

EXCELLENCE

Numbers 18:25-32

2/9/2020 – Ten:27 Ministries – Pastor Phil Emerson

ASK

- What activity do you do that you give the most care & attention to?
- Why that?

As Christians, we talk about all sorts of things we do

- Love our neighbor
- Turn the other cheek
- serve

BUT no matter what we do, God tells us we should do it with excellence.

Excellence - The Oxford Dictionary defines it in this way:

The quality of being outstanding or extremely good.

The word excel is defined as, “to do or be better than; to surpass.”

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might

I Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the
glory of God

Notice the text says, "Whatever, you do." Your farming, your job, the things you enjoy, your marriage, raising your kids, work for the church, the care of your pets, time with family, friendships, how you speak to others -
WHATEVER, YOU DO!

Illustration – Committed to Excellence

On October 13, 1962, a little boy was born in Starkville, Mississippi. His father was a bricklayer. As the young boy grew and matured he and his brothers would go with their father to the job site to help out. As he continued to grow, Jerry joined his father on the platform while his younger brothers would throw bricks up one-by-one for Jerry to stack for his dad. Jerry never dreamed that in catching brick after brick he was preparing for the most prolific professional football career that any receiver would ever experience. The Jerry I'm speaking about is Jerry Rice of the San Francisco Forty-Niners.

Jerry Rice graduated from high school and attended tiny Mississippi Valley State on a football scholarship. Out of college he was drafted in the first round as the 16th overall pick of the 1985 draft by the San Francisco 49ers. He wasn't even the first receiver chosen. There were **TWO** other receivers drafted before him; the New York Jets' drafted Al Toon and then the Cincinnati Bengals chose Eddie Brown before Jerry was chosen. Heard of either of those?

Jerry Rice was always known as the hardest worker **IN HIS PROFESSION**. As the preseason rolled around Jerry arrived at training camp **FIVE DAYS EARLY** - during the time for the rookies to report. Why would the most successful receiver in NFL history who is destined for the NFL Hall of Fame show up to workout with the rookies? Because Jerry is a champion who strives for *excellence* every day of his life.

The June 6, 1997 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle reported on the beginning of the Forty-Niners' training camp. The article states, It's hard to say what kind of impression the 49ers' two top draft choices are having on new coach Steve Mariucci, but Jerry Rice certainly knows how to make the coach smile on the first day of training camp. Mariucci gleefully said at his opening press conference last night. ``Jerry Rice was not invited to the rookies-and-selected-veteran camp. But he shows up anyway. He's been here since Monday. Is there any wonder why the guy is the greatest? ``We're going to have to tell him, `Jerry get out of here. Let the other guys get some work, please,'

Illustration – Only Excellence!

Gene Stallings tells of an incident when he was defensive backfield coach for the Dallas Cowboys. Two All-Pro players, Charlie Waters and Cliff Harris, were sitting in front of their lockers after playing a tough game against the Washington Redskins. They were still in their uniforms, and their heads were bowed in exhaustion. Waters said to Harris, “By the way, what was the final score?” Excellence isn’t

determined by comparing our score to someone else's. Excellence comes from giving one's best, no matter the score!

It is easy for those of us who watch incredible athletes like Jerry Rice to consider their abilities and accomplishments and bow out of the race for excellence.

Most people combat that by saying, 'well, if you paid me millions, I'd do that.' The point is, people do this, because they want to be the best at whatever it is they are doing. Again, do we want to be the best at whatever we do?

Illustration – Excellence in missions

David Livingstone was one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived. He moved to Africa in the early 1800's, married his wife Mary in Africa in 1845, and never stopped pursuing excellence for the Kingdom of God during his lifetime.

There was a time when Dr. Livingstone was approached about the possibility of a missionary society sending some more men to help him in his efforts to reach the people of Africa. They wrote him a letter that read, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there

is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

For me – computers, ministry, helping people – I want to do *WHATEVER* I can to get the *BEST* results, regardless of the cost!

It makes sense that I would do that for computers – it's my company and for the company to be the best it can be I have to give it whatever I can!

And if I'm striving for that level of excellence in my company, doesn't God deserve nothing less???

Even if it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, go out and sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures.

Sweep streets like Handel and Beethoven composed music

Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry.

Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.

Colossians 3:23-24

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

After all the LOVE God has shown me ... GRACE, MERCY, PEACE ...
God has given me ... and God CONTINUES to watch out for me and guide
me, why would I want ANYTHING less than excellence in serving God?

Biblically speaking, the pursuit of excellence refers to pursuing and doing
the best we can with the gifts and abilities God has given us, giving our best
to the glory of God. Living our lives the way Jesus wants us to. Excellence is
more about becoming than being. It's a way of life that needs to be at the
center of how we live our lives.

If we choose not to pursue excellence, then we are choosing a mediocre
Christian life.

If we choose not to pursue excellence, then we are choosing a bland
Christian life.

If we choose not to pursue excellence, then we are choosing a vanilla
Christian life.

If we choose not to pursue excellence, then we are choosing a lukewarm
Christian life.

If we truly love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, then we
must seek to do our best, we must pursue excellence. Our pursuit of
excellence must be motivated by our love for God. Our values, our priorities,
and our motives must align with God's will and God's Word.

Remember the Parable of the Good Samaritan?

What's the greatest commandment?

Luke 10:27 our namesake

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and **with all your strength** and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

With all our HEART, SOUL, STRENGTH, MIND

With EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT!!

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Numbers 18:25-32

²⁵ The LORD said to Moses, ²⁶ “Speak to the Levites and say to them: ‘When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD’s offering. ²⁷ Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. ²⁸ In this way you also will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from

the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest. ²⁹ You must present as the LORD's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you.'

³⁰ "Say to the Levites: 'When you present the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the product of the threshing floor or the winepress.

³¹ You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the tent of meeting. ³² By presenting the best part of it you will not be guilty in this matter; then you will not defile the holy offerings of the Israelites, and you will not die.'"

It may sound like it's about money but it's really not. It's really about excellence in what we do for God.

God calls for Excellence

- In the nation of Israel, there were 12 tribes.
- One tribe, Levi, was set aside by God to be the priests, care for the temple, tabernacle, etc.
- From within the tribe of Levi would come the "priests" or holy men that would tend to the Ark of the Covenant.
- God told the 11 tribes other than Levi that they are to *tithe*, give 10% of everything they produce (wheat, wine, sheep, cattle, etc) to the tribe of Levi
- This wasn't in terms of MONEY like we think of today
- Rather it was in whatever they did

- Family that made blankets, give 10% of their blankets to the Levites
- Computer manufacturer, give 10% of all the computers to the Levites
- Levites lived off the tithes from the other 11 tribes
- Then, from all the Levites got, they were to give 10% to the Lord

So far, so good. Nothing shocking or radical yet ...just a lesson on tithing.

But the KEY in this piece from Numbers is verse 29

²⁹ You must present as the LORD's portion **THE BEST** and holiest part of everything given to you.'

In other words, if we are giving 10% of whatever it is we make or do to God but we are not giving **the BEST 10%**, then we are sinning.

When we serve God, we are to do so with excellence.

The scary part is that it is unfortunately easy for us to justify giving God less than our best

- If you make cars and a few came off with defects, you wouldn't want to sell those to a *paying customer*they're paying good money!
- I've seen LOTS of people ... and I've unfortunately done this myself ... look at the schedule I've got for the day and say to myself, "When can I squeeze in some God time?"

- I remember a day from my schedule last fall ...
 - 4am awake to shower
 - 5am – on the road to Duluth
 - 8:15 – in Duluth with a friend who needed a hand
 - Noon – business handled, time for lunch with Austin
 - 1pm – drive back to the cities
 - 4pm – stop in at office for 15 minutes
 - 4:45 – Chamber of Commerce networking event in Apple Valley
 - 6:30 – bible study at the church
 - 8:30 – meet with a friend who needed to talk
 - 10pm – collapse
- When “God time” should be the FIRST thing I put on my calendar!!

Leviticus 22:20-22

²⁰ Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. ²¹ When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. ²² Do not offer to the LORD the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as a food offering presented to the LORD.

Whatever we give to God or do for God should be with excellence!

CONCLUSION

When the work is being approached from the right heart, the task will be completed with all their strength, with steadfastness, and certainty.

There will be no short cuts, wrong motives, empty excuses.

Whether the boss is present and watching or far away, the whole-hearted servant strives for perfection.

Here is a truth worth grasping, no matter what is done, the right whole-hearted approach is seen by all and gets the best results in the end. Do you give a right whole-hearted effort in your workplace?

Much has been said the last couple weeks about Kobe Bryant, since his death two weeks ago. It reminded me of something one of trainers said about Kobe:

Rasheed Hazzard, Lakers scout, 2006-11; current New York Knicks assistant coach: I got a phone call from a blocked number the day after Labor Day. It's 11 p.m., and it's Kobe, and he wanted to know if I would help him on the court at 5:30 a.m. I told him I'll be there, and I show up at 5:20 a.m. thinking I'm early, and he's already in a full sweat. He hired a guy just to stretch him that year and to show him different ways to do active warm-ups, so he had already done that and

lifted weights. He's in a full sweat 10 minutes before we're supposed to meet and ready to go. That's when I realized 5:30 a.m. meant 4:45 a.m. with Kobe. When we were done, he went and had a track workout. When he was done at the track, he had a core workout, and then I met him that night to get some more shots in. He averaged taking 1,000 shots at every practice. I've never seen anyone work like that. His hunger to be the best is unmatched.

And that was during the off season!

Imaging for a moment

- Someone sees what you are doing
- Notices you are doing it with great gusto
- Notices you are doing it with great conviction
- And that person is impressed
- Wonders what's behind that ????

Titus 2:7

In everything set them an example by doing what is good.

Your actions, done with excellence, just may have an impact on someone for Christ!

Illustration from Stradivarius - Our Daily Bread, January 25, 1993

The person who I think sums this up best is Stradivarius. Anyone heard of him?

The name Stradivarius is synonymous with fine violins. This is true because Antonius Stradivarius insisted that no instrument constructed in his shop be sold until it was as near perfection as human care and skill could make it. Stradivarius observed, "God needs violins to send His music into the world, and if any violins are defective God's music will be spoiled." So he made sure what he produced was the best – because anything less would be short changing God.

What about what you produce?