



RON KELLEHER
Equipping, Enabling, and Encouraging Marketplace Leaders

Running the Great Race

11 Qualities of a Winner

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, “*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. (1 Cor. 9:24)*”, they knew very well what he meant. The citizens of Corinth were familiar with athletic contests since their annual Isthmian games were second only to the Olympic games. They knew that to win a runner must stay on the course, focused on the race, and keep going until the race was over.

How do we, as Christians, run the race in today’s marketplace, in such a way that we “get the prize”? You don’t have to go far to find people willing to give you the answer. Bookstores are full of books that proclaim methods sure to harness your inner powers to win; to be successful in life. Entire magazines are devoted to teaching you the secret power of your inner-self on a monthly basis. The problem with these self-help volumes is that they focus on how you can serve yourself and they call that “winning”.

Sadly, there are millions of people who accept this advice, focusing on their own pleasures and success, but suddenly they find a great emptiness in their gut. The title and corner office at work, the luxury car, the nice house, none of these visible signs of winning bring true satisfaction. So how can you live your life so as to “win” the race? How can you serve God and win the greatest prize of all? Here are eleven qualities of winners that will get you started.

Enthusiasm

Emerson once said, “*Nothing great has ever been accomplished without enthusiasm.*” If you want to accomplish great things you will need enthusiasm. Enthusiasm will carry you through the difficult times when others are telling you “it can’t be done”. Paul, writing to the Colossians said, “*Whatever you do, work at it with **all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.***” (Col. 3:23-24). Most people only work to get through the day. So, if you work with **all your heart** you will be a high achiever. If you go a step further and work **as for the Lord** nothing can stop you.



Positive Attitude

Complainers never prosper. Life for a chronic complainer is a series of disappointments. It is hard to develop a winner's attitude when all you can see is a half empty glass.

Most high achievers develop early the ability to see the good about a product, a program, a company, etc. This does not mean they are myopic Pollyannas without a sense of realism. But it does mean that they build upon the positive rather than the negative.

Paul wrote to the Philippians that they should, *“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe...”* (Phil. 2:14-15). Do you want to stand out among your peers? Avoid the temptation to complain, criticize, and argue about everything. Instead develop a positive idea about what will work, how something can be improved, etc. People who complain are worthless to a company. People with suggestions are worth their weight in gold.

Determination

Calvin Coolidge once said, *“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are important.”* Successful people are known for their dogged determination to complete the task before them.

Paul speaks of his determination to complete his ministry saying, *“I can do all things through Him that strengthens me.”* (Phil. 4:13 NASB). When you are feeling down and a bit discouraged do you redouble your efforts knowing that God can help you accomplish all things?

In a section of Proverbs known as the Sayings of the Wise, it says *“For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again.”* (Pro. 24:16). Successful people fail, but they get up again and again. They learn something new from each failure and always try something new. Eventually, success is achieved. Have you ever watched a baby learning to walk? First they pull themselves up using a sofa and they take tiny, wobbly steps, and they fall. Over and over again they repeat this procedure; pull themselves up, take a step, and fall. Over and over again they get up, take a step, and fall. You think to yourself they will surely kill themselves before they learn to walk. Suddenly they're running and you can't get them to stop! Babies show more determination learning to walk than most of us ever do in our careers.



Confidence

You build a brick wall by laying one brick carefully upon another. Confidence is built the same way. One win builds the confidence for a bigger attempt, which leads to a bigger win.

Winners have such great confidence that they can suffer a defeat and know that they can still rise above it to achieve success. Take time in your busy schedule to notice all the little victories in your life. Did you make it to work without crashing the car? Did you avoid the double dip ice cream at the mall? Did you make a small sale to an important new customer? Whatever the victory, take the time to recognize your success; it will help build your confidence.

Open Minded

At least four times in the Old Testament you can find words similar to those recorded in Jeremiah, “*Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear.*” (Jer. 5:21). Strong words! But people with closed minds and hearts need strong words to get their attention. Great achievers are people with open minds willing to listen to the ideas and plans of others. They value the contributions of people regardless of their education, job status, sex, race, or age.

Motivated

Watty Piper wrote about motivation in his story entitled, *The Little Engine That Could*. If you remember the story from your childhood, a small switch engine dreamed of hauling a big train over the mountain like the big engines. One day the opportunity arose and the little engine is seen struggling to get over the mountain saying, “*I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.*”

Motivated achievers take advantage of the opportunities that arise to fulfill their dreams and work very hard to achieve success. They have the kind of energy and enthusiasm that makes them look like a cheerleader at a football game.

Goal-Oriented

Winners are focused, goal-oriented achievers. If you establish a written plan for your life you will be among a select group of about 2% of the population. In business, as in life, we need goals and objectives; first to stretch us to develop our skills and second, to provide a way to measure our progress.

If you want to be a winner you need to be goal-oriented. You need to look into the future to plan your course of action. Solomon writes, “*The naive believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps. A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.*” (Pro. 14:15-16 NASB). As you set your goals “consider your steps,” be cautious, and turn away from evil.



Disciplined

Solomon understood the importance of discipline saying, “*Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.*” (Prov. 25:28). A city whose walls are broken down cannot defend itself against its enemies. A man who cannot discipline his life will never be a high achiever.

If you can’t control your emotions, your tongue, your time, or your money, how can you hope to control your life? Paul also spoke of discipline as he wrote to Timothy, “*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*” (2 Tim. 1:7). Begin building discipline into your life by picking something that you really want to change; lose a few pounds, start exercising, stop smoking, stop criticizing people at the office, etc. Gain control over your life by bringing discipline into one part of your life at a time.

Supportive

Think back in your life about people who made the biggest difference in your life; a parent, teacher, special friend, a boss, or a coworker.

What these special people have in common is the winner’s quality of being supportive. They are the people who enter a room with a friendly smile and shake your hand. They ask how you are and really want to know! Then, they actually stick around long enough to hear the answer!

Supportive winners care about the people that surround them, and as a result, people care about them. Jesus describes the difference between a good shepherd and a hired hand saying that the good shepherd would lay down his life for the sheep while the hired hand would protect himself first (John 10:11-13). There is no better picture of support than that of Jesus as our good shepherd.

Responsible

Winners take responsibility for their actions. When things don’t work out they don’t look for a sucker to hang the blame on. As Solomon points out in Proverbs, “*The lazy man is full of excuses.*” (Proverbs 22:13 TLB). When things go well winners give credit to the employees who did the work and when things go bad winners take responsibility for the failure.

Dependence

The last and most important attribute of a winner is dependency on God. Many people appear, by man’s standards, to be successful; a nice house, two foreign-made luxury cars, a loving



spouse, and 2.3 kids. They fought their way up the ladder of success, all by themselves. But deep down inside their guts are tied in a knot and they fear losing it all.

Habakkuk, knowing the imminent Babylonian invasion will destroy the fig trees, grapes, olives, grain fields, and the cattle and sheep, writes, “*yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*” (Hab: 3:18-19). Despite the destruction that was at hand, Habakkuk depended on the Lord knowing that He would give him the confidence and ability to go on to new heights.

One Final Thought

Dr. Rick Warren describes three levels of living; survival, success, and significance.

The survivalist is just trying to get through life without making any waves. The success driven person wants to make some waves, leave a mark on the world, have a notation in Who’s Who, or perhaps a note in the history books. The person who lives for significance approaches life from a completely different standpoint.

Paul provides perspective of a man with a significant life who was dependent on God, “*I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.*” (Acts 20:24).

Paul understood two very important elements of a life of significance. First of all, Paul knew he was shaped by God to do a job and second, Paul also knew that God would always be standing with him to help him complete this work.

We are no different than Paul. God has given each of us unique skills and abilities to do unique work during our lives. If we honor His design in us we will do that work, knowing that He will always be there for us.

What will it be for you; vegging out, striving for success but “missing something” in your life, or living a significant life doing the work God created you to do?