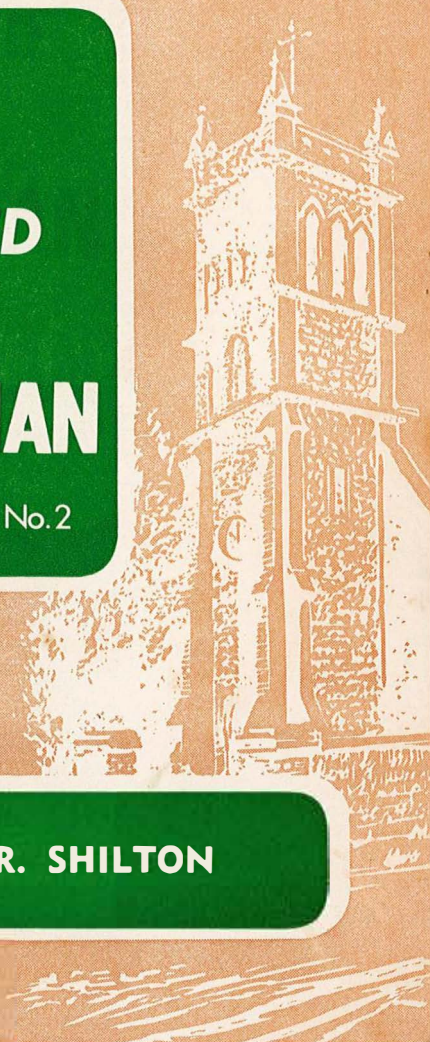


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# **HOW TO SUCCEED AS A CHRISTIAN**

Trinity Booklet No.2

**LANCE R. SHILTON**



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by the Reverend

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## HOW TO SUCCEED AS A CHRISTIAN

Everyone is interested in Success. The prize fighter entering the ring, the schoolboy sitting for an examination, the business man planning a new deal, the young couple starting their married life, the housewife organising a party; everyone is interested in success.

A recent survey has revealed that there is one quality that all successful people have in common, and that is persistence. Many men of achievement have only average intelligence and ability, but they have a greater-than-average willingness to spend time in accomplishing a task, to persevere in the face of great odds, to plod patiently along when the load is heavy.

The Christian, too, if he is worth his salt, wants to be a success. Before we look at some of the things which make it possible for a person to succeed as a Christian, we need to know what a Christian is.

The Christian is one who has REPENTED of his sins. He has not merely been sorry for the wrong doing in his life and regretted the consequences of his

folly, but has come to Christ with a deliberate intention to have done with sin. Like the prodigal son, he has repented. He has turned away from his sin and enjoys the knowledge of God's forgiveness.

The Christian has REGENERATION. He has been born again of the Spirit of God. He realises the futility of trying to patch up his old life and has received through the Holy Spirit, the new life which God alone supplies.

The Christian realises that he has been RESCUED. He knows that he has broken the moral law of God and comes under the condemnation of paying the consequences. Just as much as the person who attempts to break a physical law suffers the consequences, so too, the person who attempts to break the moral law. But Christ Who fulfilled all the requirements of the law is in a position to rescue us from the consequences of our law-breaking. The Christian knows he has been rescued and is saved.

The Christian also knows that he has RECEIVED Christ. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him (that is,

Christ), to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name."

He has received from God the free Gift which He offers and he knows that it has made all the difference.

I am speaking therefore to you who have repented of your sins and experienced forgiveness; to you who have been made regenerate through the power of the Holy Spirit; to you who have been rescued from the eternal consequences of sin; to you who have received Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord; to you, then, who are Christians, here is how to succeed as a Christian.

#### I. ACCEPT YOUR SALVATION THANKFULLY.

There is no need for doubt or uncertainty. The Christian's relationship to God as a child to his Father is not only intimate, but sure. The Christian is never a self-made man, and his experience is never purely psychological. His conversion is the work of God and happens when God meets him in grace. He appropriates and accepts what God has done for him and he knows himself to be a new man in Christ Jesus.



That is why a note of assurance rings through the New Testament. What the converted man knows is not that he has made himself a Christian through his own effort, but that God has done something for him through Christ, and something within him by the Holy Spirit. His certainty is in God and in what God has done.

St. John states categorically that this was his purpose in writing his first general Epistle, "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

Yet the way to BE sure is not just to FEEL sure. Our feelings are so variable. They change with the weather and vacillate with our health. The basis of our knowledge that we are in relationship with God is not our feelings but the fact that He says we are. St. Paul wrote: "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8.17)

"But," you may ask, "what happens if and when I sin?" Here is a human analogy. A son is rude to his father. There is tension in the atmosphere.

Father and son are not on speaking terms. What has happened? Has the boy ceased to be a son? Of course not. Their relationship has not changed; it is their fellowship which has been spoiled. Relationship depends upon birth; fellowship depends on behaviour. As soon as the son apologises, he is forgiven and fellowship is restored. But the relationship remains all the time.

When we accept our salvation thankfully we have complete assurance. Humbly to believe that we have eternal life is not presumptuous. The folly and sin would be to doubt. It is a sin of presumption not to take God at His word. 1 John 5.11 in the Revised Standard Version says, "This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life."

## II. LEARN TO PRAY BELIEVINGLY.

You now have a Heavenly Father. He hears and answers prayer. Jesus said: "Ask anything in my name and I will do it." A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian. Christ spent hours

in prayer. He sometimes spent the night on a mountain top in complete communion with God the Father. If the Son of God needed to pray, how much more is it necessary for us to pray.

There should be stated periods which you deliberately set apart for prayer. There will be many interruptions to make this rule difficult -- the baby begins to cry, the 'phone rings, someone knocks at the door -- but you must keep at it. Without constant, daily, systematic prayer your life will seem barren, discouraging, lacking in peace. As breath is to the body, so is prayer to the soul. Just as a deep sea diver can live and work on the ocean bed only as long as the life-line links him with the pure air above, so the child of God is linked by prayer with the fresh, clean atmosphere of heaven. Destroy this life-giving channel, then there is disaster. If a spaceman is to survive in the high altitudes, he must have his own supply of oxygen. The Christian must continually draw upon the inexhaustible supply of God through the channel of prayer. True prayer includes:

Meditation - being conscious of the

presence of God and allowing Him to speak to us.

Confession - making known to Him our sorrow for our sins.

Thanksgiving - for all He has done and is doing.

Intercession - remembering the needs of others before God,

Supplication - asking Him to show us His will for our lives and committing our needs to Him.

### III. STUDY THE BIBLE DILIGENTLY.

Whether you are playing a game of cricket, driving the latest model car, or using an old recipe to bake a cake, there are certain rules that must be followed if you are to succeed. The Bible clearly teaches that the Christian life is one of growth where certain rules apply. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, so that you may grow thereby." No one would be foolish enough to think that the contents of an engineering text book, the directions for an automatic sewing machine or an appreciation of a Shakespearean play could be

assimilated by a superficial reading of parts of their contents. Yet it is so easy to adopt this attitude to the Bible. Someone once said to me, "I've read the Bible from cover to cover, and I'm not any wiser now than when I first started." It is not sufficient simply to skim through its pages. We need to study it diligently. I would suggest that you start by reading the Gospel of John. As you read, the Holy Spirit will illumine the passages for you. Pray before you read. Read slowly and thoughtfully. Read and reread the passage. Use a modern translation if the old English is difficult. Look for promises to claim, commands to obey, examples to follow and sins to avoid. Above all look for Jesus Christ. He is the chief subject of the Bible.

#### IV. ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY.

John Wesley once said, "The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Christianity is a religion of fellowship. The Bible calls the Church "a holy nation", "God's own people", "the household of God", "a holy temple in the Lord", "a dwelling place of the Spirit", "the body of Christ". These are all figures of speech to indicate

the spiritual reality of the Church.

I have known many people who have come to a personal knowledge of Christ without any previous Church background. The light of God's salvation has dawned in their souls; perhaps through the words of a friend, a talk over the radio, a film on T.V.; with some it has come gradually through a variety of circumstances, with others it has come suddenly; but in every case the first thing such a person looks for is a Church to attend. There is a great longing to worship God, a sincere desire for Christian fellowship and a real willingness to serve God.

The Church was never meant to be a museum of Saints, but a congregation of sinners. It is the place where the presence of God becomes especially near to true believers.

#### V. MAINTAIN YOUR WITNESS LOYALLY.

One of the outstanding characteristics of apostolic Christians was that they were always ready to bear witness to the Christ Who had saved them and Who was ever with them. To be successful in the Christian life we, too, must

say then, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Love will stammer rather than be silent. If we have had a transforming experience of the Grace of God in Christ, and if we love Him Who first loved us, we will not be able to remain silent.

Early Apostles had none of the modern aids to evangelism -- no radio, no T.V., no books, no printing, no posters, no newspaper, no buildings -- and yet they were effective in turning the world upside down. It depended upon their deeds and their words, their life and their lips. There can be no substitute for the life lived and the word spoken.

It's easy enough to make excuses -- "I'm too ignorant; I'm too nervous; I'm too busy; I'm too inconsistent; It's too personal."

Yet today, perhaps as never before, men and women are wanting to hear a message of hope. You will never succeed in your Christian life until you open your mouth for Christ and say with St. Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believeth."

## VI. RELY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT CONSTANTLY

As a Christian you are not left on your own to fight your way through your battles as best you can. Christ has provided the Holy Spirit to make you successful in your Christian life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ASSURES THE DOUBTER:  
Who of us at times does not have doubts? If we bring these doubts to God and allow His Holy Spirit to bring us the assurance that He alone can give, then these doubts are dispelled.

THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES THE LEARNER:  
For the most part we are ignorant of the ways of God. We need humbly to admit that there are many things we do not know concerning the Christian life, but as we come to God and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us, He will guide us into all truth.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SANCTIFIES THE FOLLOWER:  
We know that we need to be cleansed constantly, day by day. We know that we are sinners before God, and there is no good thing in us. But if we keep coming to the Holy Spirit He will sanctify us and make us holy, so that we may become fit channels through which



He can work.

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS THE SERVER:  
We know only too well that we are weak.  
We are like St. Paul, who had to realise  
the words of God when he said, "My  
grace is sufficient for thee. My  
strength is made perfect in weakness."

We know our weakness as Christians  
and we know our inconsistencies, but  
the Holy Spirit will be with us con-  
stantly if we rely on Him. He will  
empower us for His service. Ask the  
Holy Spirit to take over your life.  
Tell Him how weak and helpless and un-  
stable you are. Stand aside and let  
Him take over all the choices and decis-  
ions in your life. It is very diffi-  
cult for Him to hold you if you are  
struggling, fighting, striving. Just  
relax and rest in the Lord. Hand over  
to Him so that you may find your re-  
liance on the very power of God. The  
Holy Spirit will make you successful in  
your Christian witness.

I wonder, then, are you prepared to  
follow these simple rules? Accept  
your salvation thankfully. Learn to  
pray believingly. Study the Bible dil-  
igently. Attend Church regularly,

Maintain your witness loyally. Rely on  
the Holy Spirit constantly. And remem-  
ber this; that the most successful  
Christians are those who are most con-  
scious of failure. The most successful  
Christians are those who are most de-  
pendent upon God for His strength, for  
His peace and for His victory. Not one  
of us can make a success of our own  
Christian life. Only God can do that,  
when we in full surrender, allow Him to  
take over. It all begins when we first  
say 'Yes' to Jesus Christ in words like  
these:-

'I am trusting Thee Lord Jesus,  
Trusting only Thee;  
Trusting Thee for full Salvation,  
Great and free.'

Perhaps I am speaking to someone now  
who knows that this experience is needed  
in his or her heart, because you have  
never really become a true Christian by  
receiving Christ as your Saviour. Then  
at this time, humbly and simply, put  
your trust in Jesus Christ, and find in  
Him new life from this very moment.  
Perhaps there are others who have made  
this Christian commitment previously,  
and you want to succeed in the Christ-  
ian life. Make these words of the

same hymn your earnest prayer now:

'I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,  
Never let me fall,  
I am trusting Thee for ever,  
And for all.'

\* \* \* \* \*

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