

# Seven Takeaways from “*The Pilgrim’s Progress*”

## by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle

The newspaper *The Guardian* awarded John Bunyan’s book as the second-most significant novel of all time. This Sunday, All Saints Day, we conclude our pilgrimage with Christian by crossing the River of Death and making safe passage to the Celestial City. Looking back on this classic, I’d like to share Seven Takeaways from *The Pilgrim’s Progress*:

- 1. We’re pilgrims on a pilgrimage.** Christian boldly declares, “To go back is nothing but death; to go forward is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it. I will yet go forward.” And the psalmist says, “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.” ([Psalm 84:5 NIV](#)) This way of understanding my faith and life makes Christianity an adventure and challenge to embark upon.
- 2. Process: Life is about the journey *and* the destination.** Christianity is not just about getting into the Celestial City—the journey is just as important as the destination. The getting there, the arriving, and the returning are all crucial parts of the mix. Enjoy the ride!
- 3. Pay Attention to the Path.** Every pilgrim’s path is different, yet Christ is the path. We need to stay focused on the Holy Way or the King’s Highway—that is the best path. Don’t take short-cuts or bypasses. It isn’t easy—in fact it can be hard, narrow, and steep at times, but it is always the path of life that protects us from destruction.
- 4. People.** Don’t go at this journey solo. We need traveling companions, people to share our experiences with. People who will help us and we can help them. Learn from the people you meet along the way. We need good people like Hopeful and Faithful and mentors like Evangelist or the Four Shepherds. We need to be aware of bad apples out there like Mr. Two-Tongues, Pliable, or Ignorance. They have much to teach us about what we do and *don’t* believe.
- 5. Persevere.** Pilgrimages are not cake walks. This journey involves fits and starts, advances, retreats, road-blocks, detours, delays, back tracking, trials and errors, victories and defeats. In the larger scheme of things, all of these things are part of our progress, our movement towards the celestial city. Don’t give up! Keep moving forward, even when you have gotten sidetracked. As Winston Churchill once said, “When you’re going through hell—don’t stop!”
- 6. Presents.** Use and enjoy the good gifts God and fellow pilgrims have given you—spiritual armor, traveling directions, and words of wisdom and warning. And remember the greatest gift of all—God’s grace. We could never leave the City of Destruction and make it to the Celestial City except by the grace of God.
- 7. Promise and Purpose.** We’re progressing, moving forward, even in peril. There is a purpose to all this. It’s leading somewhere—to not only spiritual growth, but to paradise. We can find purpose and meaning even in the challenges we face. Death is not the end—it concludes one journey and commences our heavenly journey. God’s promises to us give us hope to keep calm and carry on, even in pandemics and political elections.