

Success
By Michael Britton

I have spent much time trying to define success. The fact that I am a thirty-one year old student with no career and no valuable possessions needs to be considered in my definition. The truth is that no one will ever find my definition in the New York Times; it will certainly not win me a spot in next season's "Apprentice". However, if one wants to change his life forever, then true success is just a heartbeat away. Success is having a committed, compassionate, and commissioned relationship with Jesus Christ.

During my childhood I had a drug problem. My mother "drug" me to church every time the doors opened. I spent my summers in Bible Camp or Vacation Bible School. I had enough butter cookies and orange drink to last me a lifetime. I learned the "Golden Rule", Father Abraham, and how to do the Hokey-Pokey. However, when I became a teenager my flannel-board view of Jesus was not enough to sustain me. I was never wooed by drugs or alcohol. I was entranced with success. I conformed to everyone around me in pursuit of success until I did not recognize myself. Then I got my life pulled down around my ankles. In a moment of feeling completely vulnerable I realized I needed to make a commitment to Christ. It was just me, at the foot of an old rugged cross looking up into the eyes of a man who knew everything I had ever done and everything I was capable of doing. This kind of commitment does not occur in congregations and has nothing to do with a person's wearing an "I Love Jesus!" t-shirt and praying at restaurants. The day I finally made my commitment I began an abandoned, reckless exhilarating journey into a life wide open for Christ.

I lived a long time before I realized it is not about me. Look at the "Treat-yourself"; "Have-it-your-way"; "Take-time-for-you" life philosophy into which we buy. In the local bookstore the self-help section covers half the building. People are writing books just to help me! I am so important I have ten banks trying to start a relationship with me. With all of this going on it is no wonder we forget about each other. Jesus knew our tendency to forget others. That is why he repeatedly told His disciples to love one another (Matthew 12:31; John 13:34). But the pinnacle of Jesus' instruction came as He prayed just before He went to the cross. He cried out for the Father's love for the Son to be in us (John 17:26). That is eternal love. The way God loves is perfect. God does not love because it is expected of Him; His love is not faked. God's love never complains and never gets jealous; it never fails (1Corinthians 13:4-7). God wants us to love like He loves, with no conditions or reservations. If we are to find success, we must find love for God and a sincere compassion for His people.

The third ingredient of success is to have a commission. I thought that to share Christ, I either had to kick someone's door in and vomit the Gospel in thirty seconds or be a "lifestyle witness" by hiding everything I had done wrong while praying my friends do not go to Hell before they get the message. Then I heard a guy talking about a cartoon character named "Wimpy". He is that odd-looking fellow in the Popeye cartoons who goes around asking for hamburgers. Everything he says or does has something to do with hamburgers. No one has any doubt about what is on his heart and mind. It does not take Wimpy very long to move any conversation into the subject of hamburgers. That is the way God wants me to be about His son. Everything I say and everything I do should begin and end with Jesus. And no conversation of mine should last for long without Jesus being mentioned. The truth is that a commitment to Christ and a compassion for His people is not possible without a commission to share Him with others.

Success is such a personal term. For some it may be money. For others it is a home, a marriage, a promotion, or some long-awaited status symbol. For me success is the knowledge that when all of those things go away a committed, compassionate, and commissioned relationship with Jesus Christ will be with me for eternity.