

**THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION**  
**Proverbs: Topical Applications of Proverbs**  
**III. The Proverbs Themselves, Proverbs 10:1-31:31**  
**C. Proverbs On Success In Life**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

A number of people in our state are having difficulty being successful in life:

(1) “In theory Erin Stewart was a great idea for the Republican nomination for governor: . . . (She) was elected six times consecutively as mayor of a heavily Democratic city . . . But . . . the Hartford Courant and WTNH-TV8 in New Haven disclosed that Stewart had used her city government credit card for thousands of dollars of purchases for personal items delivered to her home but misclassified as office expenses . . .” (Chris Powell, “Erin Stewart is a great candidate in theory but a disaster in practice,” Republican-American, May 14, 2026, p. A6) Erin Stewart then suspended her campaign on May 14. (Alex Putterman, “Stewart suspends campaign,” op. cit., May 15, 2026, p. A1)

(2) Bridgeport has seen its share of failures in city officials: “After Mayor Joe Gannim was reelected in late 2015” after he had done time in federal prison for corruption, “he began publicly sidelining Chief Joseph Gaudett, hiring former police chief Wilbur Chapman as a paid public safety adviser and lessening Gaudett’s responsibilities. Gaudett ultimately agreed to step down in exchange for a consulting job with the city and Police Captain Armando Perez was made acting chief in March 2016 and permanent chief in 2018. However, he resigned September 11, 2020, following his arrest for rigging that 2018 chief search. (He was later sentenced to 12 months and one day in prison.)” (Brian Zahn, “Searching for stability: Is there such a thing as too many chiefs?” op. cit., May 11, 2026, p. A4)

(3) Failure to succeed reportedly affects many men today, hurting society itself: A letter by Wesley Wensek in the May 18, 2026, Republican American (p. A6) asserted, “The worsening emotional, physical, economic, and spiritual health of men in our society, especially working-class men, has been largely ignored for way too long . . .”

(4) This problem shows up in the realm of home ownership: “Experts say there is no one-size-fits-all answer to why across the generations single women outnumber single men as homeowners. Women now are outpacing men in college attendance, which can lead to higher incomes, said Jessica Lautz, (the National Association of Realtors) deputy chief economist.” (Alex Veiga, “Survey finds single Gen Z women outpacing Gen Z men to homeownership,” op. cit., May 21, 2026, p. A11)

Need: *So we ask, “Does God’s wisdom provide insight on succeeding in life?”*

- I. **God’s “wisdom,” His *hokmah*, or fixed eternal moral order for success and blessing, applies to many issues including the need to succeed in life.**
- II. **We view key proverbs in the Book of Proverbs that reveal seven key factors for success in life:**
  - A. Factor One: We must be truthful to succeed:
    1. Proverbs 17:7 reveals that lying lips are catastrophic for a ruler to have!
    2. Indeed, not only will a false witness perish, but whoever listens to him will be destroyed, Proverbs 21:28.
  - B. Factor Two: We must be humble to succeed:
    1. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall, Proverbs 16:18.
    2. On the one hand, before one’s downfall, he is proud, but humility comes before honor, Proverbs 18:12.
  - C. Factor Three: We must be teachable to succeed:
    1. If a man is wise in his own eyes, there is more hope for a fool than for him, Proverbs 26:12.
    2. If one relies on his own inner man, he is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom, seeking wise input from other reputable parties is kept safe from harm, Proverbs 28:26.
    3. A man who discerns keeps focused on wisdom where a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth where he picks up all sorts of errant ideas to his eventual harm, Proverbs 17:24.
    4. Consequently, even an insightful servant will rule over a shameful son, sharing in the family inheritance as one of the brothers, Proverbs 17:2.
  - D. Factor Four: We must be responsible in order to succeed:
    1. Proverbs 26:13 claims that the sluggard says, “There’s a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!” Instead of merely talking about such a crisis, a responsible man should act to overcome the lion in order to protect other vulnerable people on the road or in the town!
    2. Proverbs 12:24 and 22:29 indicate that diligent hands that thus make one skillful lead to leadership and success where slackness leads to slave labor and obscurity in life.

- E. Factor Five: We must adjust to compensate for our weaknesses and utilize our strengths to succeed:
1. If we have sinned, instead of concealing it, what will lead to failure, we must confess and renounce our sins to find mercy and thus a basis for continuing to head toward success, Proverbs 28:13.
  2. Proverbs 30:24-28 alludes to illustrations of the animals that teach one's adjustments to compensate for his weaknesses: (a) Like the ant that has little strength but yet stores up its annual food supply in the summer, we need to have a good work ethic to compensate for limitations in strength and time; (b) like the cony that has little power but makes its home in protective rock crags, we should acquire insurance to offset our vulnerabilities to harm; (c) like locusts that have no king but compensate by marching in ranks, we should organize ourselves to compensate for a lack leaders and (d) like the lizard that can be caught by the hand but is found in king's palaces, we need to compensate for limited current resources by being opportunistic.
  3. Proverbs 15:17 teaches us to compensate for our emotional limitations by lowering our exposure to trials, to eat at a meal of vegetables where there is love than at a meal of a fattened calf where there is hatred!
  4. Young men are known for their strength and old men for their gray hair, so young men are better utilizing their physical strength and older men their experience to succeed in enterprises in life, Proverbs 20:29.
- F. Factor Six: We must adjust to be effective in leadership to succeed:
1. Those in subordinate positions must be honest (Proverbs 16:13) and humble (Proverbs 25:6-7) to advance toward effective leadership, for dishonesty and pride upset one's advance toward leadership positions.
  2. Overseers must be just (Proverbs 16:10), demand righteousness of their subordinates (Proverbs 16:12; 25:4-5) and value the roles of their subordinates (Proverbs 14:28) to retain their oversight positions.
- G. Factor Seven: We must relate well to God to succeed:
1. We must respect all people for God's blessing: If one oppresses the poor, he shows contempt for their Maker and will face His discipline, but he who is kind to the needy honors the Lord, Proverbs 14:31; 17:5.
  2. Proverbs 28:25; 21:31 and 15:16 reveal the value of relying on God to prosper, to be victorious in conflict and to enjoy peace instead of turmoil in life.
  3. To obtain a firm establishment of our plans, we need to commit to the Lord whatever we do, and He will establish our plans for us, Proverbs 16:3.

***Lesson: The Book of Proverbs reveals that to succeed in life, we must be truthful, humble, teachable, responsible, adjust for our weaknesses and strengths, adjust to be effective in leadership and relate well to God.***

***Application: (1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit of God (Galatians 5:16, 22-23) to be truthful, humble, teachable, responsible, adjust for our weaknesses and strengths, adjust to be effective in leadership and relate well to God to succeed in our lives.***

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

An instructive illustration on success exists in 1 Samuel 17:32-54 where David defeated Goliath (as follows)

(1) First, before fighting Goliath, David was empowered by the Holy Spirit to function successfully as Israel's future king, and thus as a future warrior that he as Israel's future king needed to be (cf. 1 Samuel 16:1-13).

(2) Second, in speaking with Israel's king Saul before facing Goliath, David said he would kill Goliath since God had rescued him as a shepherd boy from a lion and a bear when they attacked his father's sheep and he had to kill them (1 Samuel 17:32-37). David had gained the courage to attack and kill those animals and Goliath from Exodus 23:28-30. God had there promised not to let Canaan's wild animals increase against Israel's people by removing the Canaanites slowly from the land so as to keep the animals in check, enabling Israel to defeat both the Canaanites and the wild animals to possess the land. Believing that promise gave David courage to fight a lion, a bear and Goliath!

(3) Third, when Saul then loaned his armor to David and he tried it on, since Saul was very tall (cf. 1 Samuel 10:23) with an oversized armor, David realized he could not effectively fight Goliath with Saul's large armor that he had also never used in combat, so he decided not to wear it (1 Samuel 17:38-39). Instead, David took his sling, a weapon with which he was familiar and that was lethal from a distance. David knew that if he attacked Goliath from a distance with his sling, he had the advantage versus getting into hand-to-hand combat with the giant (1 Samuel 17:40). David thus adjusted for his weakness and his strength before fighting Goliath, so he defeated him, 1 Samuel 17:41-51a. David's slaying of Goliath led the Philistines to flee, so Israel's men defeated them, 1 Samuel 17:51-54.

**May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit to heed the directives of Proverbs to succeed in life.**