



# Managing GOD's Money

## Theme for August: Choices

*Life is about choices. Often unconsciously we choose between important matters such as working rather than loafing, eating instead of starving, sleeping rather than staying awake. Nobody tells us which to choose because these responses either are inherent or come by experience. Not so with other choices where ignorance and cowardice often hold us back.*

*This month we will look at some choices that result from inaction:*



*Heaven or Hell: Doing nothing is a powerful decision*  
*Truth or Tolerance: The high ground or the easy way out*  
*Success or Failure: How high must I reach*  
*Christianity or Religion: The Person or the rules*

## Topic for August 15-21: Success or Failure



1 Corinthians 15:57-58

Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Recently I watched a PGA golf tournament on television. Though he played great golf, the leader for most of the four days lost by one stroke. After the game, a television interviewer said to him: *That lost must be hard to accept. You must feel bad.* Firmly, excitedly, he said: *On the contrary, I feel great. I played*

*well today; I shot a low score. But the other guy was better than me today. He deserves to win.* The interviewer persisted obnoxiously; he insisted that the golfer must feel bad about this loss. Meanwhile, the golfer kept assuring the interviewer that he was happy with the results. Other television analysts surmised that the golfer hid his emotions well; they were sure he felt terrible about losing.

Was this golfer successful or did he fail by finishing second? Could he be that ecstatic about *losing*?

In this week's Bible study passage, Apostle Paul tells us what is important in life, and how we should set our goals: *Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.*

Society presents an unattainable, unrealistic view of success that many believers accept. The Ninth Edition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary defines success this way:

1. The accomplishment of an aim; a favorable outcome.
2. The attainment of wealth, fame, or position.
3. A thing or person that turns out well.

In the world's definition, success depends on something we do or get. In the world's wisdom, the interviewer was right. The golfer failed although he did his best; he did not win. Popular world-view regards society's second and third success descriptions as true success:

*The attainment of wealth, fame, or position; a thing or person that turns out well.* No wonder so many people continue to reject the greatest person who lived: the Servant King, humble Savior, Messiah Jesus, who died on the Cross to save us all—He did not fit the world's success standards.

Popular success definitions influence many folks' decisions to spend, dress, eat, associate with friends, family, and others. It is pervasive. Believers need to understand success from God's perspective because in-demand definitions are moving targets, subjective and unfulfilling. How much fame, money, and other stuff are enough? Who decides what it means to turn out well?

Success from God's perspective is based on the *attitude you apply before you do the job; it's input-focused.* It starts with *four decisions*, and stays while you do the job:

1. To believe in Messiah.
2. To be secure in whom you are, and whom you are in Messiah.
3. To be the best you can be using your talents to the maximum degree possible for His glory.
4. To accept and learn from the results of this effort.



## **Memory Verse**

### **1 John 5:5**

Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Let's examine these four decisions that lead to successful outcomes:

### **Success Is to Know Messiah**

The first of our four permanent success-decision is to surrender our lives to Jesus. We do not revert here to perform each task. We do it once only. The Apostle Paul describes this approach aptly in **Philippians 3:7-10**:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the

power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

Paul says he considers *everything* a loss compared with knowing Messiah. Our jobs will disappear and our houses, cars, jewelry, other material stuff will burn in time. Only our personal relationships with Messiah will matter in eternity.

Unless knowing Jesus is our main preoccupation, material items we gather during life's journey will become distractions, leaving us empty; always wanting more.

### **Success Is to Be Secure in whom You Are, and in whom You Are in Messiah**

The second permanent success decision is to understand that in our humanness sin is attractive. That's why before we act we must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings to lead and guide us. Never act in your own strength; our sin nature will take over. Apostle Paul reminds us in **Ephesians 2:10** that God created us for good works; but only under His lead will we do good works with right motives.

Often our jobs define us; particularly guys like me. Have you ever noticed how we refer to ourselves? *We say, I am an accountant, I am an*

*engineer.; seldom do we say, I am a follower of Jesus who is an accountant, or engineer.*

During thirty-two years in industry, I saw many people laid off or retired in planned and unplanned company actions. Sometimes their personal anguish was huge. But those confident Jesus controlled their lives, like Apostle Paul, knew they could do everything God wanted done (**Philippians 4:13**) and they saw *this end* as a *new beginning*.

When asked to perform a task especially when you don't think you have needed skills and funds, take it to the Lord. Seek His guidance. Never act without going to God first.

I repeat, like the first decision, this second part of success is permanent and done at the *input* stage. It is between each person and his Holy, loving Father, Messiah Jesus. Remember always our sin nature will lead us astray, but dependence on Messiah will lead us to His path.

### **Success Is to Be the Best You Can Using Your Talents to the Maximum for His Glory**

This third decision of true success shows the attitude we need to do each job. It too is a permanent decision, and happens at *input*. When you know who you are in Messiah, you focus on doing your best confident the Holy Spirit will guide you. You act according to **Colossians 3:23-24** — doing your best knowing you are working

for the Lord, not your human boss.

You must work always knowing you can't please people and you are not perfect. Give 100% effort to everything you do, knowing you are *working onto the Lord* to bring Him glory, honor and praise. Further, you know God equips you to do what He calls you to do with what you need, when you need it; just as He equipped Moses and others.

### **Success Is to Accept and Learn from the Results of this Effort**

Often results vary from expectations, but this doesn't detract from your success. Accept results of your best efforts—you can't do better. Learn from them. Thank God for the lessons, then ask Him to show you what to do different next time. This is how you grow. However, you need to be teachable, mouldable, and willing to change.

**I**f those four permanent input decisions lead to success, what's failure? It doesn't exist with this stress-relieving approach. When you understand only Jesus is perfect, you strive for *excellence, not perfection*, and accept and learn from results. This success approach leads to *continuous improvement* producing contentment, peace, and a wish to please God always.

Do pressures from the world suggest that you are a *failure*? How do you respond when people like the TV reporter I mentioned earlier tell you that you failed?

God created you *fearfully*, and *wonderfully* (**Psalms 139:14**), and has a plan for your life. Stay in His word to learn it, then start acting on it (**Proverbs 20:5**). Cling to Him; lean on Him, He will make *your path straight* (**Proverbs 3:5-6**); He will lead you to success His way.

This week, list projects God is asking you to do. Ask Him to show you how to apply His success—attitude to do them. Then ask a trusted friend to hold you accountable.

The world standards are situational, fleeting, self-focused, and will cause you to yearn for more and never be satisfied.

On the other hand, God's plans for you have eternal benefits (**John 6:27-35**). You can do them when you trust Him and call on Him. *Give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because...your labor in the Lord is not in vain* (**1 Corinthians 15:57-58**).

## **Application**



### **Philippians 3:12-14**

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect. ... I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



# Daily Reflections



**August 15:**  
1 Corinthians 15:  
50-58  
Proverbs 3:5-6  
Colossians  
3:23-24

**August 16:**  
Philippians  
3:7-14

**August 17:**  
Philippians  
4:4-14; Luke  
18:14

**August 18:**  
Matthew 6:20-34

**August 19:**  
Psalm 139:1-20

**August 20:**  
Proverbs 20:5  
Ephesians 2:10

**August 21:**  
1 John 5:5; John  
6:27-35

Considering the month's theme, and the period's topic, daily reflect on verses on the left. These questions might help your reflections:

1. Who is talking to whom, about what, and in what context?
2. How do these verses apply to me today?
3. What lessons from these verses can I start today?

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible (Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.)