

Committing Ourselves to Excellence

Introduction

2 Timothy. 2:15

1. **God has never done or made anything that was not characterized by superlative goodness and excellent quality:**

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good....

2. **Unfortunately, however, the words *excellence* and *quality* sometimes cannot be used to describe the products of our efforts — occasionally we slip into the habit of doing things in a careless, inferior way.**
 - A. **When I was in the military, after completing a project, I often heard, “well, it’s good enough for government work.”**
3. **But in the Lord’s work, of all things, it should constantly be our aim to do the very best we are capable of.**
4. **Should we not be motivated by a commitment to excellence in the work of the Lord?**

Two Basic Attitudes Are Possible:

Mediocrity

1. **A certain disposition that is concerned with nothing higher than “getting by.”**
 - A. **This attitude is content with a relatively low level of quality.**
 - B. **Nothing is aspired to beyond what is “good enough.”**
2. **With this attitude, we offer work and service to the Lord that are inferior even by human standards. Cf. Hag. 1:4; Mal. 1:8.**

Haggai 1:4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

Malachi 1:8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the Lord of hosts.

- A. **What object lesson was God teaching by requiring Israel to offer the first and best of what they had physically — if not that we ought in all things to “give of our best to the Master”?**
- B. **Solomon advised:**

Proverbs 3:9 Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase.

3. **John Stuart Mill: “The general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind”**

4. **“Mediocre” = of moderate to low quality; average or inferior.**
5. **In our work, when we take the course of least resistance and do only what is easy, mediocrity increases — without a conscious effort to rise above it, we are left with a “lowest common denominator” quality of thinking and living.**
6. **In regard to less-than-excellent work in the church, people have been overheard to say, “Oh well, it’s only the church.”**
 - A. **What kind of attitude is reflected in such a statement?**
 - B. **What would be the results of such an attitude in the Lord’s work?**

Excellence

1. **Rather than a contentment with mediocrity, we should have a commitment to excellence in whatever we do.**

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, **do it with your might;** for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

Colossians 3:23-24 And whatever you do, **do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

2. **Should we not have higher standards of excellence in the Lord's work than in our own endeavors?**

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, **always abounding in the work of the Lord**, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and **he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully**.

3. **Our English word "pride" can mean a sinful attitude toward oneself — but we also use it to mean self-respect, a sense of one's own proper dignity or value, pleasure or satisfaction taken in one's work, etc.**

A. **Is there not a good sense in which it can be said we ought to "take pride" in what we do in the Lord's work?**

Galatians 6:4 But let each one examine his own work, and **then he will have rejoicing in himself alone**, and not in another.

4. **Zenith, the electronics manufacturer, said in its advertising: "The quality goes in before the name goes on."**

A. **What should be the quality of the work that we attach the Lord's name to?**

B. **We have a duty to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things"** (Titus 2:10).

5. **Quality knowledge leads to quality principles and convictions which results in quality actions.**

6. **A commitment to excellence (or the lack of it) often shows up most clearly in the way we do the "little" things.**

- 7. Should we not have a high commitment to excellence in:**
 - A. Our individual work as Christians?**
 - B. Our congregational work?**

- 8. A commitment to excellence requires extra effort — carefulness and hard work are required.**

Ephesians 5:15 See then that **you walk circumspectly**, not as fools but as wise.

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Conclusion

1. **We should always strive to “give of our best to the Master.”**
 - A. **We should aim to go “beyond ordinary.**
 - B. **We should be striving for the “quality life.”**
2. **It makes a big difference how high our goals are in the work we do.**
 - A. **If we “aim for the stars,” we may not reach them every time, but our work will be more excellent than if our sights were lower.**
 - B. **It is not a shame to fail; it is a shame to aim low.**
3. **Especially – wherever the Lord’s work is concerned, good enough is not good enough!**
4. **Our intent should always be to work as those who do “not need to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15).**
5. **Indeed, nothing but the best is good enough for the Lord who gave His life for us.**

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that **those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

