



DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

by Mike Tremba, Exchange Ministries Group Leader

How do we measure success? During a recent night of Q and A at Exchange, a group of men and women gathered to ask questions and share answers about their struggle with same sex attraction. Each comes from a different background and set of experiences: some come for support when a family member decides to live a gay lifestyle, others seek help for long-term addictions to pornography or sexual behaviors, while still others search for healing from emotionally dependent relationships. In the midst of these varied and complex needs, each person yearns for healing—a point in their lives when they can look back and see how far they've come and what victory they've attained.

The dictionary defines success as a favorable outcome after a series of attempts. We establish a goal and work diligently to reach it. That sounds great when we're dealing with the finite world around us. No one doubts success when we finally get the job we've interviewed for three times, or when we navigate through a pile of receipts and our checkbook balances. But when dealing with the fragility of emotions and the vulnerability of our sexuality, the worldly definition of success seems inadequate.

At a time when the when the world scoffs at anything less than 100%, we can remember that success comes one temptation at a time. James 1:12 reminds us that the man who endures temptation is blessed. And when he has resisted the temptation, he receives the crown of life. It may mean refusing to look at that suggestive billboard, or offering forgiveness when we want to speak in anger. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4: 7) Each time we fight makes the next temptation a little easier

to resist. These may seem like small battles in a big war, but they are not small to our Lord. Through them He gives us strength in our journey. Victory belongs to Jesus and when we stand with Him, Paul reminds us that we are "more than conquerors" (Romans 8: 37).

Success also means staying true to the Lord. Many popular theologians promote dialogues both within the church and without, citing the importance of having "congruence" between your sexual identity and your beliefs. This sounds nice, but it keeps people trapped in an effort to make sense of their own lives on their own terms, not God's. How much better we would do to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11: 29). God doesn't weigh us down with burdensome laws that deprive us of life; instead when we choose to obey His commands He frees us to walk with Him, without secrets, labels, or shame. The result of that obedience takes the form of diminished attractions—the God-given ability to say no to those things that would draw us away from Him.

Someone recently asked if, by choosing not to act on homosexual temptations, we are living "authentically." As Christians, we are new creations in Christ. We are not bound or defined by the sins of the past. With repentance comes the assurance of forgiveness. We may remember the past with regret, and may even face temptations which would lead us down that path again, but in those moments we can draw a little closer to the Lord and remember that He set us free. Remember the words of Jude, which say that Jesus "is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy" (Jude 1:24). Walking with Jesus day by day is the truest sense of living authentically.

Success in the Christian walk is a journey. We are human, we stumble, we fall, and with the Lord's help, we press on. Even Paul, whose words form much of the canon of the New Testament struggled with sin, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—

this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7: 19, 24-25). Becoming a Christian does not exempt us from sin. But sin no longer has mastery over us. We ask the Lord's forgiveness and trust His guidance—even through the tough stuff. His grace is sufficient.

We find success when we...

...realize that what God thinks of me is more important than what anyone else thinks.

...stop making excuses for sinful behaviors.

...remember that God loves us just as much on our worst days as on our best.

...offer a kind word instead of a harsh one.

...turn to a favorite Scripture verse in moments of temptation.

...refuse to flirt with something or someone that might cause us to stumble.

...trust in Christ's strength and not our weakness.

...take risks to live by faith and not by fear.

...replace something that drives us from God with something that draws us to Him.

...refuse to give up.

These are all measures of success. They represent choices in our Christian walk, where we turn the focus from ourselves to Jesus. By doing so, we remember that He gives us something greater than success. Jesus gives us victory.

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SUMMER CONFERENCE

Hope For Wholeness is hosting its national summer conference June 5-8. If you are interesting in going, carpooling with others, or would like to request financial help, please contact us so we may help you plan. (Those who attend Exchange Ministries regularly will be considered first to receive financial assistance, which is limited.) We are open to donations that would be used to help individuals attend the conference. Please register on your own through the HFW website. HFW may also provide additional discounts and scholarships.

YOUR CALLING

Christ calls all who have struggled with same-sex attraction and who are living in obedience to Him to tell others so that people may be drawn to Christ's saving truth and grace. We are called not to be friends of the world (James 4:4) but to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). This is love. Loving people enough to tell them the whole truth of the Gospel is what God requires of believers, and what will ultimately lead people to salvation and to a life lived in union with Christ.



SUPPORT NEW FILM SING OVER ME

A new Christian film about what God has done in Dennis Jernigan's life has been made, and the Christian producers are asking for help in funding its release and getting the word out. This movie comes at a time when the world and our churches need to hear Christ's message of truth and grace more than ever. Please see the website and trailer at SingOverMeMovie.com.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING & PRAYING

We sincerely thank all those who give financially to Exchange Ministries and to those who pray for us. As Director, it is amazing and faith-building to see God provide exactly what the ministry needs on a monthly and yearly basis. Be encouraged in your own lives, as you trust Him to provide. He is faithful!

CONTACT INFORMATION AND HOW TO GIVE

Director: Kristin J. Tremba

Mailing Address: Exchange Ministries, 3000 S. John Young Parkway, Orlando, FL 32805

Ways to Give: By mail (see above address), by website (Paypal)

Website: ExchangeMinistries.org

Phone: (office) 407-514-4356 (work cell) 407-637-1203 and (email) KristinTremba@gmail.com