

Five Absolutes of Achievement

The Eighth Commandment admonishes us not to steal. Embedded in this Biblical standard is the expectation that we obtain, achieve, possess. There are only three ways we can obtain anything. First, by gift. These are those possessions that we have done nothing to earn but someone has found us fitting enough and deserving enough of them. Air and water are two great gifts that we rarely think twice about and of course the greatest gift is our salvation. Second, by work. Work was created before Adam sinned and must never be viewed because of sin. It is a sin NOT to work. When we receive because of our work it produces a sense of self-worth and self-respect. We must be mindful that most of what we will ever possess comes by way of our working for it. Yes, occasionally I may get a good grade because the exam was graded on a curve (gift) but generally my grades in both the classroom and life are a result of our work ethic. We are entitled to very little in this life. Most of what we will experience and enjoy will be the result of sweat, labor, blood, tears, and sacrifice. Finally, by theft. This is the whole reason for God telling us not to steal. In this life there will be moments when all the gifts have been opened and when we have acquired all we can through our hard work and gaps will remain. When those gaps surface when our deepest longings and desires are yet to be fulfilled, we must trust the timing of God. I am learning that acquiring by ill gain is far worse than not having at all. When these moments surface and they will for all of us, keep these five imperatives in mind and do your best to practice them.

Prioritize your time. We have all been allotted only so much time and even the longest life is short in view of eternity. A.W. Tozer once wrote, "Time is a resource that is nonrenewable and nontransferable... when it is lost it is unrecoverable. When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection." Achievement requires great time management. I am relentlessly working on getting everyone and everything that matters to me on my schedule. More and more I am learning that if I do not schedule it, it probably will not get done. I am also learning that idle time is still the devil's playground. People that are busy doing things that matter don't have time to do things they will regret.

Perfect your titles. We all have them, Janitor, Teacher, Doctor, Attorney, Husband, Wife, Student, Pastor, Christian, etc. As we take a step back to consider what these titles mean – the characteristics, expectations, demands and potential results – it will challenge us to recommit ourselves to be the best of it we can possibly be. Too often, we are more focused on getting to the next rung of the ladder having not steadied ourselves and mastered the rung we are on. Additionally, we must be careful not to claim titles we are simply not deserving of. Too often we exaggerate our accomplishments and apply it as a topical sedative over our failures and like of drive with the hope of numbing ourselves from the truth that we can do better and we have not earned it yet.

Participate with your talents. Each of us has been given unique and specific gifts from God. My experience is people are successful in the area or areas they have been gifted to be successful in. Writers rarely become successful by playing athletics. Baseball players don't become successful playing hockey. When we endeavor to gain our success in areas outside our place of giftedness or "calling" we steal the needed investment capital from the area of my purpose. Most of us need all the time and effort we can muster to achieve and rarely do we have the luxury of expending the time, energy, or resources in other endeavors. I am convinced that each of us can live a good life when we identify and commit ourselves to a unique role and specific assignment. You have something that is marketable to our society. Find it, focus on it and relentlessly invest in it and you.

Present your tithe. Obviously as a Christian I believe in giving ten percent of my income to God through a local church. The significance of this strategy is first to teach us about prioritizing our finances. It is to teach us that not all we attain or achieve is for us. It is to teach us that the real measure of our worth is not found in our money. It is to teach us that there are no free lunches and that each of us has a proportionate, proper, and perpetual responsibility to give. Our achievement cannot be money motivated. Our earnings are a by-product

of our calling but not the reason for our calling. I have often said, I don't Pastor to live but rather I live to Pastor.

Publicize your testimony. Share your story because you have one. Our forward focused mentality can often rob us of the encouragement of our previous successes and the distances we have already traveled. It is true that although we may not be where we ultimately desire, we are not where we used to be. Look in the mirror from time to time and speak to yourself about yourself and celebrate how far up the ladder you have gotten and let that be motivation for you and for others to take another step today.

Success like failure may not be an exact science but it is a deliberate one. Whatever you want in your life you must be intentional about it. If you intend on achieving you must be absolute about it.

What is your absolute for achievement?