

How to make progress toward Success

In God, as in life, you can either progress or regress! **Philippians 3:12-14**, *“Not that I have already arrived, or am already completed; but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also apprehended me. I do not consider myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching (stretching) forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward (hunt down) the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* Notice, the one thing the apostle Paul constantly did was; he made progress. According to this scripture, **progress** was his primary goal for life! He knew that completion will not come without progress, and destination will not come without the journey.

Progress is ‘advancement’ and it is a necessity when fulfilling God’s plans and purposes. Therefore, progress should be the underlying objective for achieving all your goals. To step into the abundant life that God intended for you, there needs to be an earnest commitment to **progress**. As with Paul, not just the desire to start, but the gutsy determination to finish strong. The condition of your life today is a true reflection of the effort you made up to this point. Effort is what drives you forward, no effort no progress - it’s that simple! There are too many coasters among the Christian community. And although nothing appears too threatening, no progress is being made and no momentum is being sustained. Hence, because God is always moving forward, those coasting are left behind (and this is a form of backsliding).

Progress is a process. Many of you want to progress to success without the effort - without the process or application! You want the glory without the guts; the destiny without the journey.

The key is realising that success (the abundant life) is a journey, not a destination. And remember, if you are truly ‘progressive’ you will also be passionate. Passionate about everything that pertains to your life in Christ. Progressive people never do the things that they were doing a year ago today. They’ve moved on! They have developed a genuine commitment to **progress**, and they accept and co-operate with the process that accompanies real progress. Such people are always advancing “step by step” toward their destination.

Now, there are some major hindrances to making progress; things that can slow you down or derail you; things that can keep you distracted and disinterested. So here are four precautionary measures you can take in order to avoid such diversions:

1. **Prepare for a long journey**. If you do not know exactly where you are going, you will probably end up in the wrong place. Likewise, if you are not fully prepared for the length of your journey, you will probably end up tired and discouraged. You need the strength to stick it out - over the long haul. God’s word tells you not to grow weary in doing good, for at the appointed time you will receive your reward. However, the appointed time may be further away than you think.

To be fully prepared for the journey you must know the value of each step. When building anything you have to have a starting point, and every step of the building process is essential to the next. It doesn’t matter how small or large the step is as long as it is taking you in the direction you have purposed to go. Any step in the right direction is a step closer to your destination. Someone once said, *“The greater thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are going.”*

2. **Prepare for your destination.** People can be broadly divided into three main groups: (a) Those who wonder what's happening; (b) those who watch what's happening; and (c) those who make things happen. Which one are you? Is your life's walk progressive or regressive? Have you made advances or are you stuck in a rut? Now, it's ok to be knowledgeable, but knowledge must become "active" in order to benefit you and make you more competent. Knowledge without experience is like a pool without water. What's the point? Gaining knowledge is vitally important, but knowledge alone won't make you progress. Advancement comes through the effective application of that knowledge or truth to your life.

Advancement involves action. In life we never stop learning, but it is essential that we start 'living' what we've learnt. The Bible tells you to be a "doer of the word and not a hearer only." Doing or being active will prepare you for your destination. Furthermore, by actively applying the knowledge you have acquired, you will also place yourself in a position to seize every opportunity that God sends your way.

3. **Be prepared to say "No."** Say no to intimidation. To those people around you who will try to bully you into mediocrity. There are many believers who are controlled by the attitudes of their family, friends or peers, which have the appearance of wisdom, but in reality reject progress. People who are committed to opposing, preventing and resisting progress are always trying to strengthen their position by having 'more of the same'. So resist this pressure by simply saying - NO!

If you are anti-everything, then you are pro-nothing, and progress cannot be achieved from an 'anti' position. Progress can only be achieved with clear and unhindered vision for the future.

Therefore, say 'no' to anyone that stands in your way, telling you why you can't go forward! Say a definite 'no' to the variety of intimidating advice that has the appearance of wisdom, but is designed to hinder or suppress. There will always be people who are threatened by your progress, because it lends no support to the shortcomings in their own lives. So take Betty Ford's advise, "*Don't compromise yourself, you are all you've got!*"

4. **Prepare for opportunities.** Preparing for life's opportunities is simply "Seeing an Opening." Life is full of open doors - opportunities waiting for you to enjoy. So be fully prepared for great opportunities to confront you and cause you to advance. Note, you will increase your chance of getting opportunities only if you are prepared to receive them. That means you have to work hard to be ready to "act instantly." Sometimes you don't always see an opportunity - even if it is right in front of you. You need to have prepared yourself to readily take an opportunity when it presents itself. This requires a degree of spontaneity. Remember, if you can get yourself to the point of "acting" without hesitation, that is progress in itself. Be bold when it comes to opportunity.

When one door shuts, another door opens! God loves you enough to bring opportunities your way. The question is, "*Have you prepared yourself to make full use of these opportunities when they come?*" Often lack of movement, or being ready to seize on an opportunity, is not just about preparation, or knowing when to act. Sometimes it is merely over thinking a situation. In business this is commonly referred to as "analysis paralysis." On a personal level it is when you are "acting cautiously." Either way, there is only one thing holding you back from moving (and doing it instantly) - fear. Fear will paralyse your progress! The Bible says, we do not have a

spirit of fear!

Now, there may be times when it seems that others have amazing opportunities opening up for them, yet the door appears to be closed for you. God doesn't have favourites, so why should this be? Where does opportunity come from? If it's not luck or coincidence, fluke or fate, what is it? And, how can we all get new and fresh opportunities into our lives?

Here are three steps that will help produce more opportunities:

1. **Desire.** The determining factor is this - how much do you really want to progress? What are you prepared to sacrifice in order to achieve it? Desire is the starting point for progress. Desire has remarkable creative energy, and when directed correctly it propels you toward your destiny.
2. **Decision-making.** Positive desires precede positive decisions. Right decisions will place you in the right position for opportunities to strike. Remember, not every decision you make will be right, however, you can still make every decision right! It's a process! It is possible to remain in the path of great opportunities provided your "positive decisions" and "positive desires" always line up. Whenever your decisions contradict the desire in your heart it will stifle progress. Remember, opportunity comes to those whose desires and decisions have placed them in the right position to succeed.
3. **Endurance.** Many people may find themselves well positioned for great opportunities, but yet, it's still not happening. What they need is endurance and faith. Sometimes the greatest opportunities require that we build our stamina and fortitude. This is because the opportunity is only an "open door," and when you step in you may find that the task ahead demands specific and durable qualities. Maybe that opportunity requires you to stand firm and refuse to surrender. Well, endurance will produce these qualities in you and help build your character. I believe that God gives opportunities to people of character. Endurance is a trait of strong character. It will keep you committed to your course and with it you can make positive progress, no matter what the circumstances.

Back to the apostle Paul's comments.... *"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us"* (**Philippians 3:12-14**). Twice he says, **"I press on..."** "Pressing on" is a strong determination to make progress! It's an attitude that focuses on advancement - never taking your eyes off the prize! Paul was committed to progress toward success! Are you? His pep talk to the Philippians is just what we need to hear today. Never quit the race. Never stop pursuing Christ. Never lose sight of the goal line. In the game of life, there are athletes and there are spectators. Be an athlete. Be a winner! **Keep Pressing On Toward Success!** The reward is worth it!