

Living with an Eternal Perspective

Zoom Bible Study | Tuesdays @ 7:00pm (CST)
Led by Mary Lowman

January 31, 2023
Lesson Four

Fighting the Performance Mentality

Looking at success with an eternal perspective is not easy. We have a performance mentality indelibly stamped in our brains which keeps saying that success has to do with our performance!

How is this message repeated to us over and over again throughout our lives?

We judge success on earth by performance and achievement, position and power, riches and possessions. But it looks quite different with an eternal perspective.

Success in Eternity

How will success be judged in eternity?

One of the greatest truths in Scripture is that salvation is by grace alone through faith, not by works.

Ephesians 2:8-9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Yet few Christians stop to think about the fact that we will face a judgment in heaven. It's called the Judgment Seat of Christ, and it is a judgment for believers, not unbelievers. Here's what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about this Judgment Seat:

1 Corinthians 3:10 – 15

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

That's how success will be determined in eternity for all to see and know.

Eternal Jewels

What will make it through the fire and come out as gold and precious stones?

- The money we've invested in people, in spreading God's Word, in taking the gospel to every nation, not the money in our bank accounts.
- The service we've rendered to others out of a pure desire to help, to share our plenty with their little, to let God love them through us, not the status we've achieved in the business or the Christian worlds.
- The glory we've passed on to God instead of assuming it for ourselves.
- The people we've influenced to know and serve God, not the people in places of influence that we have known or been.
- The inner clothes of righteousness that we have worn, not the designer clothes in our closets.
- The prisoners, homeless, widows and orphans we've aided, not the beautifully decorated homes we've bought.
- Everything we've done in the name of Christ and for His glory, not the things we've done to be seen and appreciated by people.

The Dangers of the Pursuit of Success

There is nothing in Scripture that forbids or condemns career or monetary success.

Can you name some in the Bible who were very successful while on the earth?

Earthly success does not *negate* eternal success. But the important thing we have to keep remembering is that earthly success does not *equal* eternal success.

A Model of True Success

There is a man in the Bible who is described as succeeding in everything he undertook.

2 Chronicles 32:30: It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David. He succeeded in everything he undertook.

What made this man, Hezekiah, such a successful man, and was his success earthly or eternal?

We first meet Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 29. Here are portions of that chapter:

2 Chronicles 29

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.

³ In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them. ⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side ⁵ and said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary.

¹⁸ Then they went in to King Hezekiah and reported: "We have purified the entire temple of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table for setting out the consecrated bread, with all its articles.

²⁹ When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshiped. ³⁰ King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to praise the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness and bowed down and worshiped.

³¹ Then Hezekiah said, "You have now dedicated yourselves to the LORD. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the LORD." So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings.

So the service of the temple of the LORD was reestablished. ³⁶ Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly.

Hezekiah's Secrets of Success

1. First, he cleaned out the land from everything that was defiling it.
2. He gave worship and praise a very high priority in his life and in his land.
3. He was totally obedient to God in every area.
4. He encouraged people, and motivated them to do their work with excellence.
5. He sought God in everything he did, not trying to do it on his own strength.
6. He worked very hard and did everything really well.
7. He didn't fold under attack from the enemy, but reaffirmed his faith in God.
8. He kept a sensitive ear to God, and repented quickly when God showed him his sin and errors.

Follow Hezekiah's Secrets of Success

If we want to have eternal success, to live in such a way that our daily lives are counting for eternity, we would be well advised to follow Hezekiah's example.

- Live pure and clean lives and get rid of anything that would hinder purity in our lives.
- Make worship the central theme of our lives.
- Obey God's Word to the max!
- Become a very good encourager.
- Seek God in everything you do.
- Do everything with excellence.
- Don't fold when the enemy attacks.
- Keep short accounts with the Lord.

A life committed to the integrity and holiness like Hezekiah's is one headed for eternal success.

Looking at Time with Forever Eyes

Numbered Days

David wrote:

You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath... (**Psalm 39:5**).

And again:

The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more (**Psalm 103:15-16**).

The message for us is not that these earthly days are unimportant, but that eternity is far greater.

David wrote:

Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is (**Psalm 39:4**).

And Moses prayed:

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (**Psalm 90:12**).

Number Your Days

If you live to be very old and die of old age, how many more years do you have on this earth? Be generous and pick a large number. Write it here:

At best I figure I have ____ more years to live on this earth.

Where will you be in one hundred years? Where will you be in one thousand years? Where will you be in one million years? We will all be in eternity, and if you have been born from above, you will be in eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once again, take that number you wrote down, your best guess at the ideal number of years you have left here on this earth before beginning your eternal years, and then ask yourself: Am I living my life now in the light of eternity, or is my sight limited to the end of my earthly days?

Messages from the Person You Will Be

If the woman you will be in twenty years could talk to the woman you are now, what would she say to you? Would she have some of these messages for you?

- You're wasting valuable time on many things that do not matter.
- You're missing opportunities for service to God that will never come your way again.
- You're throwing away energy and resources on things that will burn up.
- You're living as though your days are numberless; they are not.

Living now in the light of eternity is dramatically life changing because it motivates us to be good stewards of the minutes and hours that we have left. Recognizing that we don't know what our days-left number is, we would live everyday as though it could be the last.

Living now in the light of eternity is the gateway to a meaningful, intentional lifestyle, full of challenges and even some sorrows, but never trite, never inconsequential.