Who is In Charge of Your Life

Prov. 3:5-6

Og Mandino's "The University of Success" is one of the most-read books on success and achieving it. Millions have read it and embraced the lessons taught in it. When examining the book's message, however, if we are not careful, we will and can walk away with the idea that we alone are in charge of our success.

This lesson is reinforced by the interaction between two characters in the book: Calvin and the Engineer. The Engineer's message to Calvin is one of empowerment and self-determination. The Engineer never focuses on the limitations of Calvin's efforts. Instead, he instills in Calvin the idea that he can achieve success by taking responsibility for his actions and life.

In **Og Mandino's "The University of Success,"** the interaction between Calvin and the Engineer is a pivotal moment in the book. It is at the heart of the struggle with surrender and submission to God. We tell ourselves that we are the captain of our ship. We indoctrinate ourselves every day with the idea that we shape our destiny. We tell ourselves in subtle and not-so-subtle ways that our success is totally and entirely determined by our efforts and our efforts alone. The reward and punishment system enforces this philosophy, encouraging us to rely even more on our efforts. The Engineer tells Calvin regardless of the external forces that may or may not arise, you remain in control of your destiny. You are the one who determines your path. While this idea has much validity, The harm that lies underneath is that the Engineer does not help Calvin realize his limitations. He doesn't help Calvin understand that effort, ingenuity, and imagination can only take you so far. He doesn't help Calvin recognize that there are events that enter our lives we cannot change. Some circumstances can instantly intrude and change the landscape, and life can become unrecognizable and move beyond our control.

Indeed, we cannot blame anyone for the things that happen to us. That is as tragic as circumstances are sometimes. The tragedy is not the fault of others or even yourself. The idea that we are in absolute control of our lives is an illusion many have bought into. As a result, we live a life of misery and frustration. At the same time, Calvin does not control every external factor in his life. Calvin and every other person are in control of their minds to a large degree.

Og Mandino's message clashes with Prov. 3:5-6. Proverbs three encourages complete trust in God and not self-reliance. The message of Og Mandino seems to be the worldview many Christians live by. This worldview elevates our autonomy and our individualistic control over divine guidance. Proverbs commands dependence on God while acknowledging our limitations, wisdom, foresight, and knowledge.

Our trust should be in the Lord fully. We should not place complete confidence in our abilities, insight, and intelligence. God's wisdom is what we should be dependent on at all times. Personal responsibility is important and necessary. It aligns with the biblical teachings regarding diligence and stewardship. It is important to understand that we alone are not the architects of our future. This understanding contradicts the essence of Prov. 3:5-6. This Proverb sets forth with forceful clarity that God is in control and directing our lives with our cooperation.

In the "University of Success," God appears to be a passive bystander. This distant relationship with God must change. Our dependence on our knowledge contributes to this distant relationship with God. We seem to depend on our understanding rather than seek God's will. God will remain on the periphery of our lives and a peripheral figure rather than a central one.

If God is to be at the center of our lives, we must acknowledge Him as Lord of every aspect of our life. Every decision, every situation, every outcome, everything. When we approach God from this perspective, we allow God to take the lead in our life. When we seek God in prayer and read scripture, we become sensitive to His guidance.

The message Calvin receives in the book "University of Success" emphasizes self-reliance, personal determination, and human control over our destiny. It abandons God and separates us from His counsel. There are some things we must do to shift our mindset from one of control to one of trust. We must seek God's wisdom and will through prayer and studying God's Word. These two components are at the center of our relationship with God. Without these two elements, you will never have the relationship you seek. The Word of God reinforces in your spirit that God is faithful and can be trusted with your life. Prayer opens the door of divine communication and knowledge and changes us. It is that change that makes us receptive to God's will. Prayer doesn't always change things the way you want them. But prayer can change you into who God wants you to be.

Blessings,
Pastor Gool