

**“In Search of Excellence”**

**Text: Matthew 5:16; Daniel 6:3**

April 27, 2008

Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church ([www.pbpc.org](http://www.pbpc.org))

Oakland, California

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**PRAY!**

Today we conclude our series on “Your Work Matters.” We’ve been looking at what God has to say about work.

This illustration comes from a *Time* magazine article called “The Hapless American Consumer. Why is service so bad?” The article starts with a story of Hapless Harry. “For Hapless Harry it was a rough day in the service economy. His car – a Fiasco 400 – started sputtering on the highway so Harry pulled into a gas station for help. ‘Sorry! No mechanics, we only have gas,’ shouted the attendant. ‘How can you call yourself a service station?’ yelled Harry. He went to the bank to get some emergency cash for a tow truck only to find the automatic teller machine was again out of order. ‘Real nice service!’ he muttered. Then Harry decided to use a credit card to buy a tool kit at Cheepo Discount Store. But he couldn’t find anybody to wait on him. ‘Service! Anyone! Please! Help me!’ was his cry. It had been a trying day indeed, Harry thought as he road a bus home but at least he thought he could look forward to his trip to Florida the following week with his wife Harriet. That is until Fly Way Air called, ‘Sorry, Mr. Hapless. Due to our merger with By Way Air your Florida flight has been canceled.’ Harry got so angry that he was going to call the Federal Aviation Administration immediately. But just then his phone went dead. No doubt because the Bell system had been split up, he imagined. That was the last straw. A few minutes later a wild eyed Harry burst into the newsroom of his local newspaper. ‘I’ve got a story for you,’ he cried. ‘There is no more service in America!’”

Have you ever felt like that? Tom Peters who co-authored the book, “In Search of Excellence,” says, “In general, service in America stinks! We live in an Age of Mediocrity. That’s why Christians of all people need to be excellent in their work.

- The Bible says Christians of all people ought to do their best in their work. We ought to set the standards for excellence. We ought to be the example for everybody else.

Matthew 5:16, Jesus says, “*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

- He says let your light shine on your good deeds so that people look at you and say, “That is a person of excellence. A quality person.”
- And it brings glory to God. That’s the way God wants us to live.
- He’s saying that your quality of work is a reflection of your faith.

Some of you say, “I just can’t witness on the job.” You are a witness whether you think so or not. It’s just a question of what kind – good or bad. Your work, your quality is an evidence of your faith. Are you letting your light shine?

One of the best examples of excellence in the Bible is in the Old Testament and that’s Daniel. In Daniel 6:3 it says, “*Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators by his exceptional qualities [circle that] that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.*”

- Daniel was a prisoner of war taken to a foreign country and within a matter of months he was rocketing toward the top. In a foreign economy, in a foreign hostile country, he rises to a place of prominence where he’s second in command over the whole nation. Why? Because he had character. Because he was a person of excellence.

Today, I want to talk to you about four qualities of how to excel at what you do, regardless of your work. These are qualities God wants you to build into your life, no matter what you do.

## 1. PEOPLE WHO EXCEL WORK WITH ENTHUSIASM.

- A. Colossians 3:23, “*Whatever you do, work at it with your whole heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters.*” Put your whole heart into it. He’s talking about enthusiasm.
- B. Emerson once said, “Nothing great was ever done without enthusiasm.” It says, “Whatever you do...” Whatever – big task or little task, at home or at work, whether you think it’s significant or not, you ought to work at it with enthusiasm.
- C. Last week we talked about one extreme in work – workaholicism. This week I need to talk about the other extreme – laziness. The Bible says that laziness is a problem that we need to eliminate from our lives. Proverbs has a lot to say about it.
  1. Proverbs 10:27, “*A lazy fellow is a pain to his employers like smoke in their eyes or vinegar that sets teeth on edge.*” It’s irritating to be around lazy people. They are heavenly sand paper. It’s like the guy taking a poll on the street. He said, ‘In America, the two greatest problems are ignorance and apathy. What do you think about that?’ The other guy answered, “I don’t know and I don’t care.”
  2. Illustration at UCLA Medical Center
- D. Rate yourself: What is my attitude at work? One to ten. “I resent it”, give yourself a “1.” “I tolerate it”, give yourself a “5.” “I jump out of bed in the morning and look forward to it with great gusto”, give yourself a “10.” If you don’t feel enthusiastic about your work, you should (a) change your attitude, or (b) get out of that job. If you have no enthusiasm for your work, you will never excel. God wants you to be the best you can be so you let your light shine.

## 2. PEOPLE WHO EXCEL SHARPEN THEIR SKILLS.

- A. They are continually growing, trying to be more effective, more efficient, trying to improve themselves, develop themselves and develop their skills.
- B. Proverbs 22:29, *“Do you see those who are skilled in their work? They will serve before kings...”* He’s saying cream rises to the top. Skilled people end up on top. Develop yourself. No matter what you do, work at it. Get better at it.
- C. How many of you have ever baked chocolate chip cookies? How many of you wish you had been Mrs. Fields? There’s a lady who took a thing that everybody does all the time, sharpened her skills, put thousands of people to work, is a benefit to the economy, and made a little bit of profit for herself too.
- D. Proverbs 19:8 (Good News), *“Do yourself a favor and learn all you can. Then remember what you learned and you will prosper.”* He’s saying develop yourself. Sharpen your skills no matter what you do.
- E. Rate yourself on this second one. How do I rate on job skills? Give yourself a “1” if they’re obsolete. Give yourself a “5” if you’re learning and trying to develop yourself. Give yourself a “10” if you have a development plan.

## 3. PEOPLE WHO EXCEL KEEP THEIR WORD.

- A. They’re dependable, reliable, trustworthy. They’re responsible. They’re a rare bird in our society – people you can count on.
- B. Proverbs 20:6 (Good News), *“Everyone talks about how loyal and faithful they are. But just try and find someone who really is.”* It’s rare to find somebody that you can count on. Reliability beats talent hands down in the long run. It’s like the tortoise and the hare. The greatest ability is dependability. If people know that when you say it will be done by a certain time it gets done, you will go light years ahead of people who have talent and sit on the sidelines.
- C. Have you ever had to work with somebody on whom you could never count? It’s hard. I heard about a teenage boy walking down the street looking for a job. He saw a sign that said, “Responsible young man wanted.” He walked in and said, “I’m it!” They said, ‘How do you know?’ He said, “Because at my last job, every time there was a problem they said, ‘You’re responsible.’”
- D. Are you responsible in the good sense? People who excel in life keep their word; you can count on them.
- E. Rate yourself. How reliable am I? Give yourself a “10” if people would say, “That person can always be counted on regardless of what they do. If they say it will be done, it will be done.”

#### 4. PEOPLE WHO EXCEL DO MORE THAN IS EXPECTED.

- A. Matthew 5:41, *“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”* Jesus said that in the Sermon on the Mount. What’s he taking about?”
- B. It’s called going beyond the call of duty. That is the principle of the second mile. The second mile principle is practiced by every single person in life who excels. Jesus says, as a Christian, we should do more than is expected at work. We should not just try to get by on the minimum. We should go beyond the call of duty. We should put forth the extra effort. When something is required of us we should actually go beyond it, simply because we’re believers.
- C. Jesus – Wedding (6), Feeding of 5,000, God’s enemies reconciled
- D. Can you imagine how our society would be transformed if every Christian practiced going the second mile at work? What would that do to your job if every Christian did more than what was expected at work? How would that transform your marriage if you did more for your wife or your husband than is the minimum? Or your children? It would blow their minds.
- E. What a radical idea and yet it is the key to excellence. You do more than is expected. If anybody forces you to go a mile, go two.
- F. Rate yourself: What kind of worker am I? Do I do the minimum expected at work? – give yourself a “1.” Do I always do more than expected? – give yourself a “10.” People who excel do more than expected.

What’s a good testimony or witness? That’s letting *“your life shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

#### PRAYER

**Father, I want to make the rest of my life the best of my life. Help me to work with enthusiasm, to not be slack, to do it as doing it for You and not for others. Help me to sharpen my skills, to be better at what I do as a testimony and as a witness. God, help me to be a reliable person. I want to be dependable. I want to be the kind of person who can be counted on. I want to develop that second mile principle in my life, to do more than is expected. That’s the only way to excel. I want to do it all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.**