

# Freedom in Christ

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## STAYING ON THE RIGHT PATH

I see your true colours shining through,  
I see your true colours, that's why I love you,  
So don't be afraid, to let them show,  
Your True colours, true colours,  
Are beautiful, like a rainbow.

Ok, its question time, on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 is low 5 is high) how would you answer the following questions and finish each statement?

- How Successful am I?  
I would be more successful if.....
- How significant am I?  
I would be more significant if.....
- How fulfilled am I?  
I would be more fulfilled if.....
- How satisfied am I?  
I would be more satisfied if.....
- How happy am I?  
I would be more happy if.....
- How much fun am I having?  
I would have more fun if.....
- How secure am I?  
I would be more secure if.....
- How peaceful am I?  
I would be more peaceful if.....

Honest answers to these questions could be quite revealing about what you really believe. What we say we believe, and we think we believe aren't always what we actually believe. What you actually believe is quite likely contained in the answers to these eight questions. You see – assuming your basic needs are being met, (food, shelter, safety etc.) you will be motivated by what you believe will give you a successful, significant, fulfilled, satisfied, happy, fun, secure and peaceful life – and right now you are in truth, living by faith according to what you actually believe.

Would it be ok if you have a 5 for every answer? Well God hasn't called you to be an insecure, insignificant, unfulfilled failure! But the challenge comes in that the way you define success, significance, security, fulfilment etc., might not be the way God does. If we are to stay on the right path, if we are to live our true colours, then understanding how God sees these values is crucial. So how does God see them?

It is perfectly possible to be a failure in the eyes of the world, but successful in the eyes of God. It is also possible to be a success in the eyes of the world and a failure within the perspective of eternity. Success is related to goals – to fail is to not reach them and success is to reach them or exceed them. So what goals do you have – how are you doing?

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” 2 Peter 1 v 3-4.

According to Peter, there is one goal that God has for us and it begins with what God has already done for us in Christ. He has given us everything we need for life and godliness in Christ!

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly

kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is short-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1 v 5-10.

The goal is to become more like Christ – to become more like the Father – to take on more of the family likeness. Peter encourages us to make every effort and develop our character, for in the Kingdom of God – this is success. If you do these things – you will never fall, and you will be useful and fruitful, and – here’s the good bit – nobody can keep you from being a success!

You may look at others and think that because you lack the talents, the gifts, the intelligence of them, you cannot be successful. You notice that Peter doesn’t mention gifts, talents or intelligence. Our sense of worth is not found in ability, but in who we are in Christ and our growth in character. So how are you doing?

Often when we are struggling in our spiritual life it is because we compare ourselves to others, but success comes from knowing who we are in Christ and our growth in character. After Moses died, God said these words to Joshua to encourage him:

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1 v 7 & 8.

Success for Joshua would not be dependant on other people or favourable circumstances, it hinged entirely on following what God had said. Crossing the Jordan and the battle for Jericho were dependant on following what God had said. It has to do with obedience. Success is accepting God’s goal for our lives

and by his grace becoming what he has called us to be. The truth is – we can all be successful.

Significance is about how we use time. How do you use your time? Apparently nobody has ever retired and said – “Oh I wish I’d spent more time at the office!” What do you invest your time in? The current trend it seems is that people want to become famous, but fame fades – it never lasts does it? Paul wrote “If anyone’s work remains, he shall receive a reward.” (1 Cor 3 v 14)

He wrote to Timothy: “Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” (1 Tim 4 v 7 & 8)

Significance comes from investing in the values of the Kingdom of God - investing in things that are of eternal value. You know friends, investing in things that are of eternal value are never wasted, and when you live your life from the perspective of the kingdom of God, nothing is insignificant. So how are you using your time? Most of us would say we want to live a fulfilled life wouldn’t we? So how are you serving others?

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4 v 10.

Fulfilment comes from discovering our own uniqueness in Christ and then using our gifts, talents and abilities to build others up and bring glory to God. The challenge is that we can do this in the very places that we are ...right now! Nothing about our circumstances needs to change for us to be fulfilled. I can use whatever gifts, talents, and abilities I have to serve others and administer God’s grace wherever I am – at home, at school or work and I can do it now, with life as it is!

The myth is that to be fulfilled life must turn out the way I want it to, or the way I had planned for it to. But truth is, fulfilment is found just as much in second choice worlds. Here’s a truth: ‘You are uniquely placed and uniquely equipped by God in the place you find yourself!’

You occupy a unique role wherever you go. To be fulfilled is to live our true colours where we are through being the person he has made us.

Wasn't it Mick Jagger who sang: 'I can't get no satisfaction?' I wonder how he's doing now? How are you doing? Satisfaction comes from right living and through meaningful relationships. Jesus said "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Mathew 5 v 6) Do you believe that? So how are you living – do you hunger and thirst for righteousness – or doesn't it matter to you? One of the things that really struck me about God through reading "The Shack" was just how relational he is, and how the quality of the relationship is so important to him. We are made in the image of God – we are relational and satisfaction comes from the quality of our relationship with God and with others. This quality relationship is God's greatest dream.

J.D. Rockefeller – one of the richest men in the world – was once asked: "How much money is enough?" to which he replied, "Just a little bit more than you've got." The world's view of happiness is having what we want, but true happiness could be summed up this way: "Happy are those who want what they have." How are you doing?

How much fun do you have? I think this is probably something the world does better than the church – having fun! Sometimes we are so worried about keeping up the appearance we think we should be giving – we stifle all the fun! 'Spontaneity is the spice of life!' We shouldn't be afraid of spontaneous fun! Did you know that Jesus told really funny jokes?! David danced with uninhabited joy before the Ark of the Covenant and upset his wife, Michael and David said – "Too bad dear – I'm doing it anyway – I'm dancing before the Lord and I'll dance whether you like it or not!" God's desire is that we enjoy life – so go on enjoy it!

Jim Elliot, killed by Auca Indians in Eastern Ecuador, while a missionary to them said: "He is no fool to give up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose."

Friend, in what do you put your security? Paul wrote: "But whatever was my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider

everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ.” Security is only found in one place – the eternal life of Christ, and we are “in” Christ. No-one can snatch us from his hand and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Where is your security?

“Peace on earth – goodwill towards men” – that’s what everyone wants isn’t it? Will we ever see peace on earth? I doubt it – no political solution will work, people will go on hating others. The peace of God is a different kind of peace. “My peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives, do not let your heart’s be troubled and do not be afraid.” Peace with God is something we already have through Christ and the peace of God – that passes all understanding and is of far more worth than human reasoning – is something we can take hold of daily. Many things that are external to us we cannot control – circumstances, other people.... but we can control our inner world of thoughts and emotions by allowing the peace of God to dwell in us daily. He is our peace.

So, how are you becoming more like Jesus? Staying on the right path is about living your true colours – what you are in Christ.

*I am part of the “Fellowship of the unashamed”. I have Holy Spirit Power. The die has been cast. I’ve stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low-living, sight-walking, small-planning, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, miserly giving and dwarfed goals!*

*I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don’t have to be right, first, top, recognised, praised, regarded or rewarded. I now live by presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer and labour by power.*

*My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, loured away, turned back, diluted or delayed. I*

*will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.*

*I won't give up, shut up, let up or burn up till I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up and stayed up for the cause of Christ.*

*I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know and work till He stops.*

*And when He comes to get His own, He'll have no problems recognising me. My colours will be clear.<sup>1</sup>*

1. Page 250 of the Freedom in Christ Leader's guide.

Preached in Crawley Baptist Church on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2009 by Rev. Ian Phillips.