

## "THE SECRET OF SUCCESS"

First in a Series of Four Sermons on the  
Christian Understanding of Stewardship

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by

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Let me talk to you today about success, not success narrowly defined, but in the widest possible sense.

I believe that there are four basic principles which when added together form a healthy doctrine of success. They are as follows: (1) the teamwork principle; (2) the principle of the strategic use of resources; (3) the principle of the parts, and (4) the principle of the ends and means.

Take a look first of all at the teamwork principle. There are a lot of people, particularly in individualistic Western society, who are not sold on the necessity of teamwork, but nevertheless, it is of foundation importance. Bluntly stated, it goes as follows:

In the long run a man must join with others to succeed. This principle is sound as a technological fact, a social fact and a spiritual fact.

In science and technology the teamwork concept has been dramatically authenticated in just the past few days. No one who is aware of the situation in modern technology can argue for rugged individualism any longer. There is no real advance today in science if an individual endeavors to go it alone. The Apollo 11 achievement may stand out in our century as the most exciting proof of this principle. Meaningfully integrated teams of men around the world were all essential to the project as were the three Apollo teammates--Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin; together they made the Apollo 11 a success. Command Headquarters is at Houston, blast off is at Cape Kennedy a thousand miles away, and the incredible NASA computer is located in still another place. Tracking stations are scattered worldwide. Add to this obvious cooperative line-up the thousands of less obvious teammates, including the Manila Solar Observatory right here in the Philippines, and the scope of the whole picture is fantastic. Newsweek reported an interesting sidelight to the story of the actual landing maneuver of Eagle. When the overloaded Eagle computer was beginning to fail, within seconds an engineer in Houston solved the problem with a technical suggestion to Armstrong which corrected the problem. After an experience like that we can appreciate Commander Armstrong's statement of gratitude to the thousands of men in the NASA team as more than a pleasant conventionalism. He really meant it!

The teamwork principle is equally true as a social fact and there can be no substantive solutions to the complicated social issues of our generation until we really work the principle. It means that no country will experience social change by presidential decree as if one man's pronouncements will result in meaningful renewal. We are gradually making this discovery in the secular city. It means a university cannot be administered simply as a faculty-board of regents show; the student is part of the team and for the university to fulfill its function the whole team must have voice and responsibility. If I keep my garden and house manicured and neat, but dump garbage on the street beyond my own property line, then the neatness within the wall becomes a deception and void of real meaning. Positive social change is a community, a fraternal experience and, therefore, beware of oversimplified, sweeping remedies that promise social fulfillment by either the paternalism of the political right or of the political left. The answer for our cities is in neither of these dictatorships but through the way of the hard work of building a team from the whole and working together on the problem, of Bayanihan. This road is a lot harder because it rejects the politics of blame or coercion whereas both the paternalism of the strong leader and the wrath of the radical revolutionary reject the modesty that is willing to admit solidarity with anyone outside of a very small cadre. For this very reason both of these ways are inadequate. They both recite the slogans of solidarity but they avoid solidarity as a working strategy.

The teamwork principle is true as a spiritual fact as well! In Christian faith we have one great "singular" and that is Jesus Christ our Lord. Because of this one omega we can never claim singularity for ourselves. In fact, the more fully we recognize the lordship of Jesus Christ, the less we will insist upon, and glory in, our own separateness. Cults get their start when Christ is diminished; this results in the inordinate affection for the particular speciality of our group followed by the glorification of the leader, and finally the disdain toward those outside the movement. None of this is God's will for His people and the end of it is divisiveness and trivialization of what is really central. The Apostle Paul expressed the teamwork principle with great forcefulness for the Corinthians when he put it this way:

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as He chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the

body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member is honored, all rejoice together."

I Corinthians 12:14-26

The temptation to "go it alone" is always strong but certainly we who are Christians must oppose that temptation. Can a man worship God alone? Can we raise our families alone? Can we make the community a worthwhile place to live in and do it alone? If the answer is no, then the really big question is: How does this team reality happen?

Consider that question from two sides; from the standpoint of the individual and the standpoint of the institution. The community builds a team by recruiting it. This is by no means as obvious a thing as it sounds. This involves the wisdom on the part of an institution to realize that broad social crises can only be solved by broad social involvement. This is precisely what the teamwork principle means; for this basic bedrock reason some social welfare programs fail in that the level of involvement was too limited for anything creative in the long run to take place. Somehow the whole community must involve people and groups who actually form the community. Secondly, the community must train its team; prepare the member of the whole to effectively face up to the concrete challenge. Jesus took the time to train his men and our Lord's strategy is sound. There are no short-cuts to depth solutions and, therefore, I do not believe that the Christian Church can substitute anything for the time spent in the training of our apostolate. The team that has achieved depth together will make more long-lasting contributions to the solution of social crises because they bring more wholeness and integrity to the situation itself.

Now the community has a genuine means of involving itself with the concrete issues of human existence and in a decisive way.

From the standpoint of the individual the poles are reversed. Do you want to become a part of the answer? Then join the team. Are you a Christian? If you are, then become more than a statistic on the register of the church--become a viable part in its discipleship task.

Secondly, make it your responsibility to grow in spiritual, intellectual and moral terms so that as an individual you become an asset to the team. As I see it, the Church owes it to us to provide orderly means for the Christian to grow; however, the responsibility is still our own as individual Christians to actually open ourselves to this training.

Finally, we ourselves must be willing to become involved in the work of Christ's team in the world. Involvement has never been easy, but worthwhile goals are won in no other way.