

How we live our life is a clear image to the world around us as to who we really are deep inside our hearts, and this in spite of whatever we might profess to believe. So, let' ask ourselves this question: "Who am I truly in relation to who I profess to be?"

Paul in 2Cor 13:5 tells us: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you, unless, of course, you fail the test?"

In other words, is our profession of faith in Christ simply derived from what we might have confessed in the past, without any true change of heart ever as a result?

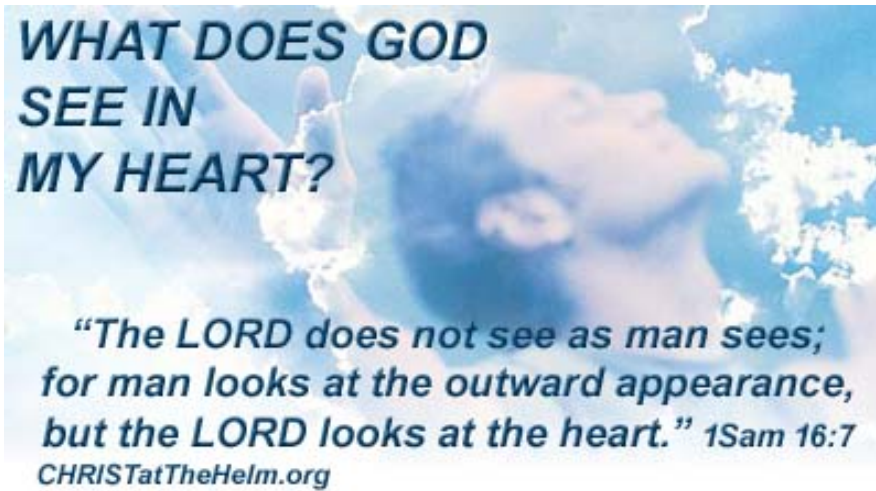
That's why the Prophet in Jer 17:9 warned us, "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

James 1:23-24 describes hypocrites like this: "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."

2Cor 5:17 affirms, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new?"

In line with this affirmation, can we say that our thoughts, actions and hearts line up with who we say we are in Christ?

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The Word of God tells us that while people might look at the outward appearance, God is only interested in the real person, who we really are deep inside.

Indeed, God sees our hearts, even the most hidden thoughts we entertain down deeply. The result, as Jesus said in Mat 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Eph 2:10 tells us that "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Then, why would we not strive to live according to what we believe in, if indeed we truly do?

Have we ever witnessed a person's real character exposed as a result of an event that revealed something we didn't know about that person? Well, that's exactly what God sees all the time, who we really are deep inside.

Ps 139:23-24 enjoins us to ask God, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if *there is any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Could we possibly identify with those Jesus spoke to in Mat 23:28? "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

In all truth, what do we believe God sees in our hearts right now?

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We all know that appearance is very important to the world today. How we dress for success, how we greet people, what we achieve at work, in sports, and for some it is about how they look, how sculpted their bodies are, what type of car they drive, and how popular they have become.

In essence, it relates to whatever shows off to the world around us.

Now, when it comes to God, does any of this mean anything in your understanding? Is God, in other words, impressed with whatever we achieve on this earth?

The simple answer is a strong "yes", surprised?

However, what does achievement mean to God?

Mat 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Acts 13:47: "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth."

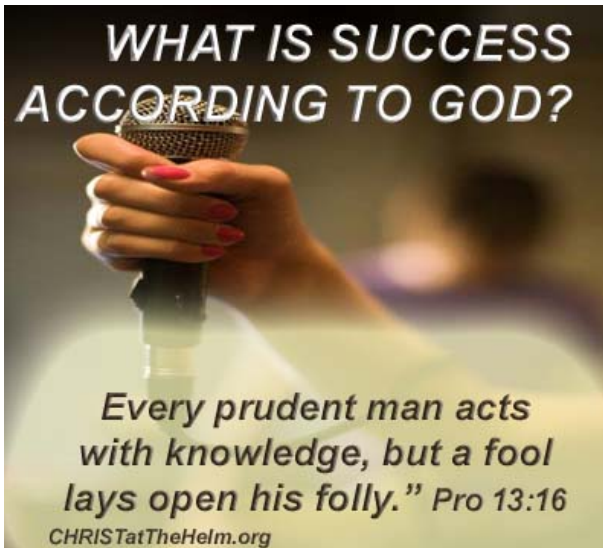
Col 3:2: "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

Pro 16:3: "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established."

In life we have two choices: We can either reach for human success, which dies with us, or we can strive for excellence, God's excellence that is, which follows us throughout eternity.

What's our definition of success and where does our heart point to right now?

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How could we define success in the eyes of the world, as opposed to God's definition of success, which rather draws people to excellence? Success is fueled by status, while excellence directs us to do our best. Success relates to how we fare compared to others, while excellence is in relation to our potential.

Success focuses its attention on the external, while excellence focus on the internal, our spiritual attitude on life.

Success drives people towards the pot of gold, while excellence focuses on doing our best through our God-given abilities.

Success draws people to compromise while excellence cultivates the principle of integrity.

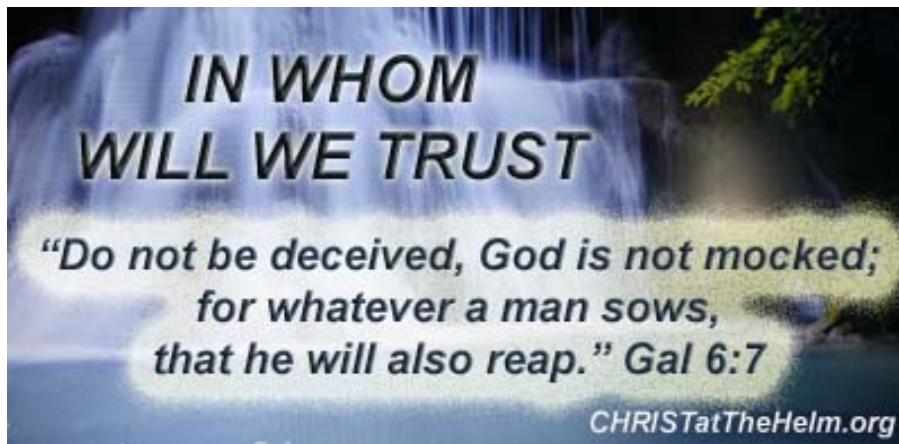
Success might involve shortcuts, lies and prompt some to use people as a means to their end, while excellence ensures we treat them as valuable as ourselves.

Success is the dream of multitudes while excellence is adopted by few.

Success, while providing materialistic rewards, will disappear as the seasons of life overcome us. Excellence, on the other hand, will follow us throughout this life and into eternity.

The big question is, what do we desire to accomplish in this life, success or excellence? As Mat 16:26 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"

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We are all faced with making choices in life. While some people have achieved great success as the world sees it, many have unfortunately admitted to have completely missed out on what's really important in life.

If we're going to strive for excellence as opposed to worldly success, what is the core principle we should hold on to and pursue to achieve true peace and joy in life?

God, our Creator, has given us the principles to live by in His Word, the core fundamentals to pursue.

Pro 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

The Bible is our "How To" book given by God to teach us those principles. Having the right priorities, as defined by God, is to first establish and surrender to God as the supreme leader of our lives. Then, it is family, the ones we committed to love and cherish. Follows our career, the responsibility men were given by God to provide for our families. Anything else comes after.

In analyzing our life so far, how do our priorities stand as compared to what God designed for us to adopt and pursue?

Will we heed the warning in James 1:22, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves?"

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