

TAKE 100% RESPONSIBILITY

Week #2 of the 3-Week Series, "The Success Principles"

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So this cranky old lady [congregation laughs] was arrested for shoplifting at a grocery store, and she was obnoxious and mean and rude to everyone, from the store manager to security ... even the arresting officer. And she appeared before the judge, and the judge asked her, "*What did you steal?*" And she snapped, "*A stupid can of peaches.*" And the judge said, "*So why'd you do it?*" She said, "*Well, I forgot my cash and didn't bring it to the store, and I was hungry. And, you know, I was going to pay next time.*" And he said, "*Well, so how many peaches were in that can?*" She said, "*Nine; but what does that have to do with anything?*" "*Well, ma'am, it has to do with the fact that I'm going to give you nine days in jail: one day for each peach that you stole.*" The woman was ticked! She said, "*Nine days!*" And as the judge was about to drop the gavel, the husband of the woman raised his hand and asked if he could speak. The judge said, "*Yes; what would you like to add, sir?*" And the husband said, "*Your Honor, I'd like you to know she also stole a can of peas.*" [Congregation laughs.] All right. [Laughs]

So this morning we are talking about being fully responsible for our lives. So how many of you would say that every day you live in the mindset that you are 100% responsible for your life? How many people would say you do that? Okay; about six. [Congregation laughs]

How many people here have ever blamed someone else for any negative feelings or circumstances that you've experienced? Anybody ever do that? And how many people have ever complained or really stewed on something that happened that didn't go the way you wanted? Did anybody ever do that?

So when you hear the words, "***You are 100% responsibility for everything in your life,***" what kind of feelings does that bring up in you? Do you get, like, warm fuzzies? [Congregation laughs] Do you get all excited? Or as you just a little bit disappointed, or maybe even apprehensive to hear that?

You know, for most of us, I think we feel a little bit of anxiety, a little bit of pressure, a little bit of stress thinking that we are fully responsible for everything in our lives. I think, at some level, the word "responsible" has gotten a bad rap; he seems to have some sort of negative connotation that is kind of some heavy and onerous: it's a heavy load to bear. You know, we have anxiety of thinking that maybe it's our fault or, you know, if we fail, it's our responsibility. Maybe if I give my best to have that responsibility and don't succeed it will show that I'm just not good enough.

I think even from the time we are young, we are sort of afraid of the consequences of taking full responsibility for our actions. And we develop a little pattern, sometimes when we're even young, of coming up with excuses rather than accepting full responsibility and taking on the consequences. The classic one is, "*The dog ate my homework.*" It's a classic "*I don't want to take full responsibility for my life.*" Sometimes we'll say, "*Well, he said it first!*" Or sometimes, anybody ever been late, and you said, "*Oh, the traffic; it was the traffic!*" And it may have been, but we get into this pattern of not wanting to face the consequences of being fully responsible. Of not being fully responsible.

And we turn the excuses into the "blame game." It's a lovely game; I think we enjoy playing it! [Congregation laughs] Because it gets us off the hook, and puts the responsibility for things that aren't working well that we did on other people.

And we get into blaming our parents. We blame our spouse. We blame the kids. We blame our exes. We blame the weather. We blame the economy. We blame the government. Even better, we blame other people's government. We blame everybody! Because we don't want to accept full responsibility for our happiness or our success, or what's going well or, particularly, what's not going well in our lives.

There was a song a few years back that sounds like the class "avoiding responsibility" song. It was by Shaggy; it was called, "*It Wasn't Me.*" [Congregation laughs] And because we don't want to accept responsibility.

You know, it kind of reminds me of this young guy who's being interviewed by the boss. And the boss says, "*You know, there's one quality we're looking for in the person we hire, and that particular quality is that they are very responsible.*" And the young man said, "*Oh, no, sir; that's me! I'm responsible; that's me! In fact, in my last job, when anything went wrong, everyone said I was responsible!*" [Laughs with congregation]

And the fact is: every one of us is responsible. That we are 100% responsible for our happiness. We are 100% responsible for our level of health and fitness and quality of our relationships. The level of our income; the amount of debt that we have. The accomplishments that we have made. We're 100% responsible for the quality of our lives. For the meaning of our lives and the enjoyment of our lives. We are responsible.

The truth is: the happiest and most successful people accept 100% responsibility for all areas of their lives. We are responsible! And that's not a bad thing; it's a good thing! Responsibility is not a burden; it's a blessing. It empowers us and liberates us to allow ourselves to use our power and our resources to make any and every area of our lives better. Yes; other people's actions and words, and there are situations and events that happen in our lives -- they absolutely impact us. However, the thing that impacts us the most is our accepting responsibility.

Responsibility means the ability to respond. We can't control everything that happens, but we 100% can control how we respond to it. Think of a problem in your life; something that isn't going as well as you want. And ask yourself: How much responsibility are you taking in that? And how well are you using your ability to respond?

Somebody once said, "*If it is to be, it's up to me.*" And it's really true! But so often, we don't want to accept full responsibility. You know, but the truth is: you can't outsource how you respond. That's like trying to hire someone to do push-ups for you! [Congregation laughs] It's just not going to be very effective!

And so today, we're in Week #2 of a three-week series entitled, "The Success Principles." Last week, the first principle -- the foundation one, I believe, for a happy and successful life -- is to develop a peaceful mind. Because if we have a mind that is always distracted; if we have a mind that is not focused, we can never really be as effective in handling our current situations; we can never have that peace to calmly enjoy life.

You know, a peaceful mind is a positive mind; it's an open mind. It is the best way to enjoy our lives fully and be more productive and effective in whatever it is that we do.

Today we are going to look at the second principle for success, which is taking 100% responsibility.

And so the first thing that we are responsible for is how we control our energy and what we put out into the world. You know, when we don't accept responsibility, we end up utilizing our energy in a very unhealthy way. And I already mentioned that. And that is by using excuses and blaming and complaining. It is an unhealthy, ineffective, unproductive use of our energy.

And gets us further away from what we want, rather than closer. You know, we all want to raise our vibration. And I'll tell you, one of the best ways to raise your vibration is to make sure you're not doing things to lower your vibration! And excuses, complaining and blaming absolutely lowers our vibration. And blaming, complaining and excuses do three things that do not help us.

Number one: it focuses on the negative. Number two: it wastes our time and energy, because whining, complaining and blaming does not resolve the problem. It doesn't bring solutions. And then the third one is: it gives our power away. So not taking responsibility says that you are allowing other people and circumstances to have more control over your own happiness than you! That we are putting the control of our success and joy in our life outside of our ourselves, and putting it in their hands. It's like we're saying, "*Hey, this is my power and, hey, you can have it.*" I mean, it is allowing our happiness to be held

hostage by someone else, and waiting for something to happen so that we can regain some happiness in some way. And I tell you, those three things are not a winning combination for happiness and success.

You know, the Bible warns us in many ways to not complain, not whine, not moan, not grumble. In Philippians it says, "*Do all things without grumbling or questioning.*" In Ephesians it says, "*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such things that are good and will build you up.*" Jesus said, "*Do not judge.*" And one of my favorites in Psalm 19; it says, "*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord.*"

And what it's saying is: don't invest your thoughts and your words in whining, complaining and grumbling. Let your words and your mouth reflect the kind of heart and the kind of life that you want to live. The fact is: every single one of us needs to give up our excuses, our complaining and blaming. Our victim stories; our "somebody-done-somebody-wrong" songs. [Congregation laughs] We need to give up all that stuff, because it's using our energy in the wrong and negative way. And so what we need to do is to discontinue those things.

Anybody ever see that video with Bob Newhart? And he is, like, a therapist? And somebody comes in, and he guaranteed to cure them in five minutes or less? It's like one of my favorites.

So a lady comes in and says, "*I have this fear of being buried alive in a box! And it affects me; I can't go in an elevator. I can't do this; I can't do that. It affects my life. My whole life!*" And she goes on about how this thing for a minute or so.

So he says, "*Okay; I've got the thing that's going to cure it. It's guaranteed. You just have to do what I say.*"

She said, "*Well, should I write it down?*"

"*Well,*" he said, "*it's only two words. But it is going to cure you.*"

And she said, "*Well, what is it?*"

And he says, "*Stop it.*" [Congregation laughs]

She says, "*Yeah, but ...*"

And he says, "*Stop it!*"

"*Yeah, but buh, buh, buh.*"

"*Stop it. Just stop it.*"

And he said, "*Do you have anything else?*" [Congregation laughs]

And she says, "*Yeah; well, I have all these dysfunctional relationships with men.*"

"*Stop it!*"

"*I seek my mother's approval.*"

"*Stop it!"*

And it seems ridiculous, but the truth is: we have a responsibility to guard our mental houses. And we can stop it.

You ever catch yourself being negative and you say, "*Cancel, cancel!*"? Ever catch yourself saying, "*Come on; don't think that way!*"? We have the power to do that!

One of the funny things we do, as human beings: we tend to complain to the people who can't do anything about it. We go to work and complain about our spouse; we come home and complain about the people at work to our spouse. [Congregation laughs] It's kind of funny! But the truth is: you know what the cure is? STOP IT! And we can! We may not be perfect, but I bet we could all -- if we wanted to -- stop as much blaming and complaining and excuses than we are currently using.

So besides the "stop it" technique, the other thing I like to use to stop myself when something upsetting or frustrating happens ... Before I go to crazy, I like to use a two-word phrase just like Bob Newhart, except mine are: when the situation comes, before you get upset, say, "*That's fascinating.*"

[Congregation laughs]

Honestly, it's a fabulous way to stop yourself from getting too upset! "*That's fascinating.*" So let's say it together: [with congregation] "*That's fascinating!*" Again: [with congregation] "*That's fascinating.*"

You spill milk on the kitchen floor? [Congregation]: "*That's fascinating!*"

You get a flat tire? [Congregation]: "*That's fascinating!*"

You get an unexpected bill? [Congregation]: "*That's fascinating!*"

You don't do so well at work? [Congregation]: "*That's fascinating!*"

Someone gets angry at you? [Congregation]: "*That's fascinating!*"

That's fascinating! It seems silly, but it is a powerful way to divert your mind to not go that place of complaining or blaming or using excuses.

Anybody heard of Edwene Gaines? Powerful spiritual teacher; she teaches prosperity. One of her key foundational things: if you want a more prosperous life, stop complaining. She has a 21-day "no complaint" practice. You have to not complain for 21 straight days to develop a new habit. And so if you complain ... If you don't complain for two days, and then complain on the third day, you've got to start over again on day one. It could take some of us YEARS before we get to 21 days! [Congregation laughs] But the effort is absolutely worth it.

So stopping excuses, complaining and blaming and, instead, using that energy to be aware of how you got where you are. And to really find out what's going on, and where in your life are you hurting? And what thing are you doing that maybe you need to stop doing? What things aren't you doing, that you might need to start? And what different perspective might you have? What's a better way to get a better result than the current results that you're getting?

Stopping complaining stops our energy from going down into negative places. But being aware of where we are is an important thing so we can get where we want to be. Success is about moving from where you are to getting where you'd like to be. And to be here -- to get that you're there -- you need to know where your "here" is!

And so that's why I think it's important, when we stop complaining, is to use it to pay attention to see what's going on: "What am I doing? And maybe I should change?" And just consider these things to move our lives forward.

The second thing about being fully responsible is to be responsible for reclaiming our own power. As I mentioned, we often give our power away when we don't take responsibility. Sometimes I think we don't feel very powerful. I don't think we feel capable and able to change and transform and improve our own lives. But the truth is: you are a powerful spiritual being. You have incredible power over your mind and yourself, and you have power over your life. That is the truth!

If you look at all the different Scriptures that remind us how powerful we are! It says, "*You have been created in the image and likeness of God.*" You are created in the image and likeness of the Creator! You are a Creator!

In Genesis it says, "*You have been given dominion and authority over all things.*" That "*You are the temple of the Living God.*" That "*You are the light of the world!*"

Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me."

All of these things lead to how powerful we are! My favorite is in the Book of Timothy when it says, "*God has not given you a spirit of fear or timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline.*" You are

God's beloved child, endowed with incredible gifts and power. The question is: do you realize how powerful you are? Are you willing to reclaim it? Are you willing to own it? Are you willing to use?

And the fact is: at some level, we A) Don't know how powerful we are; but B) I think we're a little afraid of our own power. I think we're afraid of our greatness. I think we're afraid of our light and our beauty and our genius.

Marianne Williamson: this has been quoted so often, but it's just so true! *"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be?"*

Are we willing to reclaim our power? Reclaim, quite frankly, the truth of who we are and have always been? A part of reclaiming our power is to believe in ourselves! When Jesus said, *"He who believes in me shall do the works that I do, and even greater things than these."* The question is: Do you believe in yourself? Are you willing to believe in yourself? You are blessed, gifted and endowed in so many great ways! And the important thing is to not compare ourselves to each other. Everybody is not supposed to be the same! Or look the same or do the same! Can you honor the incredible body temple God gave you, and the gifts and talents and beauty and personality that God gave you? You!

You know, to say *"I am responsible,"* it is equal to say, *"I am powerful. I am a Creator. I have a spirit of power, love and self-discipline."* That is the absolute truth! We shouldn't be afraid of being responsible, because it's really just reclaiming and accepting our own power. Saying how powerful we are in our own lives.

Do you know that today, at this very moment, you are more powerful than you've ever been? You have more experience than you ever had; you have more wisdom and insight and understanding than you have ever had. You have more clarity than you've ever had. You're powerful!

I am powerful! Together: [with congregation] *"I am powerful."*

I am a creator! [Congregation]: *"I am a creator."*

I am responsible! [Congregation]: *"I am responsible."*

I have a spirit of power, love and self-discipline. Together: [with congregation] *"I have a spirit of power, love and self-discipline."*

You know, when we don't take responsibility for our problems or our dreams, they don't get better, they get worse. But when we do accept responsibility, and use our power and realize we're a creator, our problems get better, and our problems, relationships, everything improves when we accept full responsibility. Because that means to accept our full power.

The last thing about taking 100% responsibility is to get clear. We have the responsibility to get clear on what we want. The Bible points to this over and over again by saying things like, *"Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened unto you."* *"Decide upon a thing, and it will be established for you."* And it tells us that we must have a vision. We must have a vision.

And so each one of these is saying, *"Get clear!"* What is it that you want? Who have you come to be? What do you want to attract and create? You're powerful! And a part of that responsibility with that power is to shape and design the good and the blessings of God into our lives and into our world.

Most people don't know what they want for a few reasons. One of them is: we don't often take time to think deeply -- superficially we do! -- but deeply about what it is that we actually want. Sometimes we're afraid to think and be honest and fully express and say what it is that we want, even to ourselves! It is so astounding how we get conditioned into not wanting and asking and seeking the things that we want!

So what do you want? *"I don't know."* [Congregation laughs]

What do you want? *"Ah, I don't care."*

What do you want? "Eh, it doesn't matter."

What do you want? "I'm not sure."

What do you want? "Aw, whatever's fine."

Suppose you did know. What would you want? Suppose you did care. What would you want? Suppose it did matter. What do you want? Suppose you were sure? What do you want? Suppose it wasn't fine to not know. What would you want?

I think we've been conditioned out of knowing and trusting and asking and declaring what it is that we want. As children, we would ask for what we want, but maybe over time we got conditioned after enough "No's or told, "*That's impossible; that's not a good idea. You really don't want that. That's not practical. Get a real job!*"

I'm sure they're a bunch of things that we've been conditioned. Because somehow we all get into that place where we are afraid and don't quite trust asking for what it is that we want. Maybe it's approving; the approval of other people. Or pleasing other people; doing what our parents or family want. But some way we have disconnected from the truth of what it is we desire, what it is we want, and why it is that we're here.

And I would say that it will take work -- and some consistent work -- to reconnect and get clear about what it is that we want while we are here.

Here are three practices that we need to do. The first one is to write a list of 30 things that you want to do; 30 things that you want to have; and 30 things you want to be. And our first thought is, "*Oh, my God! That's a lot of work!*" [Congregation laughs] But the fact is: okay, if you'd rather only have two or three things, then only make the list only two or three!

The point of the 30 things is to get you deeper beyond the superficial things. And nothing wrong with a nice car and a job and all those things. But when you go a little deeper, we ask ourselves a question: So how can I feel love in a deeper way? Or how do I connect with what my soul has come here to do? How can I share more of myself? What is the way I've been called to make a difference? Asking those deeper questions gets us reconnected with our soul and our heart's desires. The reason for which we have been sent here. And how to live as fully as we can live. I think getting clear is a responsibility that we have to ourselves, to God, and to everyone in our lives.

The second one is to -- three or four times a day -- to ask yourself whatever, in the moment: What do I want right now. Just in the middle of the day: What do I want right now? The answer could be a sandwich. [Congregation laughs] It could be to stretch. It could be to meditate. It could be to have a massage. I don't know!

But what it is designed to do is to help you get more comfortable with being okay with your own desires and wants. To be able to at least acknowledge to yourself, "*This is what I want right now.*" Sometimes we're trained that it's selfish; it's egotistical; it's bad. Stop thinking of yourself. But there's an element that we have a spiritual responsibility to get clear about what it is that we want. What is it we want to call forth? Who do we want to be?

The third one is to ask the deeper question: What is my divine purpose? What is my unique role in this universe? What is my heart's true desire? And it isn't necessarily connected to your job. Every one of us has a purpose. Every one of us has been called to make a difference in this world. And it's not always our job!

Hear all of these different examples I've got: To inspire and empower people to live their dreams. That doesn't necessarily need to happen through a job! To uplift humanity's consciousness through business. That one's a little more specific, but still huge. To humbly serve God by being loving, playful and a powerful, passionate example of joy. We could do that every single day. When we're clear about it,

we're more likely to do it. And the last one is to leave this world a better place than I found for horses and for people, too. [Congregation laughs]

And it could be for children. It could be for equality. It could be for the environment. It could be for arts. It could be to help people with sobriety. It could be for anything! The question is: Are you willing to get clear about what your soul is calling you to do? What your mission and your purpose is?

Somebody once said, "*The world clears a path for those who know where they're going.*" When we're clear, the universe conspires and supports us to fulfill that thing. But we need to find clarity. We give a lot of ambiguity and uncertainty. You know, it's like the worst person to take to a buffet. I don't think they exist any more, but when they did ... I hope they are! Is that sometimes too many choices freak us out. But we need to take time to zero in on: What is my thing? What is my calling? What is my purpose? What am I here for? What am I meant to give and share in this world?

Monty Roberts, when he was in high school, the teacher gave an assignment to write what their future looks like. His future, he wrote, was a 200-acre farm that raised thoroughbreds and did all kinds of more gentle ways of training horses. And when he got his paper back, he got an "F" from the teacher, who said, "*You live in a trailer, a place that you cannot raise the money base on this. And this thing is just not possible.*" And he said, "*You keep the F and I'll keep my dream.*" [Congregation murmurs] He did not rewrite it. And so the teacher was right a little bit, because his horse farm is actually 154 acres. [Congregation laughs] And he raised thoroughbreds and had national champions, and so on.

Walt Disney: fired for a lack of creativity. He was a cartoonist. He also went bankrupt. And you know his whole dream was to create the happiest place on earth. And he did: 1955. In a couple more years it will be 70 years! And that dream is still living.

Rich Paul had no formal education as an agent and negotiator. What he did at the time was to sell antique sports jerseys. He met LeBron James and became a good friend. And LeBron James hired him and then became a business partner with him. Everybody said that will be the biggest mistake that LeBron James would make, and he will regret it greatly. LeBron James is worth about a billion dollars with all his contracts; Rich Paul is worth about \$100 million now. He is the number one agent in the NBA. He and LeBron are expanding an agency for the NFL and baseball, as well. He had no training. He didn't know, but he had a passion. He had a vision. I think he's doing pretty well ... and he's dating Adele, too, so it's a good deal! [Congregation laughs]

The reason I bring up Monty Roberts and Walt Disney and Rich Paul is because they are three different people from three different worlds, and yet they all have a common: that while their situations weren't ideal, number one: they did not complain about their situations. They claimed their power and their ability to create. And they were clear on what they wanted. They did these things, and it manifested and created amazing and wonderful things.

Responsibility is not a burden; it is a gift! It is an incredible, wonderful gift! To say that, "*I am responsible*" is to say that, "*I am powerful! I am a creator!*"

If you want a better life, the second principle of success is to take 100% responsibility.

God bless you all!