

Jan 4, 2026

1 Group

Is there a difference in how a follower of Jesus approaches personal growth?

I do not want you to try harder.

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Because what Jesus calls success often looks like failure in our culture.

Life from victory.
Strength in power.
The greatest is the greatest.
Glory in triumph.

Life from victory **death**.
Strength in power **weakness**.
The greatest is the greatest **servant**.
Glory in **triumph** **crucifixion**.

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Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.
John 12:24

Jesus is not talking about farming.

Jesus is not talking about farming.
Jesus is talking about his death.

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And Jesus is talking about us dying, too.

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who **hates their life** in this world will keep it for eternal life.
John 12:25

Jesus isn't calling us to misery, but to freedom from **self-dependence**.

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Ultimately, the secret of the spiritual life is perfect **abandonment** to the will of God in things you cannot control, and perfect **obedience** to Him in everything that depends on your own will. - Thomas Merton

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Whoever serves me **must follow me**; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

John 12:26

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Following Jesus is an invitation to **stop trying** and **start dying**.

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What do these phrases all have in common?
Life from victory **death**.
Strength in power **weakness**.
The greatest is the greatest **servant**.
Glory in triumph **crucifixion**.

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They all require faith.

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The way to stop trying and start dying can be found in this question:
What am I depending on when I am not depending on God?

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What am I depending on when I am not depending on God?

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- The kids behaving
- Traffic is going my way
- Someone doing their job, so I can do my job.

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They all depend on me getting my own way.

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Dying is admitting I can't transform myself and trusting God to do what only he can do.

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"Every time you are unhappy, just ask yourself: Why am I unhappy? Is it not because I cannot do something I want to do; I do not have something I want to have; or am I concerned about what others will think? It will ultimately be one of these three."

True Self, False Self: Unmasking the Spirit
Within by M. Basil Pennington

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Trying is our effort to control others and be good enough.

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Dying is honestly confessing how much we need God's help.

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What am I depending on when I am not depending on God?

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Losing weight.

Do you want to be healthy, or are you depending on weight loss to be worthy of love?

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God, I confess that I struggle to receive your love. Help me to depend on you rather than the scale.

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Earning money.

Do you want to provide for yourself and be more generous, or is earning more what you depend on for your sense of identity?

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God, I confess I'm depending on money to make me feel secure, even though it never satisfies. Free me to trust you with my future.

35

Approval of others.

Do I want to serve people? Or am I depending on the approval of others to satisfy my insecurities?

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God, I confess I depend on the approval of others. Free me to rest in your approval.

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What am I depending on when I am not depending on God?

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