



The Success Mess: Professional Success OPENING PRAYER

Invite a member of the group to lead prayer.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.

“This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot. Likewise, all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of God. For they will scarcely brood over the days of their lives, because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts.”

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

WEEK THREE: PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

After winning Super Bowl XLV, Aaron Rodgers sat on the bus before heading back to the hotel thinking about his journey to the championship. He thought about how he was not highly recruited while in high school, and how he did not receive any scholarship offers from Division I schools to play football. Instead, he started his college football career at a junior college before transferring to the University of California, Berkeley. He thought about how 11 teams decided that he was not worthy of their first pick during the 2005 NFL Draft. He was selected twelfth by the Green Bay Packers where he sat on the bench for three years behind the star, Brett Favre. Aaron eventually became the starter and had proven all his naysayers wrong. You would be hard-pressed to find anyone today who would not consider him to be a top five quarterback in the NFL. Yet while teammates were celebrating their Super Bowl win, Aaron sat on that bus thinking, "I hope I don't just do this." Aaron had finally reached the top rung on the ladder of success for an NFL player, yet something was missing. He was not content, nor could he fully celebrate the moment. Aaron Rodgers went on journey of personal and spiritual discovery to find what he was missing.

Six years later, New England and Atlanta were playing in Super Bowl LI; Aaron Rodgers watched the game at the home of his friend, Pastor Rob Bell. Bell had a guest visiting from Northern Ireland who was not familiar with the game of football. Rodgers explained how the game worked, and Rodgers appeared to be genuinely happy. Rodgers told Bell: "I've been to the bottom and been to the top, and peace will come from somewhere else."

There are so many highly successful people, including Rodgers, who have reached the top of their professions, yet do not enjoy their work and have this feeling that something is missing. Likewise, there are many working people who feel hopeless because the rungs of the ladder are missing and there are not bootstraps to pull themselves up. My friends, where does that peace and enjoyment come from? Our text tells us that enjoyment in our work is a gift from God. Pastor Todd points out in the podcast that accompanies this series that happiness or joy does not come from our work, but God gives us enjoyment in our work. So, where do we find this gift? It starts with having the proper view of work: our work does not define us, it is our relationship with God that defines us.

Although we may have titles or roles in our workplace, we are foremost children of God. Secondly, we should have a posture of gratitude for the blessings that we have in our lives.

Third, we should look for ways to demonstrate God's love in our workplace which is inclusive of performing our tasks with excellence, commitment to following rules of the workplace that do not conflict with our Christian beliefs, and treating our co-workers and others we encounter while doing our work in a way that reflects the character of Jesus Christ. Like Aaron shared his knowledge and love of football with Bell's guest, we can share story of Jesus' love to those who are open.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Share where you've seen God at work in your life this week.

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In your own words, share the difference between finding enjoyment *from* your work - rather than in your work.

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What was the most impactful thing you learned from the sermon, podcast, or story above?

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What are some barriers to finding enjoyment in your work? How can we overcome those?

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How would it change us to accept that, "God needs us/me right where I am?"

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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WEEK THREE

Supplies:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Paper cut into quarters OR folded in half
- Stationary (optional)

WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments, allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

SHARING WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

- Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone has responded that would like to, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God.

OR you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads, saying the following:

"Dear Loving God, The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are... (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them). In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Say: "Today, we revisit last week's sermon and talk about what it means to be happy in our work."

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.
- Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.
 - "This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot. Likewise, all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of God. For they will scarcely brood over the days of their lives, because God keeps them occupied with the joy of their hearts."

ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: "Some times, we don't wake up excited for work - especially if we know the work we have to do is going to be hard!"

Discussion Questions

- What are some things - in school, chores, or at work - that you have to work hard to do?
- Describe a time you didn't want to work. Why didn't you want to? What did you want to do instead?
- What does it feel like when you finish working on something?

Say: "There are things we can do to help us be happier when we work - even when we are working on something hard! One of those things is to practice gratitude for the people we work with at school and work."

Activity: Choose to either make a card using the paper, or pick a piece of stationery, and take a moment to think of someone who works with you at school, home, or work. Write that person a quick 'thank you' note sharing why you are grateful for them, and how they bless you. The next time you see them, make their day brighter by sharing the card or note with them!

*For an alternative, or additional, activity this week, download the #WCBacktoSchool Prayer & Planning Guide to complete as a family!

ENCOUNTERING GOD TOGETHER:

Say: "May we pray together as a family..."

Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...

Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...

Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...

Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs..."

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

ENCOUNTERING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,
we prayed and we spent time with you,
we rested in your love for us,
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

BLESSING ONE ANOTHER FOR OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WORLD:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

- "I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you."
- "God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I."
- "I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them."

DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Please answer these during your personal devotional time at the end of the day or do it as a couple or family.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, "what made you happy today?"

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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