The Spiritual Dangers of Success: How to Stay Grounded in Your Faith

Whether it's in our careers, our families, our ministries, or even our personal goals, success is something we all naturally desire.

And let's be real: Success feels good. It's affirming. It's exciting. It can make us feel like we're on top of the world.

But as we pursue success, there's a subtle danger that can creep in and start to pull us away from our true foundation in Christ.

Success in itself isn't bad—in fact, it can be a blessing! But when it starts to take God's place in our hearts, that's when we need to pause and reassess.

Let's explore the spiritual dangers of success and, more importantly, how we can stay grounded in our faith even as we strive to achieve our goals.

The Lure of Success

Let's start by acknowledging that success isn't inherently wrong.

Proverbs 16:3 encourages us, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."

God wants us to be diligent, to use our gifts, and to work hard. But the key is committing our efforts to Him and keeping Him at the center of all we do.

The problem arises when our success becomes more than just a goal—it becomes an idol. And an idol is anything we put above God in our lives.

When success starts to define our identity, control our decisions, or dictate our self-worth, we've crossed a line.

The pursuit of success can become so consuming that we begin to rely on it for our sense of value, rather than on God's truth about who we are.

When Success Becomes an Idol

You might be thinking, "How do I know if success has become an idol in my life?"

It's a great question, and one that requires some honest self-reflection. Here are a few signs that success might be taking a place in your heart that only God should occupy:

You feel devastated by failure or setbacks

When success is your idol, any failure can feel like a personal catastrophe.

It's more than just disappointment—it's a blow to your identity.

You constantly compare yourself to others

If you're always measuring your success against others, it's a sign that you're finding your worth in how you stack up rather than in who God says you are.

You're willing to compromise your values to achieve success

When we start bending our morals, ethics, or integrity to reach a goal, we're placing success above our commitment to God's ways.

Your identity is tied to your accomplishments

If you feel like you're only as good as your latest achievement, or you can't separate your self-worth from your success, it's time to take a step back.

You neglect your relationship with God

Does your pursuit of success is cause you to spend less time with God? Are you spending less time in praye and less time in His Word?

This is a clear indicator that success has become too important important in your life.

The Spiritual Pitfalls of Success

So, what exactly are the spiritual dangers that come with idolizing success? Here are a few key ones to be aware of:

Pride and Self-Reliance

When we achieve success, it's easy to start believing that we did it all on our own. Pride creeps in, and before we know it, we're relying on ourselves rather than on God.

Proverbs 16:18 warns us, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

When we start to believe we don't need God because we've got it all under control, we're setting ourselves up for a spiritual downfall.

Distance from God

The more we focus on our success, the more we can drift away from God. We get busy, we get caught up in our plans, and suddenly our quiet time with God takes a backseat.

James 4:8 reminds us, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

But if we're too preoccupied with our success, we may find ourselves drifting further and further away.

Misplaced Identity

When our identity is wrapped up in our achievements, we lose sight of who we truly are in Christ.

Our worth is no longer based on being a beloved daughter of God, but on how successful we are in the world's eyes.

Colossians 3:3 tells us, "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

Our identity should be rooted in Him, not in what we accomplish.

Spiritual Burnout

The relentless pursuit of success can lead to spiritual, emotional, and even physical burnout. We push ourselves beyond our limits, neglecting our need for rest and renewal in God's presence.

Jesus invites us in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

But if we're too focused on chasing success, we might miss out on the rest and peace that He offers.

Staying Grounded in Your Faith

So, how do we pursue success without letting it become an idol? Here are some practical steps to help you stay grounded in your faith while striving for your goals:

1. **Keep Christ at the Center**
    - The most important thing you can do is keep Christ at the center of your life. This means starting your day with Him, involving Him in your decisions, and seeking His will above all else. Proverbs 3:6 says, "In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Make it a habit to submit your plans to God and trust that He will guide you.
2. **Regularly Check Your Heart**
    - It's important to regularly check your heart and ask yourself, "Why am I pursuing this goal? Is this for God's glory, or am I seeking validation from others?" Psalm

139:23-24 is a great prayer for this: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

3. **Practice Gratitude**
    - Gratitude is a powerful antidote to the idol of success. When we regularly thank God for what He’s already done in our lives, it shifts our focus from what we want to achieve to what He’s already given us. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 encourages us, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” A grateful heart is less likely to chase after success as a means of fulfillment.
4. **Set Boundaries**
    - It’s crucial to set boundaries around your work, your goals, and your time. Make sure you’re not sacrificing your relationship with God, your family, or your well-being in the name of success. Psalm 127:2 reminds us, “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.” Trust that God will bless your efforts without you having to overextend yourself.
5. **Seek Accountability**
    - Surround yourself with a community of believers who can hold you accountable and encourage you to keep Christ first. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Having sisters in Christ who will pray with you, challenge you, and remind you of your true worth in God is invaluable.

A Final Word of Encouragement

Success is a beautiful thing when it’s placed in the right perspective. God wants to see you thrive, to use your gifts, and to achieve great things for His glory.

But He also wants you to remember that your worth is not tied to your accomplishments. You are already valued, already loved, and already chosen by Him.

As you pursue your goals, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:2).

When you do, you’ll find that true success is not about what you achieve, but about who you become in Christ.

So go out there, give your best, and remember that no matter what, your identity and worth are secure in the One who loves you more than you can imagine.

Reflection

1. In what areas of your life do you find yourself most focused on achieving success? How do these pursuits impact your relationship with God?

2. Have there been moments when your sense of worth was tied to your accomplishments rather than your identity in Christ? How did this affect your spiritual and emotional well-being?
3. What specific signs do you recognize in your life that indicate success might be becoming an idol? How can you address these signs to refocus on God?
4. How do you currently involve God in your decision-making and goal-setting processes? Are there areas where you could be more intentional about seeking His guidance?
5. Reflect on a time when you felt overwhelmed or burnt out in your pursuit of success. What steps can you take to create healthier boundaries and prioritize your relationship with God moving forward?

You can download a printable version of this devotional along with the study questions here.