

# Christians are Divinely Empowered to Succeed

Your success is the ultimate goal of this book, and your success requires leadership and soft skills. More importantly, your success requires you to trust God to work in and through your life. You achieve true success when you live according to God's plan, accomplish what He calls you to do, and when you receive the blessings He has for you.

God empowers Christians to develop leadership and soft skills and to live the abundant and successful life He has planned for them. To be a Christian, you must accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. To truly experience the abundant and successful life that God has for you, embrace God's plan for your life, obey Him, and stay faithful.

## Receive Salvation

If you have not already done so, your highest priority is to confess that you are a sinner and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You may ask, "What's the big deal about confessing that I am a sinner?" The big deal is that God loves you more than you can comprehend, and He desires to spend eternity with you in Heaven. If you die without confessing you are a sinner, you will be eternally separated from God. Furthermore, you will miss out on God's best blessings for your life.

God wants to forgive your sins so that you can receive salvation and experience His best for you. The "Roman Road to Salvation" follows:

- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

- “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).
- “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
- “for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED” (Romans 10:13).
- “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:9–10).

We are born with a sinful nature and naturally gravitate towards sin. The Bible clearly states that our sins must be paid for: the “wages of sin is death.” Although we cannot pay for our own sins, God loves us so much that He sent His son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to pay for our sins. On the third day following the crucifixion, God resurrected Jesus from the dead.

Salvation is God’s gift to you based solely on His grace. **To be forgiven and to receive salvation, confess you are a sinner, acknowledge that Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins, and believe that He arose from the dead on the third day.**

## Embrace God’s Plan for Your Life

Once you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, embrace God’s plan to experience an abundant and successful life. God tells us through the prophet Jeremiah: “‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope’” (Jeremiah 29:11). (Note that “welfare” in this context means blessing!)

Think about that. **The Creator of the universe has a great plan for your life.** The apostle Paul reminds us: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8). God already has mapped out a plan for your life. The Psalmist tells us that, “The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way. <sup>24</sup>When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand” (Psalm 37:23–24). When you follow God’s plan for your life, and are obedient to Him, He will guide you and work powerfully in your life.

Of course, before you can embrace God’s plan for your life, you must know God’s plan for your life. Pray to God and ask Him to reveal His plan. You can be confident that God will communicate with you: “Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3). God promises His children: “He will call on me, and I will answer him” (Psalm 91:15). Prayer is a powerful tool for Christians. Remember what the apostle Paul says and always “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). When you do pray, you can be sure that “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16).

Although God generally reveals His plan in small increments, you can be sure that His plan includes abundance. In John 10:10 Jesus states, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Many Christians believe that God’s promise of abundance guarantees abundant money and possessions. This belief is not correct. The apostle Paul assures us that: “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). God will provide what you need but does not promise to make you rich. **Christians, though, can have spiritual abundance: joy, peace, grace, strength, wisdom, mercy, blessing, favor, provision, and protection.**

God's abundance is sufficient for every situation you face. Challenges come to Christians as well as to others, but Christians have God's abundant strength, peace, and hope to handle every challenge. The apostle Paul, writing from prison, states, "12I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:12-13).

God knows (even if you don't) that you need His help. **Seek Him, and He will empower you.** God tells us through the prophet Isaiah: "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). I have memorized this verse, and I encourage you to memorize it as well. Pray when you need God's strength: "Father God, You told me not to fear, not to be anxious. You said You would strengthen me and help me. You said You would uphold me. I need Your strength!"

## Obey and be Blessed

You must obey God to experience an abundant and successful life. **Salvation is unconditional, but blessings are not.** God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to emphasize the importance of obedience: "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jeremiah 7:23). **You "walk in all the way in which I command" by doing what God tells you to do,** and you do what God tells you to do by relying on His strength. Additionally, **you "walk in all the way in which I command" by avoiding willful sin,** and you avoid willful sin by believing that: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man;

and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). **You can overcome temptation if you rely on God’s strength rather than your own.** When you feel tempted by sin, ask God to show you how to escape.

The Bible gives a great illustration of blessing following obedience. The apostle Peter, known also as Simon, was a fisherman. Jesus had been speaking to a crowd from Simon’s fishing boat:

<sup>4</sup>When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ <sup>5</sup>Simon answered and said, ‘Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.’ <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; <sup>7</sup>so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink (Luke 5:4-7).

These verses illustrate important principles. First, **Simon obeyed Jesus and was blessed** with a “great quantity” of fish. Secondly, Simon obeyed Jesus even though his experience as a fisherman suggested that doing so would be a waste of time. You also may sense God telling you to do something that does not make sense. **You don’t need to understand why God tells you to do something; you just need to do it.** (See Proverbs 3:5 below.) I don’t recommend that you always follow advice from people when their advice does not make sense to you. But **you can trust completely the sovereign God of the universe to tell you what is best for you, and you will be blessed when you obey.**

Note also that Simon called his fishing buddies to join in. They “filled their boats” too. **Not only will God bless your obedience, but He often will bless others through you.**

In this example, Simon was not looking for a blessing. However, God tells us: “All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 28:2). Conversely, “If you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” (Deuteronomy 28:15).

Will blessings really “overtake you?” Returning to my office after a meeting one day, I had a message to call a person I did not know. I called her, and she said that her college was hiring a new leader for its academic programs. She asked me if I was interested in the position and encouraged me to apply. I was interested because of my affinity for her university. However, I was happy with my current job. I sought advice from my mentor and a few colleagues. The consensus was that I should apply for the job but not tell my boss I was applying. I trusted my colleagues and mentor, but I prayed and believed God was telling me to inform my boss that I was considering the other job.

Following God’s prompting, I told my boss that I was considering applying for the other job. My boss was supportive but told me to put together a list of things he could do to keep me from applying. I gave the list to my boss, and I got everything I asked for, including a raise that would have taken more than four years of typical annual salary increases to achieve.

If I would have asked my boss for that big raise without the other job prospect, he would have laughed at me. I was not looking for another job, but God set me up for a blessing; in other words, this blessing “overtook” me. And the blessing was in response to obedience. Had I disregarded God’s prompting, I would not have told my boss about the other job, and I would not have received the blessing.

## Stay Faithful

Stay faithful and believe that God will empower you to experience an abundant and successful life. Jesus tells us in Matthew 17:20, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” **Even if you can’t see how God can provide for you or help you, have faith.** As stated in Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.”

Your life’s journey likely will be more challenging than you think it should be. It likely will include detours, heartaches, setbacks, and obstacles that you would prefer to avoid. **If you remain faithful, God will work out His plan in your life. But understand that He will do it His way and on His schedule.** When you stay in faith, God will be glorified, and you will be blessed: “<sup>20</sup>Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, <sup>21</sup>to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20–21).

Let me share a personal example showing the importance of staying in faith while God works His plan. My wife informed me one day that I was going to be a dad. We were very excited, but the excitement gave way to despair as we suffered a miscarriage. We were devastated. Soon, we were expecting a baby again. The joy returned, and then the despair returned as we suffered another miscarriage. We spent thousands of dollars on a series of fertility treatments over the next couple of years. I came to refer to the treatments as “futility treatments” rather than “fertility treatments” because they did not work for us.

At this point, I was about done with God and His plan for my life. After all, I had been praying for a child, and God was

not honoring my request. I was complaining about this to a trusted Christian friend, and he told me, “One day you have to decide whether or not you really trust God.” His comment hit me hard. I realized that God was God, and I was not. I realized that my faith was weak, and that I should seek God’s plan rather than tell Him to honor my plan. I further realized that my prayers had been superficial and selfish.

I asked God to forgive my selfishness. I asked God to give us a child according to His will, if His will was for us to have children. We soon believed that we were supposed to adopt an international child. The adoption process took almost four years, but now we have a beautiful daughter.

Our journey to parenthood took longer than I thought it should have. We experienced numerous setbacks and intense heartache that we would have preferred to avoid. Through it all, God was faithful, and He provided a child—on His schedule and according to His plan. I still don’t understand His plan, but I don’t need to understand His plan. I do understand that now we have a child, and a wonderful little girl has a loving Mom and Dad. I understand that God is in charge, and I need to honor Him. And I understand that Romans 8:28 is absolutely true: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

I struggled in the midst of our suffering to see how God could possibly work things together for good, but He did. When you find yourself in a situation that appears hopeless or when you face a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, remember how God worked in our situation. Believe that He will work in your situation as well. Stay faithful!

Now that you see how Christians are divinely empowered to succeed, you are ready to develop the leadership and soft skills needed for your success. The next section provides an overview of these skills.