



### **Should Christians Strive For Success On Earth?**

There are conflicting arguments as to whether or not those in the Christian faith should strive to succeed in today's world. Should Christians seek to acquire material wealth, positions of authority or other things held in high esteem by the world or should they simply endure until the Lord's return? It is interesting to note that throughout the Bible persons of wealth are esteemed and exemplified. These persons - who either inherited, earned or acquired wealth or position - include Abraham, David, Solomon, Job, Ruth, and Esther among others. They appear to have lived according to God's will as stated in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

You may be surprised to learn that a success strategy is identified in the Bible and that it is being practised by people in and outside of the Christian community. It involves making lasting transformational changes in your thoughts and actions to achieve your true destiny.

Making lasting changes in the way we conduct ourselves is one of life's greatest challenges. And, given that we are creatures of habit, the longer we have been operating in a certain mode the harder it seems to switch to something new. Think about the challenge the first disciples had changing the belief patterns and associated actions of the people of their day. Changing beliefs that were tied to centuries-old traditions would appear to be an insurmountable task, yet they were successful as is confirmed by the



proliferation of the Church today. Yes, there were many who witnessed miracles and were so converted and, in later times, many were ordered by law to adopt the Christian faith. But then and now there continue to be those who are not eye witnesses to miraculous acts of God, nor are they mandated to adopt the faith, yet they become believers. How does this kind of transformational change happen?

We are told in the sixth chapter of John that faith is a gift from God and so we know that people come to believe through this means. But the early Christians were also given specific instructions as to how to go about changing their lives after they had become believers. In Romans 12:2, the Apostle Paul instructs the early Christians who were seeking to lead a new and different life to "... be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The Apostle Paul was well aware that the first step to changing our actions starts with the mind. He goes on to say that a transformed mind will enable a person to test and approve God's perfect will.

*The mind is a powerful force through which the most difficult of tasks can be accomplished and the greatest obstacles overcome.*



For many, distractions, confusion, procrastination, insecurity and/or a lack of focus are the primary obstacles that stand in the way of living the good life that God intended for us, as stated in Jeremiah 29: 11, Proverbs 10:22, Psalm 128:2 and elsewhere. They are the very destiny detractors that keep us from setting goals and from making and taking the necessary steps to achieve them. What many fail to realize is that we possess a powerful transformation tool to overcome these detractors. This powerful weapon, that when appropriately tuned and utilized can defeat all that stands between us and our God-given destiny, is the mind. It is the very same change instrument that Paul instructs the early Christian followers to employ in their life transformation.

So how do you effectively use your mind to transform your life and succeed in achieving your purpose?

Using the mind to make transformational life changes is a four-part strategy involving the spoken word, vision, faith and action.

Part one of the transformational change strategy involves the power of words to change outcomes. The first example of the power of the spoken word appears right from creation. God spoke the earth into being in Genesis 1. In John 4, Jesus healed a sick child by speaking. These are examples of *the power of God's word*. But what about the spoken word of His creations – you and I? In John 15:7 and Mark 11:23, Jesus answers this question when he states that whatever we request or say will manifest, if we believe it to be so. This is the *power of the human word* combined with faith. This is confirmed in Mark 11:24 when He declares, “Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

Part two of the transformational change strategy involves **the power of vision**. Proverbs 29:18 tells us people without vision will perish. We need a dream or a goal to strive toward. We need something to keep us going, but more importantly we need a specific vision in order to achieve a specific goal. In the Bible, God gave Moses a description of the Promised Land; a description of the New Jerusalem was provided to John in the Book of Revelation. God gave them a picture to put in their minds, to help focus their thoughts and actions on the desired future. Likewise, it is important for us to have a clear picture in our minds of the goals we strive to achieve. Having a clear picture in mind helps to crystallize our thoughts and solidify our statements. It also supports the next part of the strategy which is having strong faith in the realization of your goals.



The third part of the transformational strategy is having a firm belief, conviction or faith. Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1 as “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” There are some that argue that this contradicts the need for the power of vision; however they actually go hand in hand. A vision of your desire that is firmly planted in your mind differs from the act of physically seeing that desire. In the transformational strategy, one precedes the other. You see your desire in your mind’s eye - through faith - before it materializes and is visible to your physical eyes. Jesus confirms this in Mark 9:23 when He tells us that everything is possible for those who believe.

The fourth part of the transformational change strategy is action. James 2:24 informs us that we are justified not only by our faith but by what we do. Later in verse 26 we are instructed to take action in support of the faith we have, as faith without action is dead. Taking action, even a small step toward attaining your goal, sets the achievement ball in motion. In the Bible, God usually had people take some sort of action before divine intervention took place. For example, the people had to march around the walls of Jericho for seven days before the walls fell; the poor woman had to collect jars before they were filled with oil; Gideon’s small army had to sound the trumpet before the enemy’s army was defeated.

There are many variations of this four-part transformation strategy advocated by persons from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Its success has been demonstrated time and time and again. For those of the Christian faith it is reassuring to know that it is supported by the Living Word and that we need not be afraid or feel guilty to apply it in the pursuit of God’s will for our prosperity. The point to remember is its Biblical foundation and application. Do not be afraid to claim and apply God’s Word to your life.

So should Christians strive for success? Should they follow a God-given strategy to do so? The answer is **YES!** Success has many definitions. As detailed in Habakkuk 2, it is your motivation to have it, your path to attain it and your application of it that reveals the nature of your heart. Go forward with your dreams of prosperity and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, “Nothing is impossible with God.”

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