

Four Unhealthy (and Unspoken) Commandments of Christians

Has culture affected you?

How do you describe yourself to others?

If you want to become an emotionally healthy Christian, sooner or later, you will have to resist the pull of one or more of these commandments.

Unhealthy Commandment 1: Success is bigger and more money.

Unhealthy Commandment 2: Your Career is more important than your Character.

Unhealthy Commandment 3: Service is more important than time with God.

Unhealthy Commandment 4: Acceptance is more important than truth.

What Does The Bible Say?

Unhealthy Commandment 1: Success is bigger and more money.

17 When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, “Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!”

18 “Yes,” he told them, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! 19 Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. 20 But don’t rejoice

because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.” (Luke 10:17–20 NLT)

Christian success comes from our relationship with Jesus, not physical or earthly accomplishments.

Unhealthy Commandment 2: Your Career is more important than your Character.

21 One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.” (Luke 3:21–22 NLT)

What you do matters. Who you are matters much more.

Unhealthy Commandment 3: Service is more important than time with God.

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7 NLT)

We are concerned about the heart, beginning with our own.

Unhealthy Commandment 4: Acceptance is more important than truth.

14 They offer superficial treatments for my people’s mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14 NLT)

We need to be honest and not afraid of conflict.

How Can You Obey?

9 “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be

filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:9–17 NLT)

Let the Bible affirm you, not culture.

Make it your mission to obey God and to love others.

This is how you have lasting joy.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Notes:

The series of “The Emotionally Healthy Christian”, is shaped by the book – Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

Notes:

This week’s Insights to the Biblical World are from the book, Heiser, M. S. (2018). *Brief insights on mastering the bible: 80 expert insights on the bible, explained in a single minute* (p. 37). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Explore:

Praying for Success

How many young people have prayed a prayer similar to that of Abraham's servant—for the Lord to give them success in finding the right spouse (Gen. 24:12)! In fact, from finding a partner to finding a job, from building a business to building a life, people frequently pray for God to bless their efforts with success. Is that prayer legitimate for God's people?

In a success-driven society, people of faith often struggle with the place and pursuit of success. Some believe that material success by its nature represents a compromise of spiritual convictions. Others, however, feel that success is actually a sign that God is pleased with them. Still others claim that they are not interested in success, yet this claim seems to be an excuse for their poor performance in the marketplace. What does success mean for people who want to honor God in their lives?

There are no simple answers to these questions. The issue of success is complex and charged with emotion. But perhaps the following three observations will prove helpful as you devote thoughtful consideration and public discussion to the subject:

- Success always implies striving to meet or exceed some set of standards established by some person or group.
- The pursuit of success is always a personal choice. No one can make someone else pursue success.
- Obtaining success always exacts a cost—it takes our time, ability, and resources.

In light of these principles, ask yourself three questions as you pursue, or refrain from pursuing, success: Who is determining what success means for me? What am I choosing by my pursuit of success? What price am I paying to achieve success?

Thomas Nelson Publishers, What Does the Bible Say About...
The Ultimate A to Z Resource Fully Illustrated (Nashville, TN:
Thomas Nelson, 2001), 387.

Explore:

What is success?

Before we go any further, let's define success. Many people have the wrong understanding of it.

For Christians, success can never be measured by money. When people say to me, "That man's worth ten million dollars," that tells me he's wealthy, but it doesn't prove he's successful. In some cases, it could mean the opposite. For instance, if Mother Teresa, whom I consider a tremendous success, confessed she was hoarding a million dollars, I'd think she was a hypocrite. Money would prove her a fraud, not a success.

Second, success can never be measured by numbers—regardless of what the numbers are. Some churches gauge success by the attendance or budget numbers. Some pastors measure their success by the number of “preacher boys” they have sent to the seminary from their congregation. If the statistic I’ve heard is true—that 40 percent of seminarians are there because they’re trying to find the will of God—I have to believe many of these students have been misdirected by people who were measuring success by a number.

The measurement of success is simply the ratio of talents used to talents received. What you are doing with what you’ve got, plus who you are becoming. Are you a growing, maturing Christian? Whether you work in business, or in Christian work, or as a day laborer, professional, or academic, if you are a maturing Christian, using a large percentage of your talents, you are successful. Be glad.

Some of us tend to think, I could have been a success, but I never had the opportunity or I wasn't born into the right family or I didn't have the money to go to the best school. But when we measure success by the extent we're using what we've received, it eliminates that frustration. I've known many Christians who had limited opportunities, but they made the most of what they had. They had a great sense of responsibility, a love for God and other people, and out of that flowed a tremendous use of talents.

When I worked for Genesco, I promoted a young man from operating a machine into a lower-managerial role because we wanted to test his capability. Shortly afterward, he was killed in an automobile accident near Lewisburg, Tennessee. Maxey Jarman, Genesco's chairman, wanted to go to the funeral. We drove seventy-five miles to the funeral, and on the way back Maxey said, "I believe Bill was one of the most successful men we have had in the company."

I said, “He was an hourly employee and was just promoted to a small managerial job. Why would you say that?”

“Because he used what he had.”

The person doing the most with what he’s got is truly successful.

Not the one who becomes the richest or most famous, but the one who has the closest ratio of talents received to talents used.

An unsuccessful person, on the other hand, is one who didn’t use the chances he or she had. He could have developed himself, he could have made a contribution to life, he could have become a mature Christian, but he didn’t. It is my challenge as a leader to keep this from happening, and giving permission to succeed is a good starting place. The Bible says that to whom much has been given, much will be required.

Encourage your people to measure success only by potential, not by what others are doing. One of the prominent Realtors in Dallas came to me a few years ago after the bottom fell out of

the housing market. He was very concerned, almost depressed, because business was down 40 percent, and he didn't know how to get it up. We talked a little, and then I said to him, "Why don't you change your goals this year?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why not measure success by survival this year? With the current condition of the real estate market in Dallas, anyone who survives is a success."

I saw him two or three months later, and he was smiling. "Fred," he said, "I'm going to survive, and for me right now, that's success. I can't beat last year, but I can beat failure."

Another thing we often forget: being a success doesn't mean everything in our lives has turned out well. We can be successful in coming back from a fall. I have a friend who got into an immoral situation. He genuinely repented and accepted God's forgiveness and moved forward. To me, that was success.

I know a woman who fought severe depression—and won. That’s true success. I’ve seen women lose their husbands to an affair, yet come through that great rejection and reestablish their lives. They have demonstrated the power of God in a human life. They’ve become successes. Our privilege as leaders is to commend their success!

Fred Smith, “Granting Permission to Succeed,” in *Empowering Your Church through Creativity and Change : 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*, ed. Marshall Shelley, 1st ed., vol. 2 of *Library of Christian Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1995), 212–214.

Explore:

BEAUTY OF CHARACTER

The character of a person can range from beautiful to ugly, depending on the degree of godliness or ungodliness in the behaviour of that person. One of the reasons why young children can often have a beautiful character is that they have an inherent innocence compared with adults.

The Bible teaches that the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This fruit of the spirit produces a beautiful character. The concept of a beautiful character is not something that can be assigned to an animal, because an animal does not have control over its behaviour.

Stuart Burgess, *In God's Image: The Divine Origin of Humans, Creation Points* (Leominster: Day One, 2008), 21.

Explore:

Is “truth” Truth?

What is truth for English? How can anyone think that “truth” may be untrustworthy—especially if he adheres to the slogan, “All truth is God’s truth”? Truth is Truth. If it is God’s Truth given by General Revelation, then it cannot be considered as less “trustworthy” than His Truth given in Special Revelation (the Bible). How can any truth be more or less “trustworthy” and still be God’s Truth? All of God’s Truth is trustworthy. And, if the Truth derived from General Revelation is from God, how can one speak of filtering it? You can’t filter out error from God’s Truth because in His Truth there is none! Truth is Truth—but English doesn’t seem to think so. He has two kinds of “truth.” How can there be such? What does he mean by less trustworthy truth? If it is less trustworthy, but still God’s truth, then God’s Word (at least in part) is untrustworthy. How can this be? The sloppy thinking that is often found in the integrationist movement makes it difficult to critique. Truth, if it “truly” is Truth, is always trustworthy—simply because it is Truth.

What “truth”?

There are many non-Christians who talk of truth as if every man has his own truth. While I am sure that English does not believe this, it is necessary to warn those who read him of the danger of this sort of speaking because it can easily lead to thinking the way these unbelievers do. When he says that truth must be “filtered,” he cannot possibly mean that such truth is Truth; otherwise it could not be called truth—could it? You don’t filter truth in order to obtain the truth that is within truth. The language used is patently ridiculous.

What he seems to be trying to say (however badly) is that non-truth has been mixed with Truth (that supposedly comes from God in General Revelation) and must be filtered out of the mix. But his words seem to say that truths mixed with lesser truths have to be separated. The difficulty that he has is simply this: he has called General Revelation a source of “psychological truth,”

but he can't bring himself to believe that General Revelation is really Revelation. And that is the crux of the matter.

Jay E. Adams, "The Insufficiency of General Revelation for Sanctification," ed. Lou Priolo, *The Journal of Modern Ministry* 3.3 (2006): 66–67.

Question 1 of 5

Why is knowing the genre of a book important when reading the Bible?

Question 2 of 5

How do you process difficult emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness?

Question 3 of 5

How do you not avoid difficult conversations with your spouse and family?

Question 4 of 5

Why does obeying God lead to joy?

Question 5 of 5

Define success by God's standards? How can we ensure that we measure success by God's standard and not culture's?