

## Success Redefined

Back in the spring of 2007, I was finishing up my undergraduate studies at Illinois Wesleyan University. During our final campus ministry meeting of the year, each senior received several gifts to honor his or her time serving in the ministry. One of the gifts we received was a candle with a personalized Bible verse. The verse I received was Proverbs 16:3 in the New Living Translation. It read:

*"Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed."*

As someone who was about to step out into the real world for the first time, the words were comforting to me. After all, I had big plans!

Fast-forward 11 years later, and I can tell you that I have definitely not succeeded in all of my plans. So what happened? Maybe I didn't pray hard enough? Or maybe God didn't show up?

Or maybe I just had the wrong idea of what this verse really means. In our 21<sup>st</sup> century American worldview, success is determined by money, power, and social status. However, success in the kingdom of God is an entirely different reality. Think about the types of people that Jesus said are blessed: the poor in spirit, the meek, those who are persecuted... (Matthew 5:3-12). These aren't exactly the type of people that we would label as successful in our society. **Success in the kingdom of**

## **God is based upon one thing - becoming like Christ.**

If we are truly honest with ourselves, I believe that all of us can recall times when we poured our time and resources into selfish ambitions with the goal of fleeting worldly success. Author Francis Chan writes, "Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter." Oftentimes, it is through the fires of failure that God refines us. This is a pattern that has been evident throughout our readings this year. God meets people at their point of failure and uses it as an opportunity to teach and redirect them.

Looking back at the past decade of my life, I have found this to be true for me as well. While my life may not look anything like the way I had planned it, I can see how God was working to grow me in his character through both my successes and failures. Now when I look at that candle, I see a completely different message. It isn't a promise for personal success, but it is something much more valuable: It is a reminder that when we truly commit our ways to the Lord, he will be faithful in growing us into men and women who imitate Christ.

***~ Matt Kooi***

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### **May 27th Readings**

PROVERBS 1:1-4:27

### **May 28th Readings**

PROVERBS 5:1-7:27

### **May 29th Readings**

PROVERBS 8:1-10:32

### **May 30th Readings**

PROVERBS 11:1-13:25

### **May 31st Readings**

PROVERBS 14:1-16:33

### **June 1st Readings**

PROVERBS 17:1-19:29

**June 2nd Readings**  
**PROVERBS 20:1-22:16**