

Excellence (James W. Nderitu, 20th May 2025)

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True excellence isn't just about worldly success or recognition, but setting our minds and striving to reflect God's character in all we do.

Excellence means being outstanding or extremely good at something. It involves superior performance and achievement. For Christians, excellence goes deeper. It means being the best we can be with God's help, doing tasks with care, skill, and honesty. Christian excellence is about a clear, purposeful direction in life that reflects God's nature.

Excellence is a journey, not a destination. It's about growing, learning, and striving to improve. It's also about character—choosing to do what is right even when no one is watching. As Christians, we know that excellence is not just about outward success but about living in a way that honors God and serves others.

Dr. Grant C. Richison says that Biblical excellence points to God Himself as the source and object of excellence; therefore, the more common way to describe excellence is by the Greek term telos. TELOS describes the END or PURPOSE of something. God has made us for a purpose and to move toward this TELOS is to move toward excellence. This is the fundamental issue in excellence.

This also leads to fundamental questions about the purpose of life.

Aristotle's goal was to discover man's essential purpose of existence. Going by this philosophy, the excellence of a thing was related to the purpose for which it exists. However, being excellent ought to be seen in consideration to God's purpose for one's life. Excellence when understood this way is radically theocentric (God-centered). It means being the best we can be with God's help' while living out God's purposes.

The Biblical Foundation of Excellence

1. The Bible provides a strong foundation for why we should pursue excellence. Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NIV) states, "Whatever you do, do it well." **This verse calls us to approach every task with dedication and commitment, whether big or small.** It reminds us that our work reflects our values and faith. Doing things well is not about perfection but about wholeheartedly committing to our responsibilities.
2. Excellence is not just for our satisfaction or recognition. Colossians 3:17 (NIV) tells us, "**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**" This means our pursuit of excellence should be an act of worship, giving every task a greater purpose. When we dedicate our efforts to God, even ordinary tasks become sacred. We acknowledge that our talents and opportunities are gifts from Him, and we use them to reflect His character in all we do.

3. Proverbs 22:29 (NIV) highlights the value of skill and dedication: “Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings.” **This scripture shows that excellence can lead to greater opportunities, not for self-glory but to glorify God.** Striving for excellence sets us apart and allows us to be effective in our witness for Christ.

Examples of Biblical Excellence

The Bible gives us clear examples of excellence:

- **Daniel and the Three Hebrew Boys:** Daniel 1:17-20

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found **none equal** to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

Daniel and his friends excelling in wisdom and understanding because of their commitment to God. Their excellence brought them favor and influence in a foreign land, showing how godly excellence can open doors and create opportunities for impact.

- **Ruth:** Ruth’s life is a powerful example of excellent character and loyalty. Her dedication to her mother-in-law Naomi and her hard work in the fields (Ruth 2:2-3) earned her a reputation as a woman of noble character. Ruth’s diligence and integrity led to blessings and divine favour, demonstrating how excellence can lead to unexpected opportunities.

Motivation for Christian Excellence

Christians are called to pursue excellence for several reasons:

1. **God and Jesus are Excellent:** The Bible reminds us of God’s majestic excellence in verses like Psalm 8:1 (Lord, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth You have set your glory in the heavens.) and Hebrews 8:6 (But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises). As

followers of Christ, we are called to reflect His excellence. God's creation shows His excellence—intricate and intentional. Our pursuit of excellence is a response to His greatness.

2. **Excellence Honors God and Glorifies Christ:** 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." John 15:8 tells us, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." Striving for excellence honors God and demonstrates His transformative power. Our actions, when done with excellence, become worship and testimony.
3. **Excellence Encourages Growth:** 1 Peter 4:10 encourages us to use our gifts to serve others, while 2 Peter 1:5-8 urges us to add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love to our faith. Excellence fosters personal growth and strengthens our communities, encouraging others to strive for their best.
4. **Excellence is a Witness to Others:** Matthew 5:16 tells us to let our light shine before others so that they may see our good deeds and glorify God. Our commitment to excellence can draw others to Christ through the quality of our work and integrity.

Principles of excellence

Aristotle said that we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit. Habits come from subconscious mind. All our habits reflect subconscious feelings or emotions. It is therefore necessary to internalize principles and patterns of behavior that will enable you to achieve your purpose.

Here are some useful principle of excellence

1. **Recognize your uniqueness.** You cannot evaluate yourself against other people for that would reduce to an average. Your life has to be lived by you, your potential must be realized by you. You just be surrendered to the general or popular beliefs.
2. **Determine to be the best in everything.** Be trustworthy to your self and that will translate into your speech and be demonstrated by your life. Trust is based on character and competence. Aspire to do the best even when no one sees. Do not allow yourself to be a victim of people's opinion.
3. **Never stop improving.**

Do not become a settler, satisfied with the present. Keep exploring. Life is dynamic and the moment you stop growing you start dying. Look for information, read, attend seminars. Take responsibility for your improvement.

5. Keep yourself updated. Interact with minds of great thinkers regularly. Let the word of God be a lamp to your feet and light to your path (psalm 119:103)

3. Be committed to ethics and moral uprightness.

Ethics are mental attitudes that govern behavior. Ethics and integrity must be placed above personal satisfaction and qualification. Integrity is integration of your words and behavior.

4. Show genuine respect for others.

To respect is to honour, to esteem highly place much worth on another. Are there people that you find hard to respect? Do you recognize the potential in people?

5. Go the second mile.

Do not fear to do your best. Responsibility is greater than rights. Determine to give more than you can take from life. Do more than is expected of you. Go beyond the call of duty and beyond the assignment.

6. Set high standards for yourself and be consistent.

Always do the best you know how. A lot of people can be good for a moment but revert back and become inconsistent.

7. Seek to be a giver.

Genesis 14:22-24 Abram would not take what he had not earned. Free gifts make others have power over you. Sense of personal pride that comes because of achievement should be encouraged. Let your work be your signature. If you do not like something you have done or the way you are groomed do not let another see it.. You are the ruler- you set the standard.

8. Make excellence your lifestyle.

People will see you before they hear you. Be proud of who you are. Always seek to look good, feel good, seek good. Refuse the scarcity mentality that makes you want to grab. Do not postpone your life to tomorrow. Live today and enjoy the best.

9. Make improvement not excuses. Do not spend time looking for who to assign blame. Do what needs to be done.

10. Never compare yourself with others.

Compete with yourself. Compete with what you did last. Strive to be all you are meant to be. Observe people but do not make yourself who they are. To be yourself and

become yourself is the essence of life. To help others discover themselves is the essence of living.

Practical Steps to Pursuing and Maintaining Excellence

Excellence requires ongoing growth and commitment. Here are steps to help you pursue and maintain excellence:

1. **Trust in God's Guidance and Strength:** Trust that God will guide you through challenges and opportunities. Regular prayer and meditation on God's Word can provide the strength and focus needed to stay on track. Proverbs 3:5,6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight
2. **Define What Excellence Means to You:** Reflect on what excellence looks like in your life. Set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) that align with your values and purpose. Clear goals provide a roadmap for maintaining high standards.
3. **Develop Habits of Diligence and Discipline:** Cultivate habits that encourage diligence and discipline, such as regular practice and time management. Consistency in small tasks prepares you for greater responsibilities. Proverbs 6:10-11 ¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— ¹¹ and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.
4. **Strive for Continual Growth:** Adopt a mindset of lifelong learning. Seek opportunities to improve skills, expand knowledge, and grow spiritually. Learning and improvement are key to maintaining excellence.
5. **Prioritize Tasks and Manage Time Effectively:** Focus on the most important tasks and use tools like calendars and to-do lists to manage your time. Efficient time management is essential for achieving excellence.
6. **View Challenges as Opportunities for Growth:** See setbacks as chances to learn and develop resilience. Trust that God can use challenges to bring about growth and maturity.
7. **Evaluate Your Actions and Priorities Regularly:** Regularly assess your actions and priorities to ensure they align with your goals and values. Reflection helps keep you focused on your path to excellence.
8. **Surround Yourself with Supportive Individuals:** Find a community that encourages your pursuit of excellence. Supportive relationships provide feedback, wisdom, and accountability, helping you reach higher levels of achievement.

9. **Avoid Perfectionism by Setting Realistic Standards:** Excellence is not about being perfect but about doing your best. Set achievable standards and avoid perfectionism, which can lead to frustration and burnout.
10. **Recognize Signs of Stress and Practice Self-Care:** Pay attention to signs of stress and ensure regular rest and relaxation. Self-care is essential for maintaining high performance and avoiding burnout.

References

Graves, W. (2024, August 27). Pursuing Excellence as an Act of Worship.
<https://www.wilfredgraves.org/pursuing-excellence-as-an-act-of-worship/>

Richison, G., C. (n.d). *BIBLICAL EXCELLENCE and Critique of “Success Theology”*.
<https://versebyversecommentary.com/articles/doctrine/biblical-excellence/>

Case study

Read **Matthew 24:14-30**. What lessons about excellence can you draw from the Parable of the talents?