

THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe and do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success. Joshua 1:8 (AMP)

This is the only place in the Bible that the word success is found and Strong's Concordance says: "to be (cause, make or act) circumspect and hence intelligent – consider, expert, instruct, prosper, (deal prudent (-ly), (give) skill (-ful), have good success, teach, Have, make to) understand (-ing), wisdom, (be, behave self, consider, make) wise (-ly) guide, wittingly." (The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible Page 141 Hebrew Reference #7919 © 1990 Thomas Nelson Publishers)

We see from this definition that nowhere is success synonymous with MONEY.

How do we measure success?

Do you love God?

Do you desire His presence as Joshua did?

Even after Moses left the tabernacle, Joshua would remain in the presence of God. (Exodus 33:11) Joshua not only served Moses, but he sought after God.

As I read and listen to many Christian leaders there is increasing evidence of new age/eastern terms creeping into their vocabulary. Take the word "mantra" for example. They are advocating using the Word of God as a mantra- this is a term used in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, and is supposed to have the effect of mind protection. The basic idea of repeating God's Word in order to erase negative thoughts is commendable but is this interpretation what God means by "meditating" on His Word?

Meditating on God's Word means to read it quietly, reflecting on it, repeating it to yourself as it relates to any situation. It involves reflecting on the Word of God and applying it to every area of your life.

We are told by some Christian leaders to follow your dream, 'don't let go

of your dream' they say. We are instructed by them to hold on to our dreams then ask God to make them come true. God is not the "fairy godmother" we read about in fairy tales as children. Their recommended system seems to be "prepare yourself and get equipped to follow your dream then say 'God, you help me with this dream, provide for it, send people my way, help me be successful in my dream'."

How many great men and women of God in the Bible pursued their dream? Did Moses pursue his dream? The last thing he wanted was to lead a nation of over a million stiff-necked, rebellious, idolatrous people!

Joshua in turn was hesitant to take up that mantle. David was happy and contented in the presence of God while tending his sheep. Solomon felt inadequate when his turn came to take the throne.

Jesus came to the earth as a man anointed by God to fulfill a specific purpose. As a man do you think Jesus' dream was to go to the cross? Jesus did not come to realize a dream, He came to fulfill God's plan for His life.

How many of us take the correct route and go to God first then dream of accomplishing what He has authored for our lives? This is why so many people climb the ladder of success, reach the top and then find nothing there! Their lives are empty and some even commit suicide. Others, on reaching the top, then decide that they need spiritual fulfillment and turn to all sorts of pagan religions for the answer. Most are successes in the eyes of the world, but are spiritually bankrupt as they face eternity. Anyone can follow their dream and find success in the world's terms through determination.

Take Oprah Winfrey for example; despite her background, she is now the most successful woman in the USA, and many Christian leaders hold her up as an example. She had determination and a vision. She pursued that vision. She is a philanthropist of the highest order. In the eyes of the world, she is a huge success and a "good" person. Is she successful in the eyes of God? Has she pursued God's vision for her life? Is she a child of God? As she faces eternity when she draws her last breath – is her elevator going up or down? There are no floors in between that she can hop off and change direction! If her elevator goes down, she is a huge failure, she is lost for eternity. If that elevator goes up and she has not accomplished what God has authored for her life she is a failure as far as God's destiny for her is concerned.

As we study the heroes and heroines of the Bible, the success of the individual is characterized by a close relationship with God, determining

God's direction for their life, obedience to God's instructions and then equipping themselves for the task. Ideally, this process should begin from childhood, but the majority of individuals on the earth today are not born into Christian homes where parents can be directed by God as to the destiny of the child.

We must begin where we are. Perhaps you have started pursuing your dream. Begin by asking God what is His plan for the rest of your life. Nothing is impossible for Him and it is not too late for Him to make His plan and your dream come together. Your life-experiences have molded you into who you are, just as Joshua's experiences molded him into who he was.

So, what is the Biblical path to success?

1) **Give God first place.**

We do not give first place to our own dreams and desires. Matthew 6:32-34 (Amplified) *For the Gentiles (heathen) wish for and crave and diligently seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows well that you need them all. 33But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides. 34So do not worry or be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries and anxieties of its own. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.*

Jesus is not only speaking about pursuing worldly riches and comforts, God want us to have all of those things. Jesus is addressing the question of anxiety as well. Anxiety is a demonstration of our lack of trust in God to provide for us. It is an indicator of a faithless walk. Anxiety does not please God – faith does. *“But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out].* (Hebrews 11:6 AMP). Once we have yielded ourselves totally to Him, He takes care of us (1 Peter 5:7) When we give ourselves totally to God, we not only walk in His will, but He sees to it that we are fulfilled and prosper in every area of our lives- including our own dreams- because He said in Psalm 37:4-5 KJV) *Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. 5Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.* (See also Ephesians 3:20)

2) Follow the Word of God

In order to possess the total life prosperity that God wants to give us, we must commit to obey God's Word. The written word is our central authority for everything in life. We must not be swayed by tradition, religion, culture or any other man-made principle. We must remember that God also speaks through His prophets, and we must take the prophetic word we are given and stand on that word as though it was a word from the lips of God Himself.

In our lives we have been given prophetic words by proven prophets of God and have used them, as we would the written word, to take hold of the victory in situations that arose. While we are not led by prophetic words, what we are told bears witness to us of what God has already revealed to us and in no way contradicts His written Word.

God knows each one of us and our personal needs. He will speak to us in prayer, through the prophetic word, as well as through the written word. As we fellowship with Him we will become familiar with how he speaks to us.

3) **Pursue the vision God has given you.** Philippians 3:13-14(AMP) *I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.*

Paul was a man whose burning desire and dream was to eradicate Christianity from the face of the earth - until he accepted Jesus as Lord and God's dream became his dream. His vision now, with every fiber of his being, is to fulfill that vision and gain the reward that God gives, not a reward from man. Paul lived, with tent making as his profession, and serving God by taking the revelation of the Gospel to the Church was his vision- the vision God had given him.

Whatever your profession, pursue God's vision.

4) **Be determined.** Galatians 6:9 (Amplified) *And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint.*

What is "doing right"? – To do right is to walk in the will of God. Walking that path will mean tremendous adversity, because we are persecuted for the sake of the Word of God. Like Paul, we must set our faces toward the

finish line that God has ordained for us. We must remember that all we do, we do for the cause of Jesus Christ.

As we pursue our God-given destiny, we must do so with integrity, remembering that God will be glorified by our lives. We dishonor Him when we attempt to gain success by underhanded means. Let us pursue what God has called us to do as Paul did : *" I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,*

14I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward." (Philippians 3:13-14 AMP) and at the end of life, we look forward to our reward as he did. *[As to what remains] henceforth there is laid up for me the [victor's] crown of righteousness [for being right with God and doing right], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me and recompense me on that [great] day--and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved and yearned for and welcomed His appearing (His return) 2 Timothy 4:8(AMP)*

This is an example of true success.