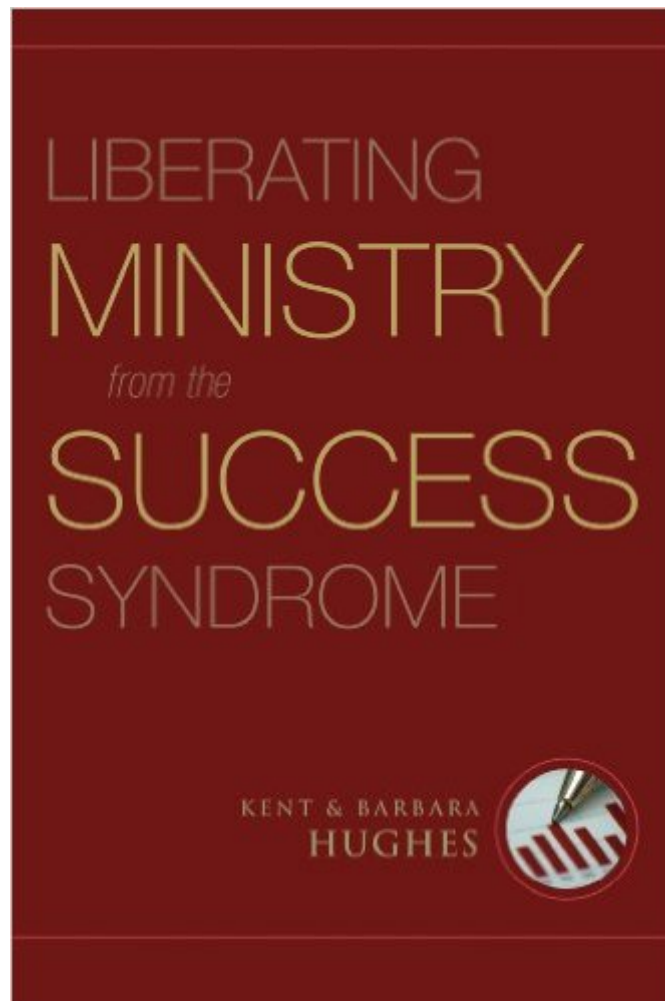


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# Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome



## Synopsis

Every year thousands of God's servants leave the ministry convinced they are failures. Years ago, in the midst of a crisis of faith, Kent Hughes almost became one of them. But instead he and his wife Barbara turned to God's Word, determined to learn what God had to say about success and to evaluate their ministry from a biblical point of view. This book describes their journey and their liberation from the "success syndrome"-the misguided belief that success in ministry means increased numbers. In today's world it is easy to be seduced by the secular thinking that places a number on everything. But the authors teach that true success in ministry lies not in numbers but in several key areas: faithfulness, serving, loving, believing, prayer, holiness, and a Christlike attitude. Their thoughts will encourage readers who grapple with feelings of failure and lead them to a deeper, fuller understanding of success in Christian ministry. This book was originally published by Tyndale in 1987 and includes a new preface.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Many pastors and church leaders find themselves evaluating their ministries by corporate standards. As a result, if the church or ministry does not meet particular benchmarks they feel the ministry is unsuccessful. Kent Hughes has been a pastor for over four decades and he writes *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* for the pastor who is feeling this pressure. The book was originally published by Tyndale House in 1987 and has now been updated and republished last month by Crossway. Hughes recounts a scene from early on his ministry where he was working on a

church plant. From all accounts this was going to be a successful ministry. Hughes was blessed with a clear demonstration of pastoral gifts, a solid core group, a promising social demographic, and financial backing. However, after a short period, Hughes was on the edge of despondency and ready to leave the ministry. He goes on to articulate the depths of despair that colored these early days of ministry: "My long-established world of bright prospects and success melted around me. I was in the darkest, deepest depression of my life. My memory of this time is of a gray, horizonless sea. A faint light falls from a threatening sky and I am treading water alone, sinking. Soon, I will be below the surface. Melodramatic, to be sure! But that is how I felt. I wanted out." For someone like myself who is in the process of church planting, this book is encouraging and sobering, while being very practical. Hughes goes on to describe the way in which the Lord brought him low only to bring him back up through prayer and dependence upon the God of the Scriptures. It was through this process of praying and reading that Hughes began to learn what ministry was all about.

Point: "...We found no place where it says that God's servants are called to be successful. Rather, we discovered our call is to be faithful." (35) It is true. The idea of success is not mandated in Scripture, but faithfulness is. The minister must seek to be faithful to Him, His Word and the task He has given. That will result in true success. The negative of this is also true. "It is possible to be held up as a paragon of success and to receive the ardent accolades of one's people and be a failure." (36) How many in today's culture are heralded as "having arrived" yet will not be commended on that Judgment Day? Agreement: The focus which Hughes puts on prayer was especially challenging. This is an area which I struggle, apparently with many others as well. "Indeed, when God's servants candidly talk about their spiritual lives, a majority express guilt over their prayerlessness. This means that thousands are hacking away at their ministries with increasingly dull instruments that inevitably frustrate any possible success." (72) Prayer truly does sharpen us, and regretfully I find it so difficult to make time in the midst of school work, lesson preparation and event planning. E. Stanley Jones put it plainly when he made the comparison between prayer and throwing out an anchor and pulling oneself to shore. You do not pull the shore to you, you pull yourself to shore. The same it is with prayer. Our goal is not to twist God's arm in order to do our will, but to align our will with His. The author did a good job at confronting the dangerous view of success which has crept into many ministries. Not only did he delineate what true success is, he also laid out a plan by which one can encourage others, and where to find encouragement as well.

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