



Success by Excess Is Not True Greatness

During a school vacation, Billy stayed at his grandmother's house, where she introduced him to the game of Monopoly. As you know, the game of Monopoly is about money and power—it's all about acquiring, purchasing and owning more property, more buildings and more companies than anyone else. It's ruthless—one cannot win the game of Monopoly until one bankrupts one's opponents.

During his week with his grandma, Billy learned that she was a Monopoly expert. They played Monopoly every day and she never lost a single game. She never patronized Billy by letting him win. At the end of the week she told him he needed to learn how to play the game and the next time he visited they could play again.

Billy was enormously competitive, so when he went home he devoted himself to the game of Monopoly. He played the game with his parents and with his friends. He learned as much as he could about Monopoly. His goal was to get good enough to beat his grandma. About a year later, during his summer vacation Billy had the opportunity to spend another week with Grandma.

The first morning he was there, out came the Monopoly game, spread out on the dining room table. The very first game they played, it took Billy, now a year older and much more skilled at the game of Monopoly, a little less than two hours to beat his grandmother.

When the game was over Billy's grandma congratulated him about how well he had learned to play the game. Now, she told him, he was

ready to learn the toughest part of the game of Monopoly. "What's that Grandma?" Billy asked.

His grandmother reached over to the side of the table where the empty Monopoly box was, and she started putting all the cards and money and player tokens and game pieces back into the box.

As she was refilling the Monopoly box, she looked Billy in the eye and said, "Billy, the toughest part of the game is that **when the game is over, it all goes back into the box.**"

Those who appear to have more materialistic success in the game of life are just the same as those who lose and fail—**when the game is over, it all goes back in the box.**

Success in our world is normally defined as excess. Success is regarded as a comfortable and secure lifestyle when one has the extravagant resources to meet all their desires, wants and needs. That definition has been the primary definition of success through all human history—success has always been perceived as riches and power.

I have a lifelong devotion to the game of baseball. Baseball is a statistic driven game—a player's performance is judged using many standards of measurement by which abilities and contributions are assessed. Those who follow the game of baseball closely know of these many gauges and yardsticks used to determine success or failure in the game.

One of the most traditional standards and measuring tools that spans the history of the sport is called an "error." An *error* only occurs when a player is involved defensively—trying to catch or field the ball so that the opponents, who

are "at bat" offensively, will not score runs.

Baseball professionals and dedicated fans know that the number of *errors* a player has committed can be misleading. The mere fact that one player has fewer *errors* than another does not make that player a better defensive player.

Many players who are given an error by the official scorekeeper make extraordinary efforts trying to make a great play—but fail. One cannot make an *error* unless one touches the ball. And then, having at least touched the ball, they fail to record an "out."

One can avoid making an *error* by not trying to make a play—but that doesn't mean that such a player is a good defensive player. Many great defensive players have numerous *errors* because they try hard but sometimes fall short.

What is success? What is failure? What is weakness and what is strength?

Our goal as Christ-followers is not to avoid making mistakes and thus "win." Our goal in Christ is not to be physically filled with all of our sensory needs and desires—our goal as Christ-followers is to experience the joy that comes from serving others in Jesus' name.

The primary result of following Jesus is not economic benefits and good physical health. The primary result of following Jesus is service to others in the name of Jesus. □

—Greg Albrecht

Join us for the complete message "Success by Excess Is Not True Greatness" at the audio teaching ministry of Christianity Without the Religion, the week of Nov. 11, 2018.