

Signposts to a Successful Life

Today's underlying theme is "**plans** and **purposes**." Last Sunday we studied **advancement** and **fulfilment**. When you understand any of these fundamentals of the Christian life, and then apply them correctly, you are more likely to succeed. But what is success?

In the Observer newspaper (15th January 1950) this quote appeared: "*If A is a success in life, then $A = x + y + z$. Work is x, y is play, and z is keeping your mouth shut.*" I like this balanced sentiment, but what is real success and how can we measure it?

When you mention the word success, most people think of yachts, gorgeous homes, expensive cars, designer clothes and large bank balances. Now, it's quite possible to have all these things and also be successful. Unfortunately, merely having possessions does not necessarily make you successful. There are so many people who have accumulated all of these things, and yet, when asked they will honestly and openly admit that they're still unhappy.

There are others who define success in terms of power, position, prestige and popularity. But again, even these attributes are not in themselves the foundation stones of success. Even more people say that success has to do with achievement – *attaining the goals you set for yourself*. But, the question still remains, "Does the attainment of these particular goals produce genuine satisfaction in your heart?"

In **Psalm 63:5** David declares, "**My soul shall be satisfied.**" The external frame and measure of success does not necessarily guarantee internal happiness or peace. Alexander the Great wept because he had triumphed over all and there were no more worlds for him to conquer! Someone once said, "*Success is not merely getting what you want, but wanting what you got after you get it!*"

If success is not measured in terms of possessions, popularity or performance, how then can it be defined? Perhaps the simplest definition of success for any believer is – **knowing and then attaining God's plan and purpose for your life**. Therefore, success is different things to different people (at different times)! But always remember, a successful life is one that is full of happiness! When God brings about success in your life, with it He adds no sorrow (**Proverbs 10:22**)!

I believe that success is simply:

- *Becoming what God wants you to become.*
- *Doing what God wants you to do.*
- *Possessing what God wants you to have.*

As you get to know and then accomplish each pre-determined goal, pre-set for your life by God Himself, you become successful. It is a progressive process of "self-development" and "personal accomplishment!" Therefore, real success is not a destination, it's a journey! And what's more, God promises to prosper you on route - *in everything you do* [**Psalm 1:3**]!

Note, the Greek for "prosper" literally means "*to help succeed on the road.*" Therefore, success must be a **journey**, and if success is a journey, there must be **signposts** along the way. I have found *seven signposts* that you must observe and obey in order to secure ongoing success. Here they are:

[1] The first is VISION. The Bible says, "*People perish (are going nowhere) through lack of vision*" (Hosea 4:6). If you are going to progress down the road of success, you must first define your dream. Your dream is

usually what creates the highest level of joy and excitement within you. Defining a dream always starts with an explicit and implicit “Why?” Why do you want to achieve these things? Why do you want to build your future that way? When you know “why” it’s easier to be specific and make it the vision clear. In **Habakkuk 2:2,3** the Lord says, *“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time.... Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come to pass.”*

You cannot journey down the road of success without a road map. But in order to use any road map effectively you must know where you want to go and then plot the best and most efficient route to get there. And what I mentioned last week is also very important. *“Make plans for reaching your destination!”* This is faith in action! You must know what you want to do when you get there, and see yourself enjoying each stage of its completion. Life’s journey will have many destinations.

[2] The second signpost is DIRECTION. In **1 Cor. 9:26** the apostle Paul said, *“I run this way; not with uncertainty, and I fight not as one who beats the air.”* Paul was certain about what he wanted to achieve and he always had a specific goal to aim at. Clear direction will provide you with clear opportunities. When you’ve set your mind on spotting every opportunity, the right people and ideas will mark the road of your success.

Start off by charting a particular course with some attainable deadlines. Then, when you’ve decided to get going, organise your time and make a detailed list of your priorities. **Ephesians 5:16** says, *“Redeeming your time because the days are evil.”* The most precious commodity you have is your time – use it wisely!

Here is some sound advice (three things you can do):

- (a) Think big but start small.
- (b) Do what’s most important and do it without delay.
- (c) Do what you enjoy and what gives you most pleasure.

If you take this direction, you will be able to exploit the present in order to create a successful future.

[3] The third signpost is COMMUNICATION. Meet with God in prayer but don’t lose touch with those around you. Correct communication with God and man creates an environment where success is inevitable. **2 Chronicles 26:5**, *“As long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.”*

Communication is also about “right” information. Stay informed! Secure all pertinent information concerning the course you’ve plotted, the journey you’ve chosen, and your final destination. Be observant, read, talk, search, and maintain an effective “information line,” and keep this information line open by being *teachable!*

[4] The fourth signpost is DISCIPLINE. The key to satisfying reward in every aspect of your life is personal discipline. A productive life is not an accident. Almost without exception, winners are successful because of self-discipline. It gives birth to successful habits! In **1 Corinthians 9:27** Paul said this, *“I keep my body under and bring it into submission.”*

There are probably several areas of your life that you need to be disciplined in. The most conspicuous being your conversation. *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21).* Never speak words that make the devil think he is winning! Speak positively concerning yourself and others. And remember this, a bad mouth creates a bad habit, and bad habits can destroy your future. Men do not really decide their future, they decide their habits. It’s your habits that will decide what’s going to happen down the road - whether good or bad!

You will never reach your full potential in God until your priorities have become habitual. And how do you do this? Through self-discipline. Prioritise your life and then discipline yourself to make sure your priorities become habitual.

[5] The fifth signpost is TEAMWORK. Your destiny is locked-up (contained) in other people - those whom God has strategically placed around you. Acknowledge this and your journey will be more enjoyable. Remember, you cannot succeed without their help, so co-operate with them at every stage. It's very likely that these people have gifts and abilities that complement yours. Learn to be a team player! Trust in teamwork!

Here are three things you can do:

- (a) Draw strength from and rely upon other team members.
- (b) Support and inspire each other, remembering to be enthusiastic at all times.
- (c) Remove all barriers between yourself and the team by being transparent.

This will bring unity, maintain trust and develop respect and honesty; making the impossible possible. God's word says, *"One can put a thousand to flight, but two can put ten thousand to flight"* (**Deuteronomy 32:30**). When in unity, your team has great power!

[6] The sixth signpost is COURAGE. It takes courage to maintain success. This means that you have counted the cost and are prepared to pay the price! When God commissioned Joshua to take the Israelites into the promised land, three times He says this, *"Be strong and courageous!"* Victories are won, and defeats are suffered, so you must be courageous and think victory at all times. Those who are unwilling to loose, rarely do!

Most courageous people exude confidence; therefore, create a climate of confidence in every situation. **Isaiah 30:15** declares, *"Confidence shall be your strength."* **Hebrews 10:35** says, *"Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward."* Your confidence will be rewarded if you 'tough it out' along the way.

[7] The seventh and final signpost is ENDURANCE. Never let up! Champions simply make an extra attempt - they put in more effort! Endurance is a vital, because without it it's impossible to stay the course. The Bible says *"you have great need of endurance"* (**Hebrew 10:36**). Endurance helps you to keep going - right to the very end of the road - and then beyond!

After you have reached one destination, there will always be other destinations to reach. The successful life is more about the journey than the destination, so keep plotting another course (for yet another journey). Dare to go where no man has ever gone before!

Here are three things that you can do to help you stay the course:

- (a) Plan a route that suites your talents and abilities.
- (b) Plan enjoyable 'stopovers' along the way.
- (c) March to your own drumbeat rather than the expectations of others.

Remember, real success is not a destination, it's a journey. So plan *ahead*, plan an *efficient* and *effective* route, and plan to always BE HAPPY!