

## How to be a Successful Christian

Ps. 119

The successful Christian life is not nearly as complicated as we try to make it. If only we'd do 2 things: Read Bible/Pray and the one always leads to the other.

I was shocked to hear of a recent survey by Barna research group showing the average Pastor says he spends less than 20 minutes a day in Bible reading and prayer!

I read somewhere it takes being in contact with other Christians 3 times week to thrive! I've preached many times about the need to be in church. But there's a need for some balance here: I'm making a mistake if I give the impression that IF you're at church 3 times a week, that means you're right w/ God...a successful Christian. (though it is a basic starting point)

Most of us eat 3 meals a day...some only 2...some people tell me they eat only once each day...I think it takes more than that to maintain this figure, though!

Imagine how weak you'd be physically if you only ate 3 times a week! (if the only time you spend in the Word is at church, which is in some churches twice on Sunday, one on Wednesday, you're only eating 3 times!)

As we live in some very trying times in a country that has lost it' walk with Jesus, we need spiritually strong believers.

The demands on us all are getting greater and greater...and the risk of burnout is huge and unless, unless we get back to the basics of where our strength comes from. (our source!)

As Pastor, I feel God wants to call us back to Him...consider getting up 20 minutes early and having that time w/ God...not rushed—in the quiet place, no interruptions...alone w/ God!

And try me on this...you'll have more physical energy than if you slept 20 minutes longer. It's amazing how God rewards us when we put Him first! (time/talent/tithe)

We all want to grow as a church...but we won't unless we grow personally, individually!

We need workers...but God wants worshippers...an intimate relationship w/ Him. Look deep into His eyes and allow Him to do the same back! Ill.—(Kim and the kids on her lap!)

A NT example: (Martha/Mary)

My goal for this message is that everyone make a commitment, or re-commit, to a quiet time alone w/ God for 7 days this week, and next week, and the next!

If you do:

### **1. You'll receive joy!**

There's a big difference between joy and happiness  
(happencance/circumstance/happenings)

### **Happiness is external...joy is internal (the eye of the storm)**

Psalms 119:54 **"Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge.** (tough circumstance's.).

And what brought about the joy in tough circumstances? "Your decrees!"

In the written Word we find the Living Word, Jesus, who IS joy! And if you have Jesus, you can have joy. You don't have to have anything else...people are looking for joy in all the wrong places!

"if I could buy this...I'd be happy" find a guy/bigger house/different job

We don't always have to be happy (describe a day of circumstances wherewe laughed for joy])

And some of you have some really tough circumstances right now...tough times will either drive you into the Word or they will drive a wedge between you and the Word...the choice is yours!

Ill—Gold City—"when you don't feel like praying: pray"

When you don't feel like going to church is when you need it the most.

You should be reading your Bible and serving the Lord 2 times a week  
You should read your Bible: when you feel like it, and when you don't because that's when you need it the most)

**Joy...**

## 2. Victory

Psalms 119:45 “I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.”

Freedom is the opposite of bondage...and it's not God's will that believers stay in bondage to sin.

Israel was delivered from Egypt, from bondage (spiritual bondage as well) Oftentimes they didn't believe it could work (plagues/taskmasters doubling work load/even in process of deliverance at red sea, in wilderness, at the very border of the promised land!)

**Why? Because one of Satan's goals in our lives is to convince us that we cannot break the chains of sin...that we'll never break that habit/get victory/find a better way**

It's true, before you were saved, sin had a grip on you in such a way that you were powerless...to do anything about it. But at salvation, **Jesus broke those chains...but Satan tries to create the illusion that you're still bound!**

**The true is you're not!**

Ill.—elephants at circus chained to small stakes driven only a few inches into the ground/elephants never try to get away, though they easily could...why don't they try?

Because when they were little babies, only 500 lbs!, they were chained to large stakes, driven deep into the ground/they'd try to get away but couldn't/one day quit trying/will was broken! Now the adult doesn't even try to get away, because he doesn't think he can!

A lot of Christians live in bondage to certain sins, and they've quit trying to get loose because they don't think they can...the irony is, those chains were already broken, God has already given the victory is they'll just claim it!

You can get away, you can find victory...but only thru the Word of God. Even Jesus, when He walked this earth, could not get victory w/out the Word of God! (tempted in wilderness) in Matthew 4.

Firsts Satan tempted His flesh; “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Then the pride of life;

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." (did you notice that satan was quoting Scripture?)

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

(So Satan is basically saying jump off the roof of the temple, you know the angels would catch you, you'd be ok, you'd show all these people you are God Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ...OT book of Deuteronomy...I have a feeling that Jesus had His devotions that morning in Deuteronomy!)

Then the eyes: Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

Jesus didn't try to reason/argue/debate Satan, and He didn't try to get the victory in His own strength...no, Jesus defeated Satan when He ran the sucker thru w/ the sharp, 2-edged Sword of the Spirit!

**If Jesus needed the Word of God to get victory, what makes us think we don't???** (that's why we should memorize key verses)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the

breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Joy/victory...

### 3. Nourishment

Psalms 119:32 “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”

A picture of growth!

Is God enlarging the capacity of your heart for spiritual things?

1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,  
As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:  
From milk to meat, the next step!”

Don't you love the meat of the Word of God.

We looked at it when we talked from Revelation about the 3rd Jewish temple to be built during the tribulation/red heifer/shocking ways these meaty subjects affect life in the here and now!

III.—Through the years many people have shared with me things they get from their walk with God

One man—told me how God opened his eyes to a great truth in His Word.

A teen—after I preached a while back, added a few points to my message after church...complete w/ cross references making their point even further!

A S.S. teacher--shared with our class the blessing of opening God's Word for study...and soon finding themselves surrounded by books and commentaries (what?)

A deacon—emailed me a wonderful thought about sacrifice. He shared that though people in Bible times had to bring sacrifices for themselves...no sacrifice was ever given for Jesus or by Jesus (who usually set the example for us) because He was perfect and had no sins to atone for.

He continued: "It's amazing what you can always still learn about Jesus. His dimensions are overwhelming!"

Amen to that!!

What great nourishment we can receive as we look to God's Word every day...as we do that, it will then become the catalyst for a real prayer life!

Only then will we experience Victory and Joy.