

## THE RELENTLESS, UNREWARDING PURSUIT OF SUCCESS

By Robert J. Tamasy

Many of us in the business and professional world have oriented our lives to a singular focus – the pursuit of success. But have you ever stopped to seriously consider what success really is?

That thought reminds me of the dog that delights in chasing cars. One passes by and there goes the dog in rapid pursuit. But has the dog ever wondered what it would do if it actually caught the car? What would she do with it? In a sense, success is much the same. We embark on a career with certain goals and aspirations in mind, achievements we intend to attain. But what happens when we have attained them?

This brings to mind the top executive who would talk about climbing the proverbial “ladder of success,” only to discover when he reached the top that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

In my own career, I attained all of the goals I had established early on. Be editor of a newspaper? Check. Write a magazine article? Check. Be editor of a magazine? Check. Write a book? Check. I have been able to accomplish each of those. And much more. But did any of those, even combined together, give me a sense of total fulfillment, of ultimate success? No, because there was always more that I could have done, always other people who had achieved more than I had – at least to my way of thinking.

Success can sometimes feel like competing in a race with the finish line being moved farther and farther away. Promotions, pay increases, professional recognition might satisfy for a moment or two, but then what? I have learned that true success ultimately is found only in the One who bestows the abilities, interests, gifts, and opportunities that we use each day.

As we are admonished in Deuteronomy 8:17-18, “You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth....” We may need is a new definition or perspective on success. I can think of no better source for this than the Scriptures:

**How do we find success?** The Bible tells us success is not found in what we seek, but in Whom we seek. “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8).

**Success is setting the right goals.** The apostle Paul, then known as Saul, had everything – prestige, prominence, power. But then, encountering Jesus Christ turned his values upside-down; his goals were changed forever, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for

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the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...” (Philippians 3:7-8).

**Success is still a lifelong pursuit.** Paul gained a new understanding of what success means but remained devoted to it – his new mission – for the rest of his life. “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.... I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

© 2023. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you define success? How close do you think you are to attaining it?
2. Why does it seem that for a lot of people success remains so elusive? Why is it that no matter how much some people accomplish, it never seems to be enough?
3. If we consider – and believe – that it is God who truly gives us the ability to succeed, to produce wealth through our respective abilities, gifts, and opportunities, how should that affect the way we approach our work each day?
4. In what ways would meditating on the “book of the Law” – the Bible, the Word of God – make it possible for us to prosper and achieve lasting success?

#### NOTE:

*If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:*  
Ecclesiastes 1:2-4,11, 2:24-26,5:18; 1 Corinthians 3:9-11; Colossians 3:17,23-24

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