure. We may even have the experience of feeling that we are a failure because we don't see the end of the story.

A Monrovia missionary name George Smith went to Africa.

He had been there only a short time and had only one convert, a poor woman, when he was driven from the country. He died shortly after, on his knees, praying for Africa. He was considered a failure. But a company of men stumbled onto the place where he had prayed and found a copy of the Scriptures he had left. Presently they met the one poor woman who was his convert. A hundred years later his mission counted more than 13,000 living converts who had sprung from the ministry of George Smith.

God's timing is not our timing, but we must continue pulling our LITTLE RED WAGON. Failure only becomes failure if we give up – if we stop getting back up when we fall down. If we stop trusting – stop being patient.

FOLLOWING GOD

This is an action verb showing that we must work. We must each apply ourselves diligently to what God has put before us.

Prov. 28:19 He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

Prov. 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Prov. 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Josh. 1: 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Ps. 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

So, putting it all together, what are God's principles for success in life? It is a simple phrase. One which once learned can become a recurring encouragement to our wagon moving smoothly. The entire phrase says very simply:

We need to focus on becoming a PREPARED, LISTENING, FAITHFUL, SERVANT PATIENTLY FOLLOWING GOD

Follow God's principles for success and your LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS will roll through life to true success. Success that stands the test of time. Success that, according to God's grace, will glorify God through your life.

Go with God...and your LITTLE RED WAGON OF SUCCESS.



The above was first presented at a homeschool graduation in May 1992. It has been presented at five graduations since then.