

The Measure of Success

“Seizing the Moment”

Week 3 – May 21, 2023

Scripture: Esther 4:1-17

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Do you have a favorite underdog story? Share it and explain why it's a favorite story.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

How we define and measure success will impact how we experience God and His plans for our lives. During this series we've discussed that success isn't found in moving up, moving forward, or waiting for us when we enter the next season of life. Today, we lean into the success found in opportunity, calling, and courage. One of God's promises to us is that He has plans for our lives. Plans that are connected to His greater purposes for humanity. Those plans seldom present the way we expect, look the way we hope, or appear when it's convenient. When we respond to the opportunities God places in front of us, we will find ourselves stepping into some of the very plans God has laid out for our lives.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Esther was a woman who responded to her own giant and in doing so found a different measure of success that didn't just benefit herself but saved a nation. Her story is an account of an underdog who became more than simply a victim of circumstances, instead believing that it was the overwhelming circumstances that they were born for. Can you think of a time in your life when you had the choice to stand up or become a victim? What did you do?
2. Read **Esther 4:1-17**. Even if you are unfamiliar with how Esther and Mordecai got to this place or how their story ends, what matters is that two people got serious about their faith and faced the odds stacked against them, no matter the outcome. They choose to see the opportunity presented to them as God's plans laid out for their lives.
 - a. Besides courage, what is required to be brave and step out into a vulnerable situation?
 - b. Do you find it difficult to act on something when you cannot see the big picture? Why?
3. Success is measured by your “such a time as this” moments (**Esther 4:14**). Sometimes these moments are big, sometimes they are small.
 - a. If we say no to these moments, do you think we could pass by things God prepared for us in advance?
 - b. Have you ever heard the phrase “do for one what you wish you could do for all”? What could this mean specifically to you?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God he keeps things in front of our faces, our hearts, and in our thoughts. Ask him for your “such a time as this” moment – perhaps there is a personal change he's asking you to make, there's a need he's asking you to meet, or an opportunity he's placed in front of you.

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“Living In the Moment”

Week 2 – May 14, 2023

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever been in a situation you couldn't wait to change? Share the situation.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

How we define and measure success will impact how we experience God and His plans for our lives. Last week we discussed that success isn't found moving up. But truthfully, up is not only the direction we tend to reach towards when looking for success and satisfaction; we also tend to reach for success by moving forward. We desire to enter the next season of life and miss enjoying the season of life we are currently in. We tend to chase the joy of the future rather than the joy that is in front of us. There is not a promise that tomorrow or the joy of the future will come, so maybe success is enjoying the season we are currently in. King Solomon's warning throughout the book of Ecclesiastes is to be careful not to look for success and satisfaction by living to just get higher and get further.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Read **Ecclesiastes 3**. King Solomon is writing about time as God designed it. We have little of it, and it is very precious. Sometimes we are not in control of it, but it is in control of us. What else can stand out in this passage?
2. Think about what it could look like to refocus yourself to the present season you are in. Discuss the seasons we tend to want to get to faster....when we get married, when we make more money, when the kids get older, when we finish school, etc.
3. Think about what is beautiful in your life right now. Discuss how we can turn “then” into “now” and how we can enjoy the people in our lives right now.
4. Think about what happens when you lose track of time. Discuss what it could look like to go for a period of time without a phone, an agenda, or a watch.
5. Is there any place in your life where you are moving away from something or someone that you need to be moving towards? Share what comes to mind.
6. What would you do today if you didn't have tomorrow to do it?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that we wake up to the reality that success and satisfaction is not found in getting higher or found in a future season. Thank God that we have the hope of eternity while we enjoy what we have, who we have, and what we do in every season of life.

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“Looking Beyond the Moment”

Week 1 – May 7, 2023

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 1 & 2

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: How would you complete this question? “If I had more _____, I would be happy.”

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

How we define and measure success will impact how we experience God and His plans for our lives. For three weeks we will reframe success through the lenses of eternal impact, the power of the moment, and embracing the opportunities God puts in front of us. Without a proper definition of success, we run the risk of living a life that succeeds at things that don't matter.

Ecclesiastes records the life and accomplishments of one of the kings of Israel named Solomon. King Solomon was the son of King David and was set up to be the next king. When Solomon considers taking on the role of King, he humbly asks God for one thing....wisdom. He could have asked God for anything, but he asks for wisdom. He went on to be the wisest, richest, king that ever led Israel. He built the first temple in Jerusalem; He wrote the book of Proverbs, the song of Solomon, and the book of Ecclesiastes. In

Ecclesiastes 1:2 King Solomon says, “everything is meaningless”. How does the richest, smartest, most accomplished guy of all time conclude this?

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. In his book “Crazy Love”, Francis Chan said, “If we only live for what is “under the sun” then we will never feel a truly satisfying level of success in life.” So what is success? When we talk about it, we often talk about “climbing the ladder of success”. What are some of the ways we measure success?
2. We all desire success. We do not live the majority of our decisions, actions, and relationships for false successes that do not matter. Consider what your ladder of success looks like. Read and discuss the common ladders we tend to look to for success in our lives.
 - a. The ladder of money – **Ecclesiastes 5:10-15**
 - b. The ladder of achievement – **Ecclesiastes 2:4-7, 11**
 - c. The ladder of pleasure and fame – **Ecclesiastes 2:1-3, 9, 10**
3. As you read through Ecclesiastes it becomes clear that Solomon is testing the ladders to see if there's one that will satisfy if he can get high enough on it, and what he concluded is that life is full of ladders that don't matter. When we live in such a way as to strive for the success of the temporal, and to the primary benefit of ourselves, a frustrated life is the result.
 - a. If the ladder of success is an illusion, what results from climbing it? (i.e. stress, anger, etc)
 - b. What changes when the definition of success shifts from the “here and now” to “eternity”?
 - c. How can we trust God that he will make everything beautiful in its time (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**)?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that with him we can be successful in the things that do matter, and because of his forgiveness and grace we are able to discover success in both the now and in eternity. Ask God these questions: What am I doing this for? Who am I doing this for? What do I do with my frustrations? Praise God that in him we find contentment.