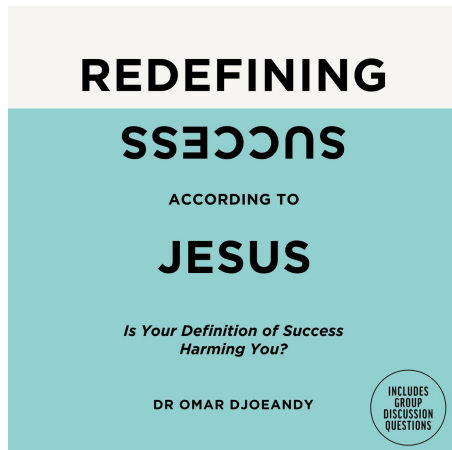


Redefining success according to Jesus. If your definition of success harming you?

By dr. Omar Djoeandy

Summary



We are committed to the Kingdom and the mission of God.

What might be a significant hindrance to people loving God and others, being salt and light, and giving generously in our culture? What might be keeping people from being His witnesses among the least-reached?

I suggest people's definition of success.

Let me explain.

Everybody wants to be successful.

But some definitions of success cause harm.

The world defines success according to your achievements, popularity, looks, possessions and other outward symbols. The accompanying harm includes feeling worthless, anxious, inadequate, disappointed, restless, afraid, envious or prideful. Or suffering from never-enough syndrome, fluctuating self-esteem, comparison, and competition.

Worldly success is elusive, fleeting, and addictive. We will always want more. There will always be someone who looks superior and have more, bigger, and better.

Tragically, many Christians define success similar to people in the world, but they might be unaware. They may differ in their resolve to avoid corrupt and dishonest means, but they still suffer from harmful definitions of success.

The McCrindle research mentioned in the 2019 *Consumed* report shows we need to do more to combat consumerism in our churches. Despite professing to worship Jesus and not money, a significant portion of Australian churchgoers remain enthralled by possessions:

- *81% own more than what they need (35% say this is a good thing)*
- *45% claim they often feel the need to buy new things*
- *30% admit they spend ten or more hours a week on screens for entertainment/shopping/social media. That's just the people who admitted it!*

Well-meaning Christians, crippled by debt, struggle to give generously and effective ministries remain under-funded. Or they are exhausted from working long hours.

Potential overseas workers are held back or delayed by their mortgage, lifestyle preference, career, family, or fears. Jesus is not treasured above all.

Jesus directly contradicted worldly success in Luke 12 when He said, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."*(v15) He then redefines success as being dependent upon God as His children, being Kingdom-focused, and giving generously (v22-34). This might seem straightforward in theory but can be challenging to apply.

More people redefining success according to Jesus, I believe, will result in more prayer, workers and funding for His local, cross-cultural, and global mission. It is also the key to finding courage, enjoy contentment, experience community, and to be resilient and fruitful as His followers.

Chapter Key Ideas

<p>CHAPTER 1</p> <p>Worldly Definitions of Success are Harming Us</p>	<p>Key idea: Most people suffer from harmful definitions of success, but often unaware of the damages—personal, relational, and generational. There must be a better way.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 2</p> <p>The Dark Side of Consumerism – Dehumanisation and Degradation</p>	<p>Key idea: Worldly success is dehumanising us all because it measures the worth of a person according to their achievements, looks, possessions, and other outward symbols. Hyper-consumerism cause degradation on our planet. Individual choices have societal and global impacts.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 3</p> <p>Our Blind Spots and Blind Guides</p>	<p>Key idea: Harmful definitions of success are often subtle and hidden but deadly like cancer. Our heart problem according to Jesus is greed. We all have blind spots, even the religious and so-called experts. Therefore, they are blind guides, the blind leading the blind. Who can guide us?</p>
<p>CHAPTER 4</p> <p>Transformed by the Real Jesus</p>	<p>Key idea: Most people suffer from accepting harmful definitions of success that have been shaped by other people. We need to encounter the real Jesus. By discovering and embracing His definition of success, we can be transformed and experience a life of contentment, courage, and community.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 5</p>	<p>Key idea: Don't assume success in worldly terms such as material possessions equals being a success in God's eyes. The rich</p>

<p>The Wealthy Successful Fool</p> <p>Luke 12:13-21</p>	<p>man is the poster of worldly success—wealthy and carefree. Yet, God called him a fool—why? He was independent of God. How are we like the rich man? What else is failure according to Jesus and why? What is success according to Jesus?</p>
<p>CHAPTER 6</p> <p>From a Rebel to a Child of God</p> <p>Luke 12:17-19</p>	<p>Key idea: Jesus defines success not based on possessions but on our relationship with God. Being independent of God, as practised by the rich fool and many people today, is a form of rebellion that goes back to Adam and Eve. We need to see the foolishness of being rebels against a loving and sacrificing God and become His children and enter His Kingdom. This is paradoxically more straightforward and difficult than most realise.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 7</p> <p>Being God’s Children</p> <p>Luke 12:21-30</p>	<p>Key idea: Harmful definitions of success attack our core identity and security. Defining ourselves as consumers and measuring our worth according to our possessions leaves us empty, feeling like failures, fearful, and in competition with others. Sometimes we live like orphans. Jesus contradicts and defines success from the inside out, starting with our identity as God’s children. What does this look like in practice?</p>
<p>CHAPTER 8</p> <p>Jesus Redefining Worldly Failure</p> <p>Luke 12:32 Luke 16</p>	<p>Key idea: Like harmful definitions of success, harmful definitions of failure can be soul-destroying. We need to identify and resist these because sooner or later, we will feel like failures when we are not living the “best life”, we don’t have it all, or don’t measure up. Our reality can never match the harmful definitions of worldly success. Jesus Himself was considered a failure by many of the powerful and influential elite during His life on earth. Jesus contradicts the worldly failure and demonstrates how the poor, the marginalised, and the weak can be a success in His eyes. Therefore, we need to connect with them for mutual learning and blessings.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 9</p> <p>Being Kingdom-Focused – Living with the End in Mind</p> <p>Luke 12:29-32</p>	<p>Key idea: Jesus also defines success as living in and living for the Kingdom of God. What is the Kingdom of God—and what isn’t it? What makes it distinct from the kingdoms that have been and all that we know? What makes His Kingdom worth exchanging our lives for? What does prioritising God’s Kingdom look like in practice?</p>

<p>CHAPTER 10</p> <p>Giving Generously is the Successful Life</p> <p>Luke 12:33-34</p>	<p>Key idea: Jesus defines success as giving generously instead of consuming and hoarding. He redefines generosity. Giving guards against greed. Giving generously without compassion fatigue or burnout is possible if we live and give, not as the source, but as channels and stewards of God's abundance, to whom all things belong.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 11</p> <p>Redefining Success in Community</p>	<p>Key idea: Harmful definitions of success are socially constructed and impossible to resist alone. We need others who affirm Jesus' redefinition of success because it is a "narrow road". It is counter-intuitive and counter-cultural. Consistently and persistently redefining success according to Jesus is only possible by being part of a functioning community of Jesus followers. Jesus also redefines how His community should function in contrast to the world.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 12</p> <p>The Heart of Redefining Success – Treasuring Jesus Most</p> <p>Luke 12:34</p>	<p>Key idea: Our most compelling motivations derive from those we love most, whose opinion we care for most. Love for Jesus will motivate and empower us to pursue success according to Him, even when it is difficult or when the world sees us as failures. Praying and practising the Lord's Prayer can be a helpful habit to redefine success according to Jesus.</p>