



PERSONAL

AM I SUCCESSFUL?

A person who heard about my story and read my book once asked me, "Sir Dodong, you have inspired and encouraged many, would you consider yourself a success already?" She added, "A lot of people have given their versions of success. If you don't mind, can you tell me what success is to you, especially in terms of the culture here in our country?"

I answered her, "I do not know if I am successful. Kasi that is not my objective in life. My goal is to be faithful to the Owner of my business and my Father in heaven. I work not to reach a status of success; instead, I work to be faithful by using the talents that He has entrusted to me."

One day a friend asked me, "Since you have achieved a lot already, do you have other ambitions?" I told him that I have stopped setting ambitions ever since God brought my family to Bukidnon, especially when He took me from an executive position in Hewlett-Packard to live in a container van! But I have a daily desire, a desire to hear God tell me what He told Jesus in Matthew 3:17 — that I am His son, in whom He is also pleased. So, my desire, or ambition, is not one that involves my future, but one that concerns my today. This is important because I know that what I do today will determine my future. Yet, as I strive to be faithful, God has blessed me in many ways, including materially.

I strive to follow Jesus in order to honor Him and please His Father. So, my measure of success is very simple: I am successful when I feel that God is pleased with me.

OUR POSSESSION SHOULD REFLECT WHO WE ARE BEFORE GOD

Two years ago, I brought a group of friends from Manila to our farm. As we traveled up the mountain, one of them asked, "Bakit ito ang pinili mong lupa? Malayo, rough, and mahirap puntahan! Bakit hindi ka bumili ng mas maganda?" Sabi ko sa kanya "Ito lang kasi ang binigay ni God sa amin noon. Since He did not give me extra money to buy something better, ang puwede ko lang gawin ay pagyamanin ang binigay Niya."

Wouldn't it be nice if we can choose our lot in life— our job, our inheritance, and our business? This would make it easier for everyone involved, di ba? While some have this privilege, this is not the case for most of us. We find jobs riddled with conflicts, we inherit possessions that are flawed, and we get into businesses that are full of challenges. If God owns everything, why would He give us imperfect gifts?

As I searched the Bible for answers, I found two reasons why God does not give us what we think is the best for us. Matthew 25:14- 15 tells us that God will entrust to us talents according to our abilities. On the other hand, John 9:1- 3 tells us that things happen so that God's power may be seen in us. This means that whatever we have today, God gave them because He thinks they are the best for us.

Some people easily leave their jobs, sell their lands, and hop from one business to another because they feel there is something better elsewhere. They do not stay long enough to grow their abilities and to experience God's glory as He creates miracles through the problems, He allows them to experience.

The two pictures below show a contrast of how our farm looked like when we first acquired it versus how it is today. The first picture shows an area covered with worthless cogon grass, while the second one shows a forest filled with animals and plants. God gave my family a farm that was difficult to manage because He wanted to grow our abilities and show the world His glory. I believe God wants to do the same thing to everyone who is willing to trust that He has given what is best for them.

Doc Alvin Ang, one of the most respected economists in the country, once said, "Our possession do not define who we are." I agree! But let me just say that I also believe that our possession should reflect who we are before God. The way we manage our possession should show that God remains the Owner, as we strive to be His good and faithful stewards.



WORK YOUR LAND AND YOU WILL SUCCEED

Some people feel that life has not given them a fair chance to succeed. They complain and say that if only they were born to better parents, or went to better schools, or had better jobs, or inherited a better property, they would have succeeded.

But do you know that many of our Bible heroes had disadvantaged beginnings? Abraham had to make do with the land Lot rejected. Isaac stayed in a land of famine while everyone had left for Egypt. Joseph went from being a privileged son to becoming a slave and then a prisoner. Yet, all of them eventually prospered in spite of their predicaments.

The story of Isaac in Genesis 26 reveals the secret to these men's success. It shows that (1) We should stay where God puts us and WORK our land no matter what its condition may be; (2) We should WORK according to His instructions (law or Torah in Hebrew) and obey Him in every way. If we do these, as Joshua 1:8 says, we will make our ways prosperous.

This is the testimony of our farm. People would often ask us why we did not choose a better land. They say the farm is just too far, too rough, and too difficult to manage. I would tell them, "Ito lang ang binigay ni God sa amin, so

ang puwede lang naming gawin ay pagyamanin ito." Since we did not have access to extra funds, we set ourselves to WORK and make do with what we had. And after 18 years, we have converted this barren land into a fruitful garden.

Whatever your lot in life, if you WORK on it according to the ways of the Lord you will experience the breakthroughs Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph experienced. I believe God established our farm so that it can show the world what He can do with a barren land. Our farm is called Moriah Farms. Recently, I discovered that in Hebrew *Mori-yah* means "where God teaches." Yah is short for Yahweh and mori means to teach. In 2005, He also built Semilya Sa Kinabuhi through a series of miracles, which paved the way for us to be able to teach people His ways. We hope someday you can join our training programs so that we can help you experience your own breakthroughs.

ABOUT VALUES AND VIRTUES

(A response to an article written by Rex Mendoza)

Rex, I agree with the need to restore values and virtues. And para sa akin, hindi ibig sabihin na porke't religious ang isang tao, may mga values din. I feel that the state of our nation is an external manifestation of our values as a people. Kasi ang tanong ng karamihang tao ay, "Paano na lang si Edi?" Pero sino si Edi? Edi AKO!"

One time, in another Viber group, someone suggested that we think more of the nation and less of ourselves. And someone reacted by saying that we need to protect ourselves first. In one video about Japan, it says the reason the Japanese are orderly, and progressive is because of their concern and respect for others. They don't throw garbage unnecessarily because they don't want others to be inconvenienced. Dito, the opposite is being done. For the sake of Edi.

I do not know the case about gasoline, but the price of rice and corn should not be this high because the buying price from the farmers has not changed for years but the selling price continually goes up. For example, in Mindanao, the farmers sell their rice produce for P18 to P20, but it retails for P40 to P50. A friend studied the system and told me that there is just too much anomaly in between and for decades the government has not intervened. Why? Because of Edi!

When Randell Tiongson said Christian values are necessary for change, I believe what he is saying is we should start living out our beliefs and not just merely talk about them. The Bible says we should consider others as more important than ourselves (see Philippians 2), but we do otherwise. We do not realize that when we start to protect ourselves from others, they will also protect themselves from us. But when we aim to protect others, others will protect us.

I really like the heart of this group because it is concerned about the welfare of the individual. I believe if we continue to work on the micro, we will soon impact the macro. Because the macro is just the sum total of the hearts of the micros. If I can, I will support what Salve Dulpito is doing but I am just too far. So sa kanila ang Luzon, amin ang Mindanao!

May God bless you all with so much abundance so that your overflow can nourish everyone around you.

Note:

*Rex Mendoza is a well-known author and public speaker, one of the most respected in the industry.

*Salve Dulpito is the anchor of ANC's *On the Money*

NATIONALISM: LOVING GOD, LOVING OUR COUNTRY

According to Dr. Alvin Ang, one of the top economists in the country, the Philippines has been the fastest growing economy in Asia since 2017. However, there are Filipinos who are still wondering if this is the best place to live in. This is because of all the issues we are facing, like the Marcos burial, the extrajudicial killings, Duterte's leaning towards China and Russia, etc. It saddens me to hear people wanting to migrate in order to protect themselves from the uncertainties of the future. On the other hand, it angers me when people say, "Mabuti pa sa America, sa London, sa Canada... Hindi katulad dito sa Pilipinas!"

Have you ever wondered why God created you as a Filipino? If God is in control, He could have made you an American or a Canadian, di ba? So why did He make you a Filipino? I believe it is because He sees you as the best steward of this country. He gave you your portion or inheritance in the Philippines because this is the part of the world that He wants you to care for and to make fruitful.

He allowed many of us to see the beauty of other countries, not because He wants us to live there, but because He wants us to realize our potentials. We should understand that the reason why the infrastructure of the US is good is because the Americans of old stayed, took care of their country, and made it what it is today. Unfortunately, many Filipinos keep on leaving for other countries, selling their lands, and bringing their money out to spend in those nations. No wonder we are what we are today. It is because many of our best talents did not stay to care for this country.

God made me a Filipino because He wants me to steward a portion of the country in Bukidnon. If only all Filipinos would take good care of the portion God entrusted to them, we can make this country what God wants it to be. I love this country not because it is the best but because it is the country God gave to me. If only we would all learn to love what God gave us, we can make this country the best in the world.

For me nationalism is not just about loving our country but also about loving God and treasuring the things He entrusted to us.

NATIONALISM: TAKING CARE OF OUR COUNTRY

When Israel was allowed to become a nation in 1948, the Jews were offered three places to settle in— Madagascar, Uganda or their original land which was located within the region of Palestine. They opted to go back to their original land, even if this was barren and occupied by hostile Arabs. They chose this because they said it was the land God gave them. Jews from all over the world migrated, and continuously migrate, back to the land of their forefathers. They have since taken care of their land and have made the desert bloom and the land flourish. They have also developed so many technologies that have influenced our lives today.

The Philippines today is in a much better position than when Israel started in 1948. Like the Jews, only we Filipinos can make our country bloom because no one else will love this country more than us. If only we would stop looking at the bad condition we are in and see our country's potential, then I believe we can be the Israel of Asia. But how can we do this?

I am not a person who will enter politics, so I won't be able to help this country on a national scale. I am a farmer and a businessman in Bukidnon. I believe I can contribute to the development of this nation by taking care of my portion and by making sure my business succeeds so that I can uplift the lives of my people and contribute to the community where I live. If God gives me the chance, I will help others by sharing the things I have learned. Like me, many of you may not be able to help the country on a national scale. But if you focus your energy on excelling in your work and making your business fruitful, you can be a blessing to your people and your community. Together, we will all be able to make this country what God wants it to be.

I believe our country has unrealized potential. What it lacks are people who will take good care of it. I wish that those who have left, like the Jews, will someday come back to bless this country with the things they have learned. If we are truly a Christian nation who claims to love the Lord, then we should love this country because this is the place He has entrusted to us.

A MAN OF WISDOM?

A number of people have called me a man of wisdom. Friends, I am not! And I am not trying to be humble about this. In fact, when I was young, my mother even told me, "Anak, hindi ka matalino, diligent lang." Today, I wish to explain why some people think of me this way because I also want people to think of you in the same way.

Let me ask you, when do you call a person wise? Di ba it is when he taught you something that worked for him? When he's able to share with you, ways to solve the problems and help you gain success? In my case, what unique and new principles have I taught you? Karamihan ng prinsipyo ko galing lang sa Bible, so they are not mine but the Lord's.

Alam n'yo tama ang nanay ko nang sabihin niyang I am not an intelligent person, diligent lang. Up to now, it takes me a long time to understand the Word of God. So, to compensate for this, I would read and reread it. I would also analyze and ponder over it, and I would try to find the reasons why and how it would benefit me. After I have done this, I would then obey what I've learned! Thus, I am not a wise person, I am just obedient.

Joshua 1:8 explains why some of you see me as wise. It says that if you meditate on God's Word daily and obey it diligently, you will make your ways prosperous and you will have success. Unfortunately, most people only see the Bible as a spiritual book, so they do not read it as often as they should. Ako naman, I see it as an instruction manual, that is why I immerse myself in it. Some say the Bible is short for Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth. Para sa akin it means Basic Instructions By which to Live on Earth.

My friends, I am not wise, just obedient. The success you see in me is the Word of God applied. I have been reading the Bible from cover to cover for the past 20 years, and it has brought many good things to me and into the life of my family. So my desire is for all of you to experience success in every way, para when people see you, they will also say that you are a person full of wisdom. But true wisdom comes only from the Lord and only obedience unleashes its power. But you will find that it is difficult to obey if you are first not intimate with Him. So get to know Him better. Read His words and obey His ways, so that you may benefit from the wisdom of the Lord!

THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

One day my daughter asked me, "Papa, how are you able to think outside the box? Kasi, you seem to see things differently from most people." I do not know if you agree with her, but my answer shocked her. Sabi ko, "Denise, I am an engineer. I always think inside a box. Kaya lang, I think inside a different box than most people use."

People today strive to think outside the box. They often challenge the norm, looking for ways to work smarter and get rich faster. I believe this was why GMO plants have been developed and new technologies have been invented. But the promise of better yields through GMO seeds does not always happen and technology has not really simplified our lives.

I have learned that there are laws in nature that we cannot change. Thus, we should not go against them but instead, just work around them. This is true for the Bible as well. While we can challenge the laws of the Lord, at the end of the day, people will find that His ways will always prevail. When I tell people that I rest our soil in the seventh year and explain the benefits we get, most of them are shocked. Yet there was an old farmer who told me that this principle was taught in agricultural books in the 1950s. So, I asked him, why was it removed? He said it was because people found a faster way to sterilize the soil, using chemicals to kill unwanted organisms. But since all organisms mutate, they have to develop stronger strains to continually address the issue. Kami, we rest our soil because no pest that attacks our crops will survive if we starve them. By doing this, our soil also improves as we encourage the growth of beneficial organisms.

I am a very 'in-the-box' thinker! But I choose to think within the box that is spelled B-I-B-L-E. When I read something that doesn't make sense, instead of challenging it, I would find ways to understand and apply it. I try my best to diligently obey God's instructions, and in return, He has kept His promises in Deuteronomy 28:1-14 (you should read it). I hope I can encourage all of you to do the same because the Bible is not a book to make us 'spiritual'; it is an operating manual to make us fruitful.