

the way, is what the Bible calls repentance). Use the following suggested prayer or paraphrase it in your own words:

Lord Jesus,

*I realize that I have been living the life of a cultural Christian. I have been seeking a success that doesn't really matter. As a result, I contracted "success sickness." I have been seeking the God(s) I wanted and not the God who is. I have sinned against You, and I am sorry. I ask You to once again forgive me by Your amazing grace and bring me back into a right relationship with You. Jesus, I belong to You. I want to live the rest of my life for You. I want my life to count, to make a difference. Yet, I want my life to count for You, not for me. Help me to love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I know **Whose** I am, and I know **Who** is the purpose of my life. Pledging to remain aware of these things, I ask You now to reveal to me what Your purpose for my life is. I dedicate myself to growing in my faith and love for You. Help me find success that matters.*

Suggestion: Why not re-read this article periodically, say once a year. Perhaps you could put it into a suspense file.

¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensees*, tr. by W. F. Trotter, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), 113.

² Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 29.

³ Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling*, (New York: Free Press, 1996), 6.

⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Westchester, Ill: Crossway, 1976), 205.

⁵ Patrick Morley, *The Man in the Mirror*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 33.

Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley helps men to think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to be equipped for a larger impact on the world.

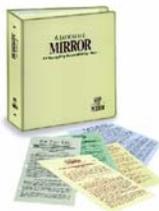
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Number 23

Finding Success That Matters

By Patrick Morley

Recently a wife told me she was having difficulty figuring out how to offer support to her husband. He loves his work. Occasionally, for stretches of months at a time, he will work 12 hour days. Then suddenly his mood will swing, and he will mope around for months. "What is it that you want?" she asks him. He cannot articulate an answer.

To me she said, "I can chart these cycles on paper. They're completely predictable. I just don't know what to do for him any more. He is extremely successful. He has the job he always wanted. We have a beautiful home and two lovely children. What's his problem?"

How can a man get exactly what he wants and not be happy?

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT HOW MEN ARE DOING

Many men today are hurting. Their careers aren't turning out the way they planned or, what's sometimes worse, they are. Their marriages are not working the way they're supposed to, many times their kids don't seem appreciative, and they're up to their receding hairlines in financial problems.

If we were limited to making one observation about men, it would be that men are tired - mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually tired. When I make this observation at our men's seminars it evokes as much response as anything else I say. Many heads nod agreement while others droop to their chests.

Not only are men tired, they often have a lingering feeling something isn't quite right about their lives. Many times men's lives are not turning out the way they planned. A lot of the time their lives are coming unglued. Often it just doesn't seem to them like anyone really cares.

For many men, managing their lives has become like trying to tie two pieces of string together that are not quite long enough. They are long enough to touch, long enough to manipulate, and long enough to create hope that they can be tied together, but they simply are not long enough to tie the knot. Close, but not close enough.

The result? A pervasive lack of contentment stalks them. As Thoreau said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." They often find

themselves frustrated, discouraged, disillusioned, confused, afraid of the future, lonely, and riddled with guilt over poor decisions. They are restless. They are wondering, "Is this all there is? There must be more to life-there's gotta' be."

WHAT IS IT THAT MEN WANT?

Blaise Pascal wrote,

*All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. . . . This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.*¹

Every man seeks the same ultimate thing. He wants to experience joy in his life. He may call it by many names: happiness, success, contentment, fulfillment, pleasure, delight, significance, purpose, and meaning. These ideas weave together into a single cloth.

The question is, "How does this pleasure, this fulfillment, this joy come to a man?" A man's life consists of his *relationships* and his *tasks*. Of utmost importance to men are their relationships with God, their wives, and their children.

A MAN'S GREATEST NEED

After his relationship with God and his family, a man's most innate need is his need to be significant.

In the breast of every man burns an intense desire to lead a more significant life to find meaning and purpose. Men express it different ways: "I want my life to count, to make a difference, to have an impact, to be filled with meaning, to do something important, to live a life of significance."

A man's most innate need is his need to be significant.

He doesn't want to become just another notch on the belt of history. He doesn't want to be a shooting star that burns out half way through the sky.

This compelling desire animates not just top managers but all men. Michael Novak, in *Business as a Calling*, says,

*Being a middle manager is not primarily a way station on the way to the top ... Middle management, many know early, is their calling. They want to be super good at it. They want to make a contribution. Most of all, they need to know in their own minds that they have done so.*²

"Success Sickness"

In March, 1990, Republican Party Chairman Lee Atwater was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Before his death Atwater - who began

Thousands of men are realizing they have been living by their own best thinking and not by obedience to God's Word. They have not been pursuing a success that really matters. These men are making a significant commitment to live the rest of their lives for the will of God, become Biblical Christians, and make Jesus Lord. They have discovered, often the hard way, that, "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere" (Ps. 84:10). To find success that matters what do you need to do?

APPLICATION

1. How are you doing? Read through the following list and put a check mark next to each statement with which you identify.

- I'm tired and frustrated with the rat race.
- I have a lingering feeling something is not right about my life.
- My life isn't turning out the way I had planned.
- I don't feel like anyone really cares about me, personally.
- I'm achieving my goals, but success doesn't satisfy.
- I'm thinking, "There must be more to life - there's gotta' be."
- I'm following the God I have been underlining in my Bible.
- I practice "Spare Tire Christianity."
- I'm a disciple of Wall Street, not Church Street.
- I "plan, then pray."
- I have let the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of money choke the word and make it unfruitful (Matthew 13:22).
- I let the yeast of culture work through the whole batch of dough (Galatians 5:9).
- I am high risk for a great crash because I built on sand and not the rock (Matthew 7:24-27).
- I have been seeking the God I wanted and not the God who is.

2. Do you have a case of "success sickness" - even though you may know Christ? π yes π no

Which of the "success viruses" have you caught?

π The Rat Race π Unexamined Life π Cultural Christianity

3. Review the ten "Success That Matters"TM questions. Do you agree, and why or why not? Check each of the ten areas in which you already experience success. Put an asterisk by those areas which need the most attention and record one action you plan to take. Personalize your own list by adding anything else that represents success that matters to you.

4. Have you been living the life of a cultural Christian? π yes π no

If yes, have you reached a turning point? Are you ready to stop seeking the God you want and start seeking the God who is? If so, tell Him. Tell Him what you want to turn from and what you want to turn to. (This process, by

for a great crash because they built on sand and not the rock (Matt. 7:24-27).

By default men become cultural Christians when they choose not to proactively become biblical Christians.

"Success sickness" is killing us. According to surveys by the Billy Graham organization, 90% of all Christians lead defeated lives. When we run in the rat race, lead an unexamined life, and become Cultural Christians we must fight off three lethal viruses at the same time. No wonder so many of us feel what Soren Kierkegaard called "the sickness unto death." If we are not careful, it can be a terminal illness.

THE TURNING POINT

If "success sickness" is to reach our goals only to discover they don't really matter, how can we find "success that matters"?

First, we must reach a turning point. *The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.*

God is who He is, and no amount of wanting to recreate Him in our imagination to be different is going to have any effect on His unchanging character and nature. Our principle task, then, is to come humbly to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ and there negotiate the terms of a full, total, complete surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

"SUCCESS THAT MATTERS"™

Success that matters means a full-orbed, well-balanced, priority-based, thought-through success.

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No man will sense he has been truly successful unless he can honestly answer "yes" to all of the following ten questions.

1. Am I growing in faith and love for the Lord Jesus every day?
2. Am I actively helping my family grow in their faith in Christ?
3. Am I making a significant contribution in my church?
4. Am I doing everything possible to help my children become responsible adults?
5. Am I building a strong, loving marriage?
6. Am I investing in other people's lives as a friend, counselor, accountability partner, and mentor?
7. Am I a good provider?
8. Am I living a life of integrity and good deeds?
9. Am I performing fulfilling work?
10. Will I go to heaven when I die?

writing apology notes to political enemies - told columnist Cal Thomas, "I have found Jesus Christ. It's that simple. He's made a difference, and I'm glad I've found him while there's still time." The month Atwater, eaten up with cancer, turned forty he said,

The 80s were about acquiring-acquiring wealth, power, prestige. I know. I acquired more wealth, power and prestige than most. But you can acquire all you want and still feel empty. What power wouldn't I trade for a little more time with my family? What price wouldn't I pay for an evening with friends? It took a deadly illness to put me eye to eye with that truth, but it is a truth that the country, caught up in its ruthless ambitions and moral decay, can learn on my dime. I don't know who will lead us through the 90s but they must be made to speak to this spiritual vacuum at the heart of American society, this tumor of the soul.

Our generation has a tumor on its soul we might term "success sickness." It is the disease of the nineties; the malady of always wanting more, and never being satisfied when we get it. We are the nation that weeps over winning only silver medals.

"Success sickness" is the intangible pain of not achieving goals that should have never been set, or achieving them only to find they didn't really matter.

The greatest problem we see is not that men are failing to achieve their goals. They are achieving them. The problem is they are the wrong goals. Many men get what they want only to find it doesn't matter. In fact, we could say failure means to succeed in a way that doesn't really matter.

The unhappy result is that many men today are struggling with problems that success can't solve. What William James called the "bitch goddess of success" does not satisfy them. As Michael Novak points out, "The aftertaste of affluence is boredom."³

Men today are struggling with problems that success can't solve.

Let's discuss three viruses that infect men with this "success sickness."

VIRUS #1. THE RAT RACE

The most highly contagious virus known to the American male is the rat race. Picture this. Men, lots of men, zooming down the fast lanes of the rat race. Some are oblivious to what they're doing. Some are starting to wonder about it. Others are weary. Still others have "hit the wall".

What is the rat race? The rat race is the endless pursuit of an ever increasing prosperity that ends in frustration rather than contentment. Francis Schaeffer said that most people have adopted two impoverished values: *personal peace-*

not wanting to be bothered with the troubles of others, and *affluence*- a life made up of things, things, and more things. ⁴

As a result, many men have been knocked off balance. Painful questions knife through their thoughts. "What's it all about? How can I be so successful and so unfulfilled at the same time? Is this all there is?" The rat race charges an expensive toll. It takes everything you have to give.

So, how do men get caught up in the rat race? Galatians 5:7 asks the question this way: "You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?" Paul teaches that "a little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough" (Gal. 5:9).

VIRUS #2. THE UNEXAMINED LIFE

Perhaps the greatest weakness men face at the turn of the 21st century is that they tend to lead unexamined lives. *To lead an unexamined life means to rush from task to busy task, but not call enough time-outs to reflect on life's larger meaning and purpose.*

The price of pace is peace. As a man who worked 70 hour weeks for several years recently told me, "It's been a long, intense run. My life is devoid of any quiet places."

The price of
pace is peace.

Most men have not carefully chiseled their world view by a personal search for truth and obedience to God and His Word. Rather, they are drifting. They are not thinking deeply about their lives. Buffeted by the whipping winds of daily pressure, tossed about like a bobbing cork by surging waves of change, they long for the sure-footed sands of simpler days, but with scarcely a clue about how to reach such a distant shore.

Lamentations 3:40 exhorts, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD." Only on the anvil of self-examination can God shape a man into the image of His son.

VIRUS #3. CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY

When I hit the ten year mark in my spiritual journey I realized something was desperately wrong with my life, but I couldn't put my finger on any one problem. I was an active Christian, reading my Bible and praying regularly, immersed in church, a vocal witness, and pursuing a moral lifestyle.

Curiously, I was sitting at the top of my career. Materially, I was taken care of wonderfully. Yet, when I imagined another man thinking that I was blessed, I would want to grab him by the arms, shake him, and scream, "You don't understand! This isn't a blessing, it's a curse!"

Finally the intangible pain became so strong that I called a "time out" for

reflection and self-examination. I spent the next two and a half years staring at my navel. At first all I could grasp were the thoughts described at the beginning of this article:

- I was tired and had a lingering feeling something wasn't quite right about my life.
- My life wasn't turning out the way I had planned.
- I didn't feel like anyone really cared about me, personally.
- I was achieving my goals, but success didn't satisfy.

A couple of years later during a major business crisis a thought went through my mind as I was sitting in the rubble of my collapsing empire,

There is a God we want and there is a God who is. They are not the same God. The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.

The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.

I realized I had become what we might call a *cultural* Christian. In *The Man in the Mirror* I defined the term this way.

Cultural Christianity means to seek the God we want instead of the God who is. It is the tendency to be shallow in our understanding of God, wanting Him to be more of a gentle grandfather type who spoils us and lets us have our own way. It is sensing a need for God, but on our own terms. It is wanting the God we have underlined in our Bibles without wanting the rest of Him, too. It is God relative instead of God absolute.⁵

ARE YOU A CULTURAL CHRISTIAN?

When is a man a cultural Christian? Men become cultural Christians when they seek the God (or gods) they want, and not the God who is.

Men who are cultural Christians read their Bibles with an agenda, if they read them at all. They decide in advance what they want, and then read their Bibles looking for evidence to support the decisions they have already made. In short, they follow the God they are underlining in their Bibles.

In many ways they have merely added Jesus to their lives as another interest in an already crowded schedule. They practice a kind of "Spare Tire Christianity" they keep Jesus in the trunk just in case they have a flat.

They want to have their cake and eat it, too. They have made a plan for their lives. Their credo is, "Plan, then pray." Their lives are shaped more by following the herds of commerce than the footsteps of Christ.

Biblically, these men have let the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of money choke the word and make it unfruitful (Matt. 13:22), let the yeast of culture work through the whole batch of dough (Gal. 5:9), and are high risk