



I've Been Thinking About ...

True Success

As a professional engineer for 25 years, and a department head in two different engineering firms, I have been responsible for making my projects and departments a “success.” In addition to my engineering work, I have sought success in other areas of life, such as academics, personal finances, Christian ministry, sports, and family life. As humans, we all want to be successful in something, either for our own fulfillment or to meet the expectations of others who want us to be successful. So “success” is an important subject. But what is “*true* success?”

The Bible teaches that God is the Designer and Creator of the universe. He is the Source of life, and *the* Basis of true meaning and purpose. Thus He is the One who defines “*true* success.”

As an engineer, I design systems. What is a “successful system?” As the designer, I am the one who defines success for the system. If the system operates according to my design, it is successful. God is the Designer of human beings. When we operate according to God’s design, we are “successful.” What is “God’s design?” God created humans to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and glorify (reflect) Him. How can we know, love, serve and glorify God?

Because of the “Fall of Man” (*Genesis 3*), humans are separated from God. In our natural condition, our relationship with God is broken. To know God, our relationship with Him must be restored. Jesus Christ said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (*John 14:6*).



God sent His Son into this fallen world to provide the way of restoration. As the unique Son of God, Jesus uniquely knew, loved, served and glorified God the Father. Jesus was without sin, but he died for *our* sins, so that *we* could be forgiven. Jesus died, but he did not stay dead! He was raised from the dead, thus defeating sin and death. Jesus Christ is the Ultimate Model of Success! Thus, according to the Bible, “*true* success” begins when we are united with Christ through faith in him. *True* success is found in Jesus Christ.

So what is “true success” in the Christian’s daily life? The answer is the same. True success is to know, love, serve and glorify God. In other words, true success is faithfulness to God. The Christian’s role is faithfulness. God is in charge of the results.

If we are faithful to God, does that mean we will be “successful” in the eyes of the world? Not necessarily. However, God is the One who defines *true* success, and *true* success is much more important than “success” from the world’s perspective. Does that mean that followers of Christ should not seek success in the workplace, academia, sports, etc.? Of course not!

In my life, Colossians 3:23-24 is a key Bible passage. It says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” As I seek “success” in my engineering work, I do it “for the Lord.” Of course, I want to please the managers of my firm, and I want to please my clients. But most of all, I want to honor God. My colleagues (and most of my clients) know that I am a follower of Christ, and I want to be a good representative of God’s family. I seek to do my job with excellence so that God will be glorified. That way, my “success” in the workplace is part of the “true success” I desire.

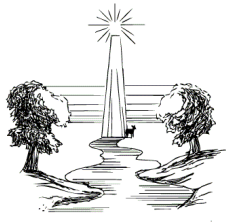
If “success” in the workplace is part of “true success,” it should be pursued in the right manner and with the right attitudes. We should *not* pursue success through dishonest or careless means. Instead, we should pursue success with integrity. We should *not* be motivated by selfish ambition and pride. And we need to understand that true fulfillment is *not* found in power, position, recognition, or material gain. Such things cannot bring true fulfillment. Instead, such things can become our “gods,” displacing the one true God, which is idolatry.

“True success” is associated with attitudes of humble service and love. As Jesus said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (*Mark 10:43-45*). The Ultimate Model of Success is also the Ultimate Model of Humble Service and Self-giving Love.



You may be thinking that doesn’t work in all areas of life. For example, you don’t become a great athlete by humbly cleaning the locker room. You become a great athlete by working hard, becoming faster and stronger, competing with others, and sometimes physically overpowering others. To some extent, that is the case in other areas of life as well. To succeed, you sometimes need to be assertive and competitive. While that is true, let us not underestimate the power and practicality of humble service even in a competitive environment.

In any case, the bottom line in “*true* success” is its relation to God. *True* success brings glory to God. Do you want *true* success? *True* success is the only success that brings deep and lasting fulfillment. *True* success is the only success that really matters in the context of eternity.



Thus seek to *know* God. Seek to love, serve and glorify God. If you are struggling with the concept of “true success,” or how to experience it in your particular situation, talk to a mature Christian friend. God has provided *the Way* for “true success” and He wants you to be successful according to *His* definition of success.