



Overcoming Obstacles

by Lou Stoops

Obstacles and hardships are common to us all, some more so than others. This simple observation leads to another; far too many of us are making excuses for the lack of success in the present, based upon the pain of the past.

While it may be true that some have had a particularly difficult life, it isn't true that that predetermines failure. On the contrary, difficulties, hardships and major obstacles can become contributors to our success.

Some years ago, a study by Victor and Mildred Goertzel entitled, *Cradles of Eminence*, explored the childhood experience and home environment of 300 highly successful people. Their names are easily recognizable: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Winston Churchill, Albert Schweitzer, Gandhi, Einstein and Freud.

These findings are fascinating and deserve to be noted next time we're tempted to focus on our weaknesses or past pain in an attempt to rationalize failure. Consider the following:

- Three-fourths of the children studied had to contend with poverty, overbearing parents, broken homes, or rejection.
- Seventy-four of the eighty-five writers of fiction and drama, as well as sixteen of twenty poets came out of home situations where tension and dysfunction between parents was the norm.
- Over one-fourth had to deal with physical handicaps such as deafness, blindness or crippled limbs.

So you see, obstacles and hardships don't have to lead to failure. William A. Ward was right when he said, "Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records."

Biologists refer to this as "the adversity principle." It seems that in their studies among plants and animals, well-being is not always an advantage to a species. Where there is no challenge, no obstacles or hardships, there is but limited growth and development. One recent survey discovered that 87% of the people questioned said "a painful event (death, illness, breakup, divorce, etc.) caused them to find a more positive meaning in life."

To become all that you can be, you must live in the present and stop making excuses. We will always have problems, but problems exist to be solved. Churchill once remarked, "Kites rise highest against the wind -- not with it." Don't be afraid to fly!