



Pause With Purpose

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...to refresh

...to grow

Excellence

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the culture of the United States experienced a significant shift in attitude and values. Thrift, careful stewardship of resources, and the meeting of needs were replaced by eager consumption, disposable convenience, and the fulfillment of wants. "New" met needs that "old" couldn't fill. Product designers fueled this change in attitude and lifestyle by intentionally making goods less durable, thus encouraging new purchases more often. This concept, called "planned obsolescence", was used as a strategy to end the Great Depression of the early 1900's.

We might pause and wonder what the life style equivalent of planned obsolescence would be. Intentional mediocrity, perhaps? While few of us would eagerly embrace this as the theme of our life, many of us actually slip on the jacket of "passive mediocrity" and wear it as our life uniform. We passively take what life gives us, hoping to survive what comes our way. We live to "make it through", rather than to "make a difference."

How would our life and the lives of those around us be different if we decided to upgrade? Not upgrade our "stuff", but upgrade our approach to

living? What if, rather than settling for a mediocre existence, we chose to reach for and embrace *excellence*? Seem out of reach, beyond your ability? Not so!

Excellence is a wonderful reality sadly tainted by our experiences in this competitive world. "Excellence" is often reserved only for those who are "on the top", who get the "A", or who come in first place. And, quite frankly, these are small spaces only few can occupy.

So what really is excellence, and how can we develop it in our life? First, let's note what excellence is *not*. Excellence is not perfection, being the best, or having the most. It is not measured by financial gain or status. It is not limited to only certain areas of life. And it is not exhibited the same way in every life.

Webster gives us a peek at what excellence is when he defines it as being "very good of it's kind". This let's us know that excellence, or being "very good", demonstrates itself in many different ways, in all areas of life. So how can we be excellent? Consider this.

1) Our own potential for excellence is often related to our gifts. (And yes, we all are gifted!) As we discover our

gifts, we uncover the field in which our excellence can grow and bloom.

2) Excellence requires intentional effort. This is not "I'll try" effort, but "I'll train" effort - the effort to study, learn, practice, and develop our gifts into excellence.

3) Excellence involves fulfilling our purpose or mission, both long term and short term. For example, our extended calling as a parent might include a shorter term mission as a soccer coach, both of which offer opportunities for excellence.

4) Passion powers excellence. When we do what we are meant to do, using the gifts we have been blessed with, we tap into a passion that fuels a joyful effort to be "very good".

5) Excellence is based on integrity. It exists when we exercise our gifts within the boundaries of morals and values that respect and serve God, His creatures, and His creation. The financially successful company, then, that intentionally pollutes, or disregards the wellbeing of its employees or customers is not excellent. Excellence requires morality, not just ability.

There is one more important element of excellence to consider - *humility*. Next month, we'll explore this key attitude of excellence. For now, let's just appreciate how rich, how diverse, and how available excellence really is.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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Can You Believe It?

Do you ever wonder what sets apart those who demonstrate excellence from the average person? Is it talent? Success? Financial backing? Opportunity? Good looks? Perhaps not!

More than anything, what sets them apart is their belief that they can be excellent, and their desire and decision to be so. Although their excellence is not all-encompassing, they do choose to connect with their passion, develop their gifts, and become "very good" in their chosen areas. They become excellent cooks for their family, excellent parents, excellent mechanics, excellent knitters, excellent artists, excellent healers, excellent listeners, excellent gardeners, excellent encouragers, or what ever else might draw them.

While these people do not seek the title of "excellent", they seek to live it out in what they do.

What about the rest of us? What would it take to believe that each one of us has the potential for excellence? Where would we like *our* excellence to show itself?



"Diamonds are lumps of coal that took the time to develop their real potential."

-Anonymous