



WHAT ABOUT...? • COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY • WEEK 9

## What About Success?

A guided conversation from the June 7, 2026 sermon by guest Pastor Jeff Sullivan (Granada Church) • Ephesians 2:8-10

### SUMMARY

How do you define success? Most of us never actually stop to answer that — and Pastor Jeff Sullivan, preaching this Sunday at Christchurch Miami from Ephesians 2:8-10, says that's exactly the problem. When you never define success for yourself, the algorithm and the neighbors define it for you, and you spend your life chasing things you never actually chose.

Jeff walked through how the world's smartest people have defined success — Dale Carnegie, Tony Robbins, Maya Angelou, Booker T. Washington — and then showed why even the biggest win runs empty. A.J. Brown finally won the Super Bowl and admitted the satisfaction lasted 'two days, to be exact.' Solomon, the wisest and wealthiest man who ever lived, did whatever his eyes desired and called all of it 'vanity, a striving after wind.'

Why? Because we are souls first. There is a desire for God built into us that no amount of achievement can satisfy — feeding the flesh will never satisfy the spirit. Jesus put the math plainly: what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36). The story of the Bible is the story of coming home — God sending His Son to restore the relationship we were made for.

So success gets redefined around two anchors. First, you cannot be truly successful outside of Christ: 'by grace you have been saved through faith... it is the gift of God' — you're adopted as a child, not hired as an employee. Second, 'we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand.' Like shopping for a car, the question isn't whether you're 'good' in the abstract — it's what you were built to do. You were made on purpose, for a purpose. The challenge: stop borrowing someone else's scoreboard and write your own.

### PRAYER

## OPENING PRAYER

*Father, before we talk about success, quiet the scoreboards we've been carrying — the ones the world handed us. Remind us who we are: Your children by grace, Your workmanship made on purpose. Make this conversation honest. Show each of us what You built and redeemed us to do, and give us the courage to chase that instead of the wind. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Before tonight, had you ever actually written down a definition of success for your own life? If you had to say it in one sentence right now, off the top of your head, what would it be?

**SCRIPTURE KEY SCRIPTURES****EPHESIANS 2:8-10 • ESV**

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

**MARK 8:36-37 • ESV**

*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?*

**PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14 • ESV**

*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

**DISCUSS DISCUSSION****01 BORROWED SCOREBOARDS.**

Pastor Jeff opened with definitions of success from Dale Carnegie, Tony Robbins, Maya Angelou, and others. Whose definition of success have you been unconsciously living by — a parent's, a culture's, the algorithm's? Where did it come from?

**02 THE TWO-DAY TROPHY.**

A.J. Brown won the Super Bowl and the satisfaction lasted exactly two days. Solomon had everything and called it 'a striving after wind.' Have you experienced that emptiness on the other side of a goal you finally reached? What was that like?

**03 THE MATH OF MARK 8:36.**

Jesus asks what it profits to gain the world but forfeit your soul. Why do you think we're so willing to make trades we'd never make if we did the math out loud? What are you tempted to trade your soul's peace for right now?

**04 BODY AND SOUL.**

The sermon argued we are souls first, and that feeding the flesh can never satisfy the spirit — like filling a tub with the drain open. Where in your life have you been adding 'more water' instead of dealing with the drain?

**05 ADOPTED, NOT EARNED.**

Ephesians 2:8 says salvation is a gift, not your own doing — Paul's picture is a fully dependent child being adopted. Why is it so hard for us to receive something we can't earn? Where are you still living like an employee on probation instead of an adopted child?

## 06 GOOD FOR WHAT?

Pastor Jeff compared us to vehicles — a car isn't 'good' in the abstract, it's good for the purpose it was built for. Ephesians 2:10 says you're His workmanship, created for good works prepared beforehand. What do you sense you were specifically built to do?

## 07 NOTHING WASTED.

He said God assembled your gifts, experiences, education — even your mistakes and past — into your purpose. Can you point to a past failure or an unlikely experience that God seems to be folding into how He uses you now?

## 08 WRITE THE SENTENCE.

The challenge was to write your own definition of success, anchored in two things: (1) you can't be successful outside of Christ, and (2) He redeemed you for something specific. Share your draft sentence with the group — and pick one person to check in with you on it this month.

### APPLY LIFE APPLICATION

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Pastor Jeff's challenge was simple and personal: stop borrowing someone else's scoreboard and write your own. Three honest moves to make this week:

- 1 Write your definition.** Actually do it: finish the sentence, 'Success, for me, is \_\_\_.' Don't borrow Carnegie's, Robbins', or your father's. Anchor it in Christ and in what He's redeemed you to do — and write it on paper where you'll see it.
- 2 Audit one trade.** Name one place you've been quietly trading your soul's peace for approval, status, or comfort (Mark 8:36). Decide one concrete way to stop the trade this week.
- 3 Name your good work.** Ephesians 2:10 says you were built for specific good works. Name one gift, experience, or even past failure God may be folding into your purpose — and take one real step to walk in it.

Don't overthink it. You can't be successful outside of Christ, and He's redeemed you for something specific. Start there, write the sentence, and press on toward it.

### REMEMBER KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- ▶ Most of us never define success — so the culture, the algorithm, and the Joneses define it for us.
- ▶ Success-as-acquisition runs empty: Solomon called it 'a striving after wind'; A.J. Brown's Super Bowl satisfied for two days.
- ▶ You are a soul first. Feeding the flesh can never satisfy the spirit (Mark 8:36).
- ▶ Salvation is a gift, not an achievement — you were adopted as a child, not hired as an employee (Ephesians 2:8).
- ▶ You are God's workmanship, created for good works He prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10) — built on purpose, for a purpose.
- ▶ Real success starts in Christ and runs toward what He redeemed you to do (Philippians 3:14).

*Stop borrowing someone else's scoreboard. Write your own — in Christ.*

*Father, we've spent so much energy chasing definitions of success that leave us empty after two days. Thank You that our worth was never something to earn – You adopted us as Your children by grace. Thank You that we are Your workmanship, built on purpose, for good works You prepared before we existed. This week, free us from borrowed scoreboards. Anchor our identity in Christ, show each of us what You've redeemed us to do, and give us the focus to press on toward it for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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