

- *“It is an addiction and a curse. It is a curse that prevents churches from reaching their potential for God. The curse hinders Christians from converting souls to Jesus. It is an addiction that does not want to be broken. The addiction resists reform and argues that it must maintain old habits and methods. It is an addiction and curse that dishonors God and withholds from Him the glory due His excellent name. The addiction and curse is called “mediocrity.” It stands diametrically opposed to everything God is and to everything God calls us to do. It means settling for less than our best. It is happy with half hearted efforts and results. It is a disgrace to the God we serve. While some brethren may settle for “good enough,” where would we go in Scripture to find that “good enough” pleases God? Search the 66 books and you will find that God was never happy when His people settled for mediocrity in serving Him. It is time that we restored the spirit of excellence that characterized so many of God’s faithful servants in Bible days!”* (Do Things Well; Ch.1 “The Pursuit of Excellence”; pg.7)
- These words written by Max Dawson of the Dowlen Road Church in Beaumont, Texas are strong, but they are accurate. There is nothing in this life that can destroy a church, outside of blatant sin or false doctrine, than mediocrity (something that is adequate but not very good) and apathy (lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern). The church that is ok with mediocrity isn’t a church that will pursue growth. The apathetic Christian does not strive to be the absolute best they can be for the Lord because they’re just not all that interested or enthused about the Lord and the Kingdom. These types of churches and these types of Christians do not put forth great effort into their faith and life for the Lord.
- Our focus of glorifying God will be well served by considering the Christian and pursuing excellence. The pursuit of excellence isn’t something that every single person automatically engages in in this life. Many people are completely content with settling for mediocrity and living this life without investing much effort to be great. They do not see the need of giving every effort in what they do to be the best that they can be. Society has done nothing to encourage the pursuit of excellence. Instead, it seems as if it encourages laziness, apathy, and mediocrity through the supporting of those who are not willing to make something of themselves. Instead of the winner or top performer receiving the accolades and rewards, everyone now seems to get a prize just for being there. Unfortunately, we never see God giving out participation awards to just anyone. God does not accept the simple mediocre “adequate, but not very good” life of someone who claims to be of His people. He is not glorified by mediocrity because, you see, God expects for His people to be something more than just ordinary, adequate, or just not very good. He expects for us to pursue (seek aggressively, to run after with haste, to acquire with a ferocious effort) excellence in all that we do. He expects that effort out of His people. So let’s study about the excellencies of God and the excellence that He expects from Christians.

I. God is Excellent

- A. Solomon recognized the excellent nature of God when he was constructing the Lord’s Temple. (**II Chronicles 2**)
 1. Solomon was given the opportunity to build a house for the name of the Lord. (**v.1**)
 2. He recognized that this house would be need to be great “for greater is our God than all the gods.” (**v.5**)
 3. Solomon understood the grand and excellent nature of the God of heaven, and he knew that the house he was about to build needed to be “great and wonderful” as well. (**v.9**)
 4. Solomon knew of God’s greatness and excellences.
- B. There are many characteristics and attributes that make God great and excellent.
 1. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. (**II Chron. 2:12 & Rev. 4:11**)
 2. He is the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the great, mighty, and awesome God. (**Duet. 10:17**)
 3. He knows all and is aware of all things, even the falling sparrow and the number of hairs on your head. (**Matt. 10:29,30**)
 4. He is perfectly just in all that He does. (**Duet. 32:4**)
 5. He is perfect in His love, promises, and patience, and He desires for all people to be saved. (**John 3:16 & II Peter 3:9**)
 6. The Lord gave up the best of heaven for a people who were not worthy of His blood.
 7. Certainly we serve a great, excellent, and perfect God. He is a God that can only be a part of and accept that which is as He is.

II. God Hates Mediocrity

- A. God was furious when some in Israel were apathetic towards Him and offered less than their best. (**Malachi 1**)
 1. God reminded the people that the son was to honor the father. The master was to be respected. (**v.6**)
 2. They had despised and dishonored the Lord by presenting that which was sick and blind. (**vv.7,8**)
 3. Yet, it seems as if they still expected for God to bless them and be pleased with them. (**v.9**)
 4. The Lord condemns them for their pathetic sacrifices. (**v.10**)
 5. God said it would be better if they would just shut the gates to the alter so He would not be disgraced by the worthless sacrifices that were being laid before Him. These people dishonored God by not giving of their best.
- B. God is dishonored and He is not glorified when we offer Him any less than our best.
 1. He is not glorified when He is only the subject of our attention during Sundays and Wednesdays.
 2. He is not honored when we come together and give Him nothing more than lip service while our hearts and minds are somewhere else entirely. (**Matt. 15:8**)
 3. He is not honored when we simply give Him our leftover time, energy, or funds. That which is left over is what we have no need of. Those who offered the sacrifices of the lame and blind had no need of them and they were of no importance.

4. God is not pleased, nor should He be pleased when the creation believes that the Creator is worth less than their best. We cannot say that we love God with all of our mind, soul, and strength if we are not giving Him our very best in all that we do.
- C. The Apostle Paul recognized that settling for mediocrity would be the death of a Christian. **(I Cor. 9:24-27)**
 1. Paul equates this life to the running of a race.
 2. He encourages them to run in such a way that they may win. **(v.24)**
 3. Paul himself says that he does not run or box aimlessly, but he disciplines his body so that he wouldn't disqualify himself. **(vv.26,27)**
 4. Paul gave every effort to run this race with a purpose and that purpose was one of excellence. He wanted to pursue excellence for his excellent God.

III. God Calls Us to Pursue Excellence

- A. God has given us all different talents and abilities **(I Cor. 12:14-30)**, therefore we are talking about quality over quantity. We are to give our best, whatever that happens to be, for the Lord so that He will be glorified. **(I Peter 4:7-11)**
- B. This pursuit of excellence begins with having an excellent mindset.
 1. Solomon had this mindset because he requested the best and finest workers and materials to be used in the building of the Temple of God. **(II Chron. 2:7,8)**
 2. Pursuing excellence for God, again, doesn't automatically mean great quantity. The widow of **Mark 12:41-44** shows us what it means to pursue excellence in all that we do. She could not give as much as others, but she gave everything she could, and she was blessed in her efforts by Jesus. She had the heart of a cheerful giver. **(II Cor. 9:7)**
 3. All throughout the New Testament, Christians are encouraged to think upon and act in an excellent way. In doing so they would be able to develop this excellent attitude in their service to God.
 - a) *"I show you a more excellent way."* **(I Cor. 12:31)**
 - b) *"...that you may approve the things that are excellent"* **(Phil. 1:10)**
 - c) *"Whatever is...excellent...dwell on these things."* **(Phil 4:8)**
 - d) *"Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles"* **(I Peter 2:12)**
 - e) *"applying all diligence...supply moral excellence"* **(II Peter 1:5)**
 4. In 3 out of these 5 passages, love is part of the subject being discussed. Our love for God has a great deal to do with whether we live a life that gives every effort to be excellent for God or whether we live being apathetic and settling for mediocrity.
- C. This mindset and attitude of pursuing excellence should drive us to give God our very best in all that we do in this life.
 1. We should pursue greater things. Things that will help us excel in this life.
 - a) *"So then we pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another."* **(Rom. 14:19)**
 - b) *"Pursue love."* **(I Cor. 14:1)**
 - c) *"Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."* **(II Tim. 2:22)**
 - d) *"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."* **(Heb. 12:14)**
 - e) *"He (righteous person from Psalm 34:14) must seek peace and pursue it."* **(I Peter 3:11)**
 2. We should press (concerted effort) on and forward towards glory.
 - a) *"so let us press on to know the Lord"* **(Hosea 6:3)** *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."* **(Hosea 4:6)**
 - b) *"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ."* **(Phil. 3:14)**
 - c) *"Therefore leaving the elementary teachings about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God."* **(Heb. 6:1)**
 3. We should do all things with all our might.
 - a) *"Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge of wisdom in Sheol where you are going."* **(Ecc. 9:10)**
 - b) *"not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."* **(Rom. 12:11)**
 - c) *"whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men."* **(Col. 3:23)**
- D. In all things, even in the areas where we are adequate and faithful, we should remember the words of Paul to the Thessalonians and "excel still more." **(I Thess. 4:10)**

It should be firmly impressed upon us that God is excellent and He expects for His people to pursue that same excellence. That's not always easy in this life. There are many things that try to influence us to give a poor effort or to just not care that much about the Lord and our life for Him. May God help us to be a type of people that have our eyes on the prize of heaven and an eternity of glorifying God. What a sad day it would be if we stand before the Lord and we don't receive the reward because we just didn't care enough and our effort for God just wasn't there. Isaac D'Israeli said it well with this quote, *"It is a wretched taste to be gratified with mediocrity when the excellent lies before us."* May we always give an excellent effort for the Lord.