

In vs At

Intro

As guys, we are programmed and hard-wired for success. And not just success, but for significance. We want to know that our work and lives matter. So, when I ask this first question, nearly every man in the room will raise his hand [silently, if not physically].

Here's is the question, actually questions, I want us to live with today.

Who wants to be successful in life?

Who wants to be successful at life?

Most of us never understand the difference between the two. We naturally assume they are the same. However, there is a greater difference that just their two letters. The difference is earth-shattering and soul-shaping.

In Life

Power, status, wealth, position, prestige, outward signs of success.

We all know successful people who are good in life. They have large companies, thriving businesses, personal successes, put-together families. We look at them and wish we could be them. We do this because from a distance it looks as though they have the world by the tail; living a stress-free existence; the pinnacle of the American dream.

However, a closer look [deeper] into their life *might* [and I stress *might*] reveal something very different. While they might be successful at the external markers which we count as achievement, there may be a dark past or a group of people littering the path that led them here. There might be practices and principles that have been overlooked or bypassed to achieve such accomplishments.

While they are fruitful in the successes of life, they might not be as healthy with the things and people in life.

Example of In Life: Steve Jobs

Known as the creator and savior behind one of the most wildly successful companies in human history, Steve Jobs was a genius when it came to creating and developing products we didn't know we needed but couldn't live without once Jobs revealed them to us.

While he accomplished great things *in* life – things no one else thought possible, Jobs left a wake of destruction and people in order to achieve those great things.

At Life

Personable, kind, helpful, genuine, humble, outward signs of peace and joy.

These are the people who are successful *at* life. They seem to be at peace with themselves and the world around them, even if it seems as though they have never led or accomplished anything great. Their *work* isn't as obvious or evident. It does not show outward signs of profit or scale. No indication of saleable products or scalable organizations.

However, if you take a deeper dive into the real work they accomplish it is transformative. Not on a public stage, not in the market, not for wholesale or retail...but found at the core of individuals, movements, and families. These men and women shape people who change markets. They grow individuals who accomplish great things. They lead teams who achieve greatness, even though no one ever knows their name.

LeBron James vs Michael Jordan

Recent debate over which is the greatest basketball player to ever live has taken on a different approach. No longer is it simply about who is the greatest individual player with the most impressive stats. It's not even about how many championships one has over the other. The conversation has been boiled down to one defining question: *who is the better teammate?*

Meaning, which one is the best *at* making their teammates better than they could be on their own. As of right now, the answer is hands-down Michael Jordan. LeBron has been labeled as [possibly] the most *ball dominant* player in the league – meaning that he needs to have the ball in his hands to make things happen, resulting in his teammates standing around watching him do his thing. For all of his individual greatness, no one [seemingly] wants to play beside LeBron...at least no great players do.

Michael Jordan vs David Robinson's Legacy and Hall of Fame Speeches

While Jordan will likely be remembered by the masses as the greatest player ever to play basketball; groups and individuals will always be affected and changed by Robinson's character and integrity.

I remember watching their individual speeches as each was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Jordan's speech centered around his greatness, which Robinson's called out the greatness of those around him – people who [according to him] were the cause of his greatness. Jordan's speech was showed great pride. Robinson's displayed great humility. Jordan's was about a sport. Robinson's was about people.

This has been the debate silently raging within the hearts of men for centuries. It is so great and far-reaching that Jesus once asked the following question.

Mark 8:36

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

If you looked at the Profit & Loss Statement of your life over the past 6 months or 3 years, what would it reveal? If you weighed out what you have netted and gained vs what you have lost [or given up] in order to realize those “gains”, what would it show?

That you have been successful *in* life – doing whatever it took to accumulate wealth, status, and accomplishment? Or that you have been successful *at* life – encouraging those around you, spending time with people who are important to you and to whom you are important?

Jesus’ follow-up question helps frame the magnitude of our current path.

8:37

For what can a man give in return for his soul?

What can you give back in return for being good *at* life? What successes or accomplishments [in this life] have enough value and worth to be able to exchange for being remembered as a great husband, father, friend, and person?

Death Bed

I would surmise that very few [if no one] at the end of their life would say – *I wish I had stayed at the office later. I wish I had worked just a little more. I wish I would have missed my kids’ events so that I could get that promotion to have been able to buy that bigger house.*

Very few [if any of us] will say, on our death bed, *bring me my car so that I can say goodbye.* [With everyone around us, remembering the past] *do you remember that week I stayed at the office working until 8pm every night, and then a month later I got that raise?*

Those will not be the conversations had around your bed or room in your last days.

The Question That Faces Us

The question you and I have to answer is – *which one is most important to you?*

Do you want to be remembered for accomplishing great things or revered for being a great human being?

One of the most interesting things about one of the most famous figures in history [Jesus] is that He never accomplished great things [according to our standards]. He left with only a handful of followers – several of whom deserted and denied him on the day of His death.

But Jesus was great *at* life. He was great *at* loving and leading people. Great *at* helping and serving others. Amazingly gifted *at* helping other people grow in ways they never thought possible before. And those who were most affected by His life, were the ones who went on to accomplish great things in history.

Can You Be Both *In* AND *At*?

A follow-up question has to be asked – *can't someone be good in life and at life at the same time?* A resounding YES is the only appropriate response. As believers, we should lead the way in bringing about change and good in the world. We should strive to be successful: accomplishing great things and leading great work. But how we do so is essential:

The manner in which we strive to succeed is more important than the work we achieve.

End in Mind

We cannot conclude which we would rather be today – because today has deadlines, pressures, bills, mountains to climb, and adventures to conquer. Only with the end in mind can we determine [and remain determined] which one we would most like to be.

How do you want to be remembered? What do you want your legacy to be?

The wisest human ever to live boiled the debate of *In vs At* down into one simple statement:

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

Proverbs 22:1

High School Baseball Game

This past week, a Minnesota high school pitcher Ty Koehn (Kane) strikes out childhood friend Jack Kocon to send his team to the Minnesota High School State Championship. But before celebrating with his team, watch what the pitcher does first.

[Video]

A great example of being both good *in* life and being good *at* life! His accomplishment [of being the closing pitcher that got his team to the state championship] is already forgotten by most. But his name has spread across the internet and across the country.

What would you be willing to change or to give up, so that you can shift the balance sheet of your life? What do you [specifically] need to do differently, in order to be successful *at* life?