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Excellence in Action as seen in the Life of Jesus

By **Benedict Little**

We all expect, admire and demand excellence in probably all areas of life. We expect it from business, service providers, the cars we drive, technology, sport, employees, students, medicine and all areas in our lives. But we do expect it and practice it in the church.

A definition of excellence:

Excellence is defined as “possession mainly of good qualities in an unusual degree; surpassing virtue, merit, worth, value”. To achieve excellence there must be discipline & tenacity of purpose. We are to pursue excellence in our Walk, Work and Worship.

When I think of the life of Daniel, I find him faithful in public life, Faultless in his private life, and Fervent in his prayer-life. Daniel is one of the few men of the Bible about whom nothing bad is recorded. It is said of Daniel that he had a spirit of EXCELLENCE - 6:3, 4

We can also talk about the excellent women of the Bible to name a few Ruth, Esther, Mary, and Phoebe & Dorcas.

Text: II Peter 1:5:10 & Psalm 105:17-19

“⁵In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. ⁸The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But those who fail to develop in this way are short-sighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. ¹⁰So, dear brothers and sisters,^[a] work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.”

Joseph, the 11th son of his father, Jacob, and first of his mother Rachael, starts life out as the **FAVoured Son**, and rubbing his brothers up the wrong way, he is sold into slavery and end up in Egypt where he becomes a **FAITHFUL Steward** in the house of Potiphar. He excelled so much that Mr Potiphar put him in charge of his whole household, until Mrs Potiphar developed a strong liking of him. Unjustly and falsely accused he is put into prison, where he becomes the **FORGOTTEN Slave**. Even though he is in prison, he again excel in his work and is put in charge of the whole prison, doing his work so well that the chief of the prison did not need to check up on his work – wow! Talk about excellence! Through God’s providence, which Psalm 105:17-19 alludes to, Joseph is freed and becomes the **FAMOUS Statesman** in Egypt. He comes from Prison to the Palace – from prisoner to prime minister – wow

We had someone like that too didn’t we?

A reconciler; a restorer; a forgiver; a father; a lover of people, a friend to all, an example of a Statesman. When he died, the nation mourned, the WHOLE world mourned. Our very own Madiba Nelson Mandela.

In his fine book, Excellence, John Gardener says, “Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have **excellence** thrust in them. They achieve it. They do not have it unwittingly by doing what comes naturally and they don’t stumble into it in the course of amusing themselves. All excellence involves **discipline** and **tenacity** of purpose”.

Brian Harbour picks up on this theme in the Rising above the Crowd: “Success means being the best. Excellence means being your best. Success, to many, means being better than everyone else. Excellence means being better tomorrow than you were yesterday. Success means exceeding the achievements of other people. Excellence means matching your *practice* with your *potential*.”

Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way. – Booker T. Washington

What are the benefits & blessings of excellence? According to Peter

1. You will never fall 2 Peter 1:10
2. Keep us from being unproductive v8
3. Keep us from being unfruitful v8
4. Prevents memory loss v9
5. Prevent spiritual blindness v9
6. You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom v11
7. In Joseph’s case – the saving of many lives – Gen 45:5, 50:20

So what holds us back?

- Fear! Fear of Failure! Can I do this?
- Fear of criticism – what will people say

Have you thought about your life in this way?

“I am not selling my time just working for the money. I want to make a big, big difference in the lives of others. The world is going to be a better place because I am here and God is working through me!”

How can we be excellent at what we do?

Let’s quickly look at four ways

1. DECIDE what it is that you want to excel at – Rom 12:5f
2. DEVELOP your skills in that area – Eccl 9:10 cf 1 Thes 4:1
3. DEPLOY your skills/gifts – 1 Cor 12
4. DETERMINATION – endurance/staying power – even when it’s tough, no, especially when it’s tough – Heb 12:1-2

Joseph was a man of

1. INSIGHT – He had the ability to “see” deeper than just the surface
2. INTELLECT – the ability to learn quickly & well
3. INTUITION – He had the ability to discern matters
4. INTEGRITY – Before God, and man

Conclusion

God wants us to serve Him with Excellence

We have enough examples from scriptures to see that it is possible – like Joseph

If you have not been serving God as you should, and you want to make that right with God today contact your local leadership to pray for you