

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHAT IS TRUE SUCCESS ?

By Robert J. Tamasy

What is your definition for ‘success’? If we were to conduct a survey of 1,000 people in the marketplace, we probably would find the word to them has many different meanings. Because, it seems, success is in the eye of the beholder.

For some, success would equate to possessions – money, cars, houses, extensive investment portfolios, and other material manifestations. For others, to be successful means advancing in one’s profession or career, receiving promotions, better jobs, and gaining recognition along the way. Success for some means power and influence, being a “mover and shaker” where they work and live.

As you read this, you might start pondering your own perspective of what true success really is. For you, is it described above? Or is it something very different?

If you were to do an online search or consult a book of famous quotations to discover what other people have said about success, you would find a broad spectrum of opinions. Here are just a few of them:

“Success consists of getting up just one more time than you fall.” (Oliver Goldsmith)

“Many people have climbed the ladder of success only to discover it was leaning against the wrong wall.” (Anonymous)

“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” (missionary Jim Elliot)

The latter quote is especially notable because Jim Elliott lived out that philosophy. In 1956, he and four other missionaries were speared to death while seeking to evangelize a primitive tribe in Ecuador. Did that mean their mission was a failure? Elliott’s life actually proved to be a tremendous success. Not only did many members of that tribe come to faith in Christ in subsequent years, but the story of his life of faith and devotion has inspired countless individuals to seek a deeper relationship with Christ.

In the business and professional world, we obviously need to earn a living. Operating a business requires formulating plans, achieving goals, and earning a profit to keep the doors open and enable future growth. But as we read the Bible, we discover a radically different perspective on success:

**God’s Word paves the way to success.** Even for many believers in God, their business approach is to establish their plans and goals, then ask God to bless them. He says the study and application of the Scriptures will guide our efforts toward success. “Do not let this Book of

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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 often is not what we gain, but what we are willing to sacrifice.** The words of Jim Elliot likely were based on the admonition Jesus Christ gave to His followers. “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it” (Matthew 16:25).

**Seek God first and success follows.** Many of us establish priorities for our lives, but Jesus said putting God first in everything we do will guide our thinking, give wisdom to our planning, enable us to clarify our goals, and see our needs being met. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

© 2024. 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.

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is your definition for ‘success’?
2. Why do you think success can mean so many different things to different people? If we do not fit someone else’s description of success, does that mean we are not successful? Explain your answer.
3. How do you respond to Jim Elliot’s perspective, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose”? What do you think he meant?
4. The idea is presented that the surest path to success is to give our highest priority to God and His Word, the Bible. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

### Challenge For This Week

Spend some time this week considering and perhaps re-evaluating your views on what success is – and what it is not. It might help to discuss this with a friend or small group of friends, listening to their perspectives as well. As Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

If you have questions about what it means to put God first in your life and work in practical ways, try to find someone who seems to have a better understanding of that and ask about what they have discovered.

#### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:

Genesis 39:2-5; 1 Samuel 18:13-14; Psalm 119:9-11; Matthew 6:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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