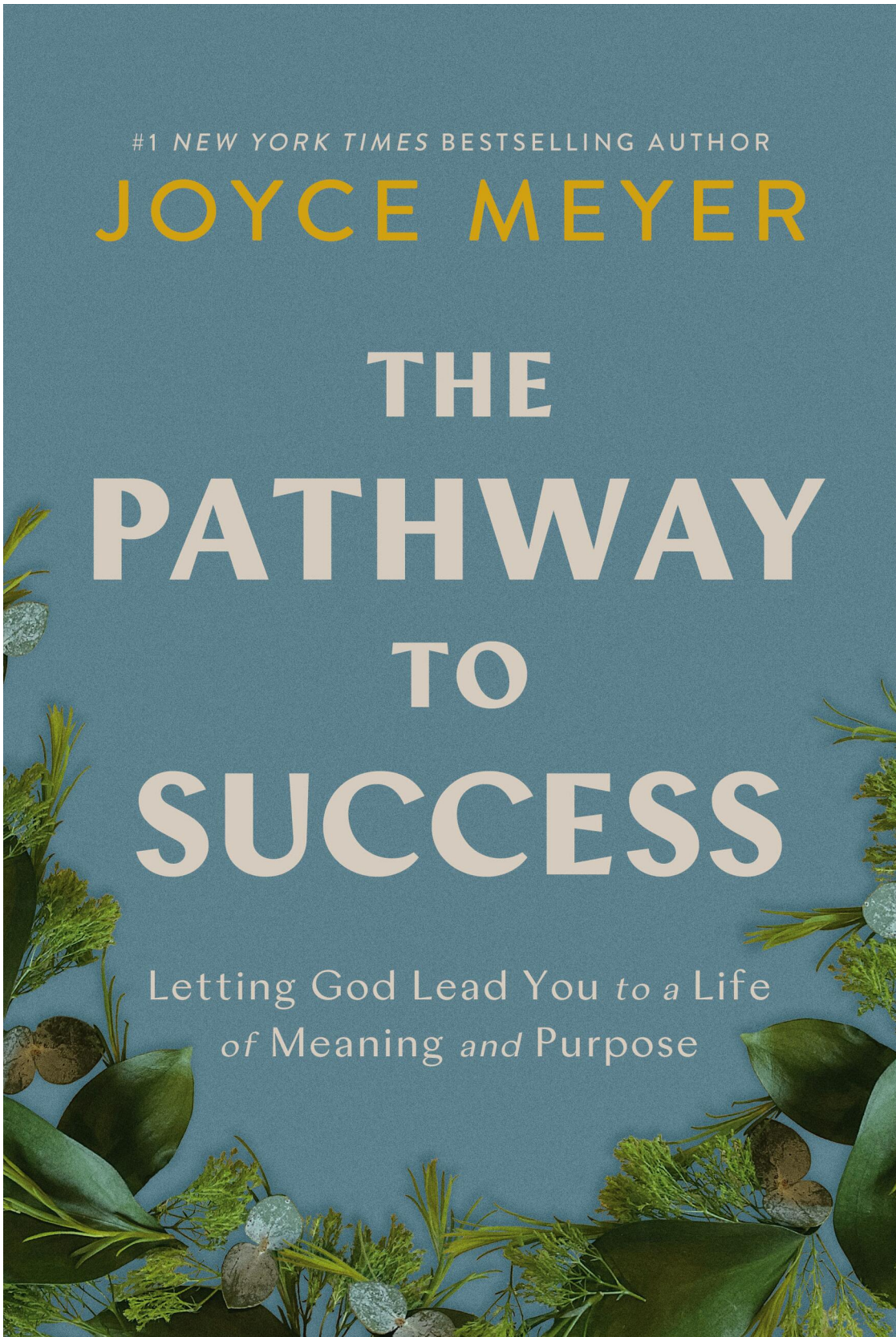


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JOYCE MEYER

THE
PATHWAY
TO
SUCCESS

Letting God Lead You *to a Life
of Meaning and Purpose*





the pathway to success

LETTING GOD LEAD YOU TO A LIFE OF
MEANING AND PURPOSE



J O Y C E M E Y E R



New York • Nashville

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Introduction



Most people want to succeed. God also wants us to succeed. But it is important to understand that what God considers success is not always what the world considers success.

The world considers people successful when they have a lot of money, own their own business, hold executive positions, or achieve fame and recognition. People with well-respected careers, such as doctors and lawyers, are viewed as successful, as are actors, actresses, singers, and celebrity athletes. Highly educated people and those regarded as experts in their field are also thought of as successful. But as Christians, we don't base success on the same criteria the world uses. The Bible teaches that we are *in* the world but not *of* the world, and that we are not to be worldly (John 17:11, 14–15; Romans 12:2).

The backgrounds and behind-the-scenes lives of many people the world considers successful reveal that they are unhappy, unkind, unloving, or self-absorbed. We also hear that they sometimes struggle with substance abuse and relational problems. They may work hard to obtain the positions they have, only to discover that they are unfulfilled and really don't know who they are apart from what they do.

Recently someone told me he had been in a respected profession for twenty-five years. He is now retired and said he felt he had lost his identity. He said, "I used to be at the top of my profession, and now I am nothing." A child of God never has to feel this way because we know we are much more than what we do. We find our value in our relationship with God through Christ. God loves us, and having His love is more important than having anything else. Isn't it good to know that God doesn't love us for what we do, but He loves us because we are His children?

*We find our value in our relationship with
God through Christ.*

In addition to what I have already mentioned, many so-called successful people are lonely. They have put all their time and energy into being at the top of their profession and as a result, they often do not have meaningful relationships.

For many people, their primary pursuit in life is making money. If this is your top priority, you will be sadly disappointed when you discover that money cannot keep you happy. Are you working two jobs to pay for a house you wanted, while ignoring your relationships with God and your family? Are you so busy working to pay for your house that you have no time to enjoy living in it? Many years from now, that house may not be fit for anyone to live in. Or maybe it's a car you are working for; someday it will just be a piece of metal in a junkyard.

The Bible also reveals that everything in this world is currently passing away. In the end, only God will remain, so He should be our top priority above all else.

First John 2:15–17 says:

Do not love the world or anything in the world.
If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is

not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:19, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

Revelation 18:10–11 says that Babylon (which I believe represents the world system) will fall in one hour and that the “merchants of the earth” (representing those who deal in commerce) will mourn. I was not alive during the Great Depression in 1929, but in one day, people who had a great deal of money in the morning had nothing by the end of the day. The stock market crashed, jobs were scarce, and money that people had worked years to save vanished in just a few hours. Having money is fine, but we should never put our hope in it, because it is not stable. However, God is faithful, and He never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

In this book, I hope to help you understand how

to walk the pathway to success in your life. The success we want is what God considers success, not success as the world views it. In God's kingdom, people may be world-famous or wealthy; they may own businesses, be CEOs of major corporations, be movie stars or sports celebrities, or appear successful for other reasons. But their motivation will be to do these things for God's glory, not merely to feel important and make money. They will also desire to share what they have with people in need.

The success we want is what God considers success, not success as the world views it.

God wants you to succeed in everything He calls and equips you to do, and my prayer is that this book will guide you down the pathway to true godly success.

1



What Is in Your Heart?



*Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness
is the key to success. If you love what you are
doing, you will be successful.*

Albert Schweitzer¹

On the pathway to success, the first questions I want to ask you are: What is in your heart? What do you want to do with your life? If you aren't sure, you may have to try some things and see if they fit you. Here's an example to explain what I mean. If I shop for an outfit for a special occasion, I may try on five or six options before I find the one that fits just right and feels comfortable to me. This is a good way to think about how to find your pathway in life. What fits? What is comfortable? What do you like to do? What are you good at?

God gives us desires, and He frequently speaks to us through them. God won't call you to do something you hate, just as I would not buy an outfit that was uncomfortable and didn't look good on me.

God will give you a desire to do something that fits you and that you enjoy. I've discovered that you know you are on the pathway to success if you would do your job without being paid for it.

*You are on the pathway to success if you
would do your job without being paid for it.*

WHAT WAS IN MY HEART

I will share more about my personal pathway to success in the next chapter of this book, but here I simply want to say that I know what it's like to have a dream in your heart and wonder how it will ever come to pass. I know what it's like to have a desire that means everything to me, a desire that only God can fulfill. And thankfully, by God's grace, I know how it feels to pray, work, and believe that He will make a dream come true in His perfect timing. I have walked the journey to success God's way and learned many lessons along the way—lessons I hope and pray will help and encourage you as you continue through this book.

After I began seriously walking with God and felt called to teach His Word, I started a small Bible study in my home. During the years I taught this home Bible study, I was happy, but I wanted to do more. However, I had to go through a testing time before more came. During that season, I tried a lot of different things because I was zealous for God. I gathered a group of ladies, and in one summer, we distributed ten thousand

gospel tracts, putting them under car windshield wipers. I tried working in the church nursery but dreaded it every time I went, so I only did it for two or three weeks. I cleaned my pastor's home a couple of times. I tried doing street witnessing or evangelism on weekends, and I was so uncomfortable I dreaded every Saturday morning. At one point, I even tried to be my pastor's secretary, but at the end of the first day, he told me he didn't think that was where I belonged. I had to try all these things before I finally realized that teaching the Bible is the best fit for me. But I wanted to do a lot more than teach a small Bible study in my home. I was consumed with a passion to teach God's Word all over the world.

Your desire may not be to be on a platform or stage, to head a corporation, own your own business, or be world-famous. It may be to raise amazing children, be the best wife in the world, or to write a cookbook. It could be to own a bakery. It doesn't matter what your dream is, as long as it's what you really want to do and believe with all your heart that God wants you to do it. Success is doing whatever we do

for God and doing it in a way that pleases and brings glory to Him.

Success is doing whatever we do for God in a way that pleases and brings glory to Him.

If everyone were a preacher or a worship leader, the world wouldn't work right. There are thousands of jobs that need to be filled. Dave and I marvel at the people who wash windows on high-rise buildings or work with the public and listen to people complain. I frequently say, "Thank God, I'm not a waitress," but some people love waiting tables and have done it for many years. Dave says, "I thank God you are not a cook." I did cook three meals a day for many years while we were raising our children, but those days are long gone. The last time I tried to fry an egg for Dave, I cracked it, totally missed the skillet, and dropped it into the stove burner. I have definitely moved on to other things!

FOLLOW YOUR HEART, NOT YOUR EMOTIONS

Some people have what others might consider “ordinary” lives that aren’t exciting or fulfilling, but for those people, life is not ordinary in a negative way as long as it fits them and makes them happy. It’s so important that each of us chooses to do what God puts in our heart to do. Don’t let other people push you into doing things that make you miserable, no matter how much they think you should do them.

Psalm 1:1 says we are not to take counsel from the ungodly. Certainly, this means not to take the advice of ungodly people, but it could also mean not allowing ourselves to be led by our emotions or thoughts that don’t agree with God’s Word. If the dreams in my heart require sacrifice, I may not *feel* like doing it, and my mind may find many reasons not to do it. But I need to look past all that and see what God has put in my heart, because ultimately that is the only thing that will satisfy me. In addition, I need to believe I am pleasing God with my decision. Because trying to do something with a guilty heart won’t make you happy. You must

be confident that what you are doing is right in God's eyes; otherwise, there is no point in doing it.

Multitudes of people ask, "What does God want me to do?" or "How can I know what God wants me to do?" First, it should agree with God's Word. It should be something you have a desire to do, will enjoy doing, and believe God has anointed you—or given you the ability—to do. God's anointing is His presence and power. When you do the thing He's given you a desire to do, you sense that God's presence and His power are with you. This does not mean you never have to do anything you don't really want to do or don't feel like doing. We are all called to make sacrifices at times, but I am referring to your life's calling. Where that's concerned, you should have a desire to do it. I don't believe God calls people to do things as their life's work that they would not enjoy or that would make them unhappy for the rest of their lives.

AVOID ASKING YOURSELF THE WRONG QUESTIONS

When you have a strong desire to do something, don't ask yourself how you *feel* about doing certain

necessary aspects of it. I remember when someone asked me, “How do you feel about all the travel you have to do in order to succeed at what God has asked you to do?”

I thought for a moment and said, “I haven’t asked myself that question in a long, long time.” It doesn’t matter how I feel about traveling. The questions that matter are, am I fulfilled in doing it, and do I believe I am doing what God wants me to do? And the answer is yes. I may not enjoy certain parts of my job, such as traveling, packing and unpacking, and staying in various hotels. But I love, love, love my overall job! The truth is that there is no job in which we will enjoy every little thing that’s required. We have to look at everything involved as a whole, and when we are doing what God has for us to do, we will find that we love more about it than we dislike.

Don’t waste time asking yourself what you think about this or that, because our thoughts and feelings can change from one hour to the next. For example, I can think I want to do something, and an hour later I think I don’t want to do it. Our thoughts are changeable

and unreliable when they are simply based on what we feel. One thought can tell you to do something because it will be fun, and the next one can tell you the same activity will be too hard. Don't ask yourself what you think. Instead, focus your mind on God for a while, pray and ask Him to show you what is in your heart. This will help you find the right thing to do.

I remember a woman who had no strong desire to do anything in particular. She was greatly frustrated because of this for a long time. Then God led her to Psalm 100:2, which says, "Serve the Lord with gladness!" (AMPC), and she decided that serving Him gladly was the call on her life. Some people are encouragers, some are helpers, some are organizers, and some do a host of other things that don't fit into the world's standard of success. So don't think you are doing something unimportant just because the world would not consider it great. Some of the most important people in my life are those who help me with the practical details of my life and the ones who pray for me and encourage me. The bottom line is that whatever God gives you to do is important, no matter what it is.

FAILURE IS PART OF SUCCESS

I like this quotation, which is often attributed to Winston Churchill: “Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts.”

I am convinced that if you will never give up, you will eventually end up at the perfect place for you. I have often said that I believe my greatest gift is the refusal to give up. I will not quit! The Bible is filled with scriptures encouraging us not to give up. People often ask me if I am going to retire, and I tell them I haven't given retirement much thought. If I begin to think about it too much, I may grow weak and feel I can't go on for some reason. Most of the time I feel young on the inside, so I am going to act young on the outside.

*I believe my greatest gift is the refusal
to give up.*

I understand that I will have to adjust my schedule as the years go by, and I will use wisdom. But I don't

plan to get to the point where I just sit in a chair and do nothing day after day. I don't know when or if I will retire from teaching God's Word like I've been doing for more than forty years now. I have no plans to do so, but I will do whatever God guides me to do.

On our way to success, we will fail sometimes and have to adjust our plans. John Maxwell wrote a book called *Failing Forward*, and I think the idea of failing forward is great. This basically means that we let our failures become stepping-stones to the future instead of allowing them to hold us back. We are wise when we learn from our mistakes rather than feel guilty about them.

I have made many mistakes, but I have also experienced many successes. If you let every failure devastate you, you will not succeed at what you really want to do. God knows your heart, and as long as you sincerely want to do His will, even if you veer onto the wrong pathway, He will gently guide you back onto the right one.

*You will not succeed if you let failure
devastate you.*

For example, I tried to go on television long before the time was right. We rented a local cable studio, and I tried to do a talk show. I sat down with three or four people who worked for me, and I asked them questions. But the problem was that I also answered the questions. You can't have a talk show if you are the only one who talks. Over the course of six months, we only received one piece of mail in response to the program, and I realized I was on the wrong path. After that, I forgot all about television and was surprised when God later showed us that He wanted us to produce a television show. I realized that it was part of God's plan all along, but I wasn't following His time frame the first time around. Sometimes we know in our hearts what God's will is, but we get ahead of His timing.

*Sometimes we let ourselves get ahead of
God's timing.*

Let me say again that feeling guilty about your mistakes is useless. We all make mistakes. When you

make one, simply ask God to forgive you and show you how to begin again.

The apostle Paul writes:

I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.

Philippians 3:13–14 AMPC

Forgetting the past and pressing toward the future was clearly important to Paul. He knew that feeling guilty over past mistakes would only keep him from moving forward. After he became a follower of Christ, I can only imagine how he must have felt when he thought about how he had persecuted the church and thrown Christians into jail (Acts 8:3). Following his conversion on the road to Damascus, he began to preach the same message he had condemned others for preaching (Acts 9:1–31). I am sure the devil reminded

him often of his past behavior and tried to hold him back by making him feel guilty and condemned. But Paul stood firm against it.

What about Peter? Three times he denied even knowing Christ. When he realized what he had done, he went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:54–62). This was his time of repentance, and God graciously forgave him and changed him from a coward into someone who spoke boldly on behalf of God's kingdom. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached about Jesus, and about three thousand people were added to the church that day (Acts 2:38–41).

Some of our worst mistakes teach us the greatest lessons of our lives. Once we've made them, we simply need to learn from them, let them go, and keep working with God to follow what is in our hearts. That's how we discover the right path to our God-given destiny.