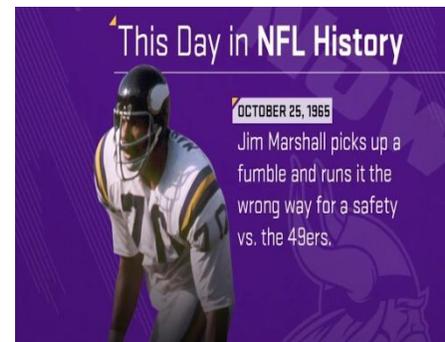


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Winning or losing....you may want to check your scorecard

Do you ever feel like you are doing things that are on the road to success, yet you wonder, "Am I really doing what is right?" Maybe you subtly feel something is going in a wrong direction. I remember as a kid seeing a football game in which a defensive lineman for the Minnesota Vikings, aptly nicknamed "wrong way Marshall," earned his name. Marshall's team was playing the San Francisco 49ers on October 25, 1964. Marshall got disoriented while recovering a fumble and ran 66 yards the wrong way into the end zone. There are many sites that have recorded the video, and it lives in infamy for Marshall like [this one](#).



All the time he was running, you can almost see what he was feeling. "This is great...I am really doing something amazing here... wow, I am really a hero!" Then you can see a change as he slows down towards the goal line and can imagine what he might be thinking. "Why isn't anyone trying to tackle me...something seems wrong...the opponents aren't running very hard after me...am I really this good?"

As he crosses the goal line and throws the ball, the opposing team members catch up to him probably saying things like, "Way to go, you just scored for us! You are our best player! What an idiot! Great job!" At least that's what I probably would have said back in my football days. Marshall's own teammates were running on the sideline yelling at him to turn around. He was running the wrong way, but in his euphoria he didn't hear them.

Sometimes I wonder if the way leaders are approaching the work of God's house has an element of going a wrong direction. What if the things we are doing aren't being measured by Biblical values or by God's definition of success?

To use another sports analogy, what if we were on a baseball field and instead of catching, throwing, and hitting a baseball, we attempted to dribble it or shoot it like basketball or kick it like a soccer ball? The ball may move or bounce a little, and we may feel like we are "succeeding," but we aren't. The right rules help define the game. The

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objectives help determine what is a success. What is His scorecard for success?

I speak with a lot of church leaders. Eventually, I get around to asking, "How are things going?" The answers usually vary like the name of an old movie "The Good the Bad, and the Ugly." They mention challenging things as well as some positive things. Inevitably, some sort of connection is made to the number of people who have been coming to the Sunday morning services. "We have been pretty full

on Sundays," usually means no matter what else they are struggling with, it is okay because people are showing up to a service.

"We have been a little sparse on Sundays," often means no matter what other things are going on, something is wrong. A full house, or a sparse crowd colors everything else. I think there is an important thing every leader should remember; there is a difference between attracting an audience and building a church. If all we do to measure success is count nickels, noses, or behinds in pews, we end up with an audience but not necessarily a church.

During the last 50 years, the church growth movement has brought some very good changes while at the same time, some disappointing ones. The rules or scorecards that determine "success" have largely been similar to those of the business, entertainment, or sports worlds. What constitutes a "win" is the size of the audience that shows up Sunday morning, but the New Testament defines it a little differently. That is, people responding to the gospel and following Jesus. The transformation of their lives through an ongoing relationship with Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit as they engage in His mission, together with His family, is success.

This was Paul's scorecard. He labored with everything in Him to see people connected and growing towards maturity. ***Colossians 1:28-2:2 CEV*** *We announce the message about Christ, and we use all our wisdom to warn and teach everyone, so that all of Christ's followers will grow and become mature. (29) That's why I work so hard and use the mighty power he gives me. (2:1) I want you to know what a struggle I am going through for you, for God's people at Laodicea, and for all of those followers who have never met me. (2) I do it to encourage them. Then as their hearts are joined together in*

love, they will be wonderfully blessed with complete understanding. And they will truly know Christ.

Paul was not simply interested in attracting people to a Sunday morning meeting. He wasn't simply calling people to make decisions for the Lord but become disciples of the Lord who became responsible family members who matured. Their lives were changed at the beginning and continued to change as they followed Jesus with His family on mission.

Paul labored to present people as "mature Christians." For him it wasn't about attending a meeting to get information, but it was about the transformation of lives as they followed and obeyed Jesus.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:10–12, he describes himself as a spiritual father dealing with his children—encouraging, comforting, and urging them to live lives worthy of God in the context of His family together on His mission.

The Scripture uses natural parallels in family to the spiritual goal of growth and maturity. What are the phases the Bible mentions?

The biggest joy of a spiritual parent or grandparent is to witness multiple generations of disciples who were influenced by those they were privileged to influence.

- **Infants (Hebrews 5:12-14):** They are newborn Christians who need lots of care. They need basic ideas formed in them and they often do things that are completely self focused.
- **Children (2 Thessalonians 2:12-14):** They are growing in their relationship with God and other Christians. They need nurturing and guidance in learning how to not be selfish and share. They need help in moving from focusing on their own needs to thinking about and caring for the needs of others (Phil 2:1-7).
- **Young Adults (1 John 2:13-14):** They are more Kingdom-focused. John tells us they "have overcome the evil one and the word abides in them." They are shifting from self-centeredness to being God-centered and others-centered. They want to be used by God and make a difference for the Kingdom. They begin to take responsibility and care to help others grow.
- **Parents (Galatians 4:10):** They are concerned with seeing Christ formed in people. They understand the importance of others in God's plans and purposes. They understand children's needs and seek to find ways to meet them. They know that helping other children grow and make it in God has a great reward. They think things like, "So and so needs help in a certain area, and I will find a way to help them...I am willing to lead a group to help others," etc.

- **Grandparents (2 Timothy 2:2):** They help parents and children, like Paul to Timothy, to get others involved in producing. They are thankful when other parents and children begin to care and help others grow. They delight in seeing others spiritually productive. They have much experience and know God's faithfulness, and they motivate others out of that experience. They delight in and want to invest in multiple generations who will continue the work of Christ beyond them.

Check it out and sign up



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Having this scorecard (definition of success) in leaders minds changes the culture of the church. The church takes on the culture of following and growing up in Christ as they engage in His mission (Col 1:28-29, Eph 4:11-13).

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