

“Character Over Consumerism”

COMPASS Sermon Series | Week Three | Newbreak Church

July 18th, 2021

This week is about the centrality of the gospel in defining our view of success. This message answers the question: How do I develop a biblical view of success?

For more insights relating to this week’s sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/>. We post a new blog every Friday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

Start Here

- What is your favorite thing about summertime? Why?
- When reflecting on your weekly schedule, what do you spend most of your time pursuing?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Read: Matthew 16:26 & Colossians 3:1-17

Point 1 – Define the win.

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matthew 16:26, NIV)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4, NIV)

In the 2004 Olympics Matt Emmons, who is considered to be one of the greatest sharpshooters of all time, was competing in the rifle shooting event, where they shoot at targets from a distance. In the final event, he was well-positioned to win the gold, and it came down to his final shot. All he needed on his final shot was to hit the target, really anywhere on the target. And so, he lined his rifle downrange, took aim, and fired, and

the shot he took would normally get a score of 8.1, which was more than enough to win the gold. The problem was that Matt was standing in lane 2 and he shot the target by accident on lane 3. It was a great shot, but at the wrong target. He got a score of zero which bumped him down to 8th place.

This is a metaphor for what our lives can look like. Sometimes, it seems like we're doing well. We take aim and shoot, and it looks good. But we get to the end of it, and we wonder, was I even aiming at the right target?

“Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter.”

The question is, does our view of success agree with Scripture's view of success? Or are we succeeding in something superfluous, or worse, worthless?

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Based on Scripture, what does “winning” look like? At home? At your job? And overall in your walk with God?
- What would it look like to devote more time, energy, and resources to developing our character? (Read the Additional Insight below for context to the question)

—ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

“So, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

If you are like me, then you were asked this question a thousand times growing up. Heck, I have adopted it as a common question I ask kids! It's a fine question. There is nothing wrong with it. But let's think more about this question, which often becomes a central and guiding one for kids of all ages.

What does the question implore or impose someone to consider? Well, taken at face value, it seems to inquire about one's future career aspirations. If you ask a kindergartener this question they might say things like a firefighter, a mailman, a chef, and—one of my favorite responses—the president!

Talking to the younger generation about career aspirations is a good thing. But what if there was something better? There is!

Someone's *character*, not their *career*, better determines the quality of life they have.

So, what if the question we really should be asking is this: ***Who do you want to become when you grow up?***

Let's admit it... if someone blind-sided you with this question on a random Tuesday afternoon, wouldn't you hesitate to answer?—Perhaps, you might have a "deer in headlights" kind of moment. I don't know if I would be more stunned by not having a satisfying answer or if I would be shocked by the maturity of the question! Yet, either way, it is the million-dollar question—which is sort of ironic since it is not the typical "career" question. I mean to say that it is a question of great worth for ourselves to consider. Halt reading this blog post from a third-person perspective and actually ask yourself: *Who do I want to become?*

Dallas Willard, one of the pillars of spiritual formation for Christians today, famously has said:

"The most important thing about a person is not what they do. It is who they become."

There is enough substance to that quote to keep us occupied for a few weeks—at least. But what can we gather immediately about Willard's point? Consider this. How much of our time, energy, and resources are devoted to building a "successful" life?

A lot. I would imagine. Maybe even all of it. But what if the question was tweaked:

How much of our time, energy, and resources are devoted to building our Christ-like character?

Do you hear the crickets?

The reality is that the common culture does not share the same view of "success" as Jesus does. While things like amassing more money, buying finer clothes, and expanding our square-footage are in the aim of most Americans (Christian or otherwise), Jesus trained His followers to adopt a far more simple perspective. Consider how counter-cultural Paul's words are.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (1 Timothy 6:6-8, NIV)

Let's not misread Paul's intent. Money is not bad. Many times Paul praises those who use their amassed wealth for advancing the gospel! However, the New Testament's teaching was consistently focused on telegraphing a passion for Christ-like character to be the center of our ambition.

¹⁰ and have put on the **new self**, which is being **renewed** in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ... ¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:10, 12-14, NIV)

Paul's view of success is to bring greater alignment between who we are in Christ and how we walk it out. Similarly, elsewhere, he sums up the goal of the Christian life as being conformed to the image of Christ ([Romans 8:29](#)). Do we see how wonderful this is?

Instead of God crafting us to do a certain career, He prioritizes constructing our character like Christ so that *what we do* (whatever we do!) stems from *who we are*.

Think about it this way. What you do for your career is ancillary, anecdotal, and beside the point in comparison to who you are becoming. Career choices are important—I don't wish to undermine that. But our character determines how effective we are for God in our careers, whichever career we do choose.

The chances are many of us are in a line of work that deviated from our answer as to when we were kids. That's okay! Whatever your satisfaction with your career, we can take heart that God is far more concerned with our character. After all, we need followers of Jesus—who actually embody the character of Jesus—in every field of work. What you do matters. And our careers contribute to society. And how much more so when we have Christ-like character fueling our work?

When we consider planning out our life, among considering our career and directional path, let us consider (with the highest importance) who we are becoming.

May the journey of becoming like Jesus inspire our goals and energize our agenda.

Read: Colossians 3:5-14

Point 2 – Consistently center my life around eternal values.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature... and have **put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:5, 10, 12-14 NIV)

The point of Colossians 3:5-14 is to show us, believers, what needs to be put to death so that the character of Christ can be brought to life through our new identity in Jesus.

In Colossians 3:5-14, Paul challenges the believer to “put to death” the carnal, earthly nature, and “put on” the new self in Christ. In vs. 5, Paul lists 5 vices that reflect the values and desires of the flesh in the world (sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed). Paul then noted in vs. 6, that we all used to walk in those ways before Christ (verse 6). We were led by our nature and shaped by those values.

In verse 7, Paul lists another set of 5 sins that the Colossian church was specifically struggling with within their community (anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language). He encouraged them to rid themselves of those things and instead to choose a different way to relate and interact with one another. Instead of allowing their old nature to rule in their lies, Paul challenged them to “put on their new self” in Christ (verses 10, 12-14). Instead of answering one another in anger, they were to clothe themselves with compassion and kindness. Instead of slandering one another, they were to bear with one another and be compassionate.

In other words, Paul was challenging the Colossians (and he is challenging us) to let our eternal values from Christ direct our lives every day. Before Christ, the desires of the flesh drove our decision-making and ultimately shaped our lives. When we choose to follow Jesus, we are also choosing to deny our old nature, take up our cross daily, and experience triumph over the old self.

When we are faced with temptations and challenges, in Christ, we now have the option to follow His path. When we start to lose our temper, we have the ability in Christ, to recenter ourselves in Him and experience victory through Him.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What values do my current pursuits reflect? Where will I end up based on the direction of my values?
- What is one character trait I know I need to work on? What can I do this week to become more like Christ in that area?

—ACTIVITY—**What Are My Values?**

Not too long ago we wrote a blog entitled: “Leading Your Home Around Personalized, Christ-Centered Values.” You can read it by [clicking here](https://newbreak.church/leading-your-home-around-values/) or following this link: newbreak.church/leading-your-home-around-values/

Read the blog and then consider writing out some values that you and/or your family would consider living by.

If you already have built a list of family values, consider taking some time to reflect personally, or discuss as a group, ways in which you will integrate your values more into your everyday / weekly life.

—SUMMARY—

How do I develop a biblical view of success?

- 1) Define the win.
- 2) Consistently center my life around eternal values.

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

1. How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
2. What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?
3. BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?