

WORK TOWARDS EXCELLENCE, NOT PERFECTION

PHILIPPIANS 4:8,9 (ESV)

FINALLY, BROTHERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS HONORABLE, WHATEVER IS JUST, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS COMMENDABLE, IF THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE, IF THERE IS ANYTHING WORTHY OF PRAISE, THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS. WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND RECEIVED AND HEARD AND SEEN IN ME—PRACTICE THESE THINGS, AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.

Each year there are a handful of pitchers who throw a “perfect game.” This can be described as a game in which all batters from one team are retired in order, with no one reaching base (thank you dictionary.com for the definition).

What’s interesting is that when this happens, ask yourself, “Was the game actually pitched perfect?” Did the pitcher throw a “ball,” or was every pitch a strike? Did an umpire make a mistake by calling a strike when it should have been a ball?

The reality is: There is no such thing as a “perfect game,” it is impossible.

Don’t believe me, just take a look at other sports, and it is clearly visible that the plausibility of sport being perfect is impossible. There is always something that could have been done, executed, communicated, demonstrated or modeled better.

Whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, the same is true in our lives. We make mistakes, we fall short and even fail miserably. But what about excellence?

The notion of excellence is often in the same conversation as perfection, but the difference is that excellence is possible. Paul, writing to the church in Philippi, said this:

“And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. . . . Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 1:6 and Philippians 4:8,9).

As athletes, we practice to pursue excellence in our sport and competition; we strive toward the standard and make every effort to see it come to fruition.

<https://athletesinaction.org/devotional/athlete-work-toward-excellence-not-perfection/>

In our faith in Christ, we get that same opportunity to live out our faith in excellence: to think about things that are pure and right; to practice our faith in the everyday, fixing our eyes on Jesus.

“Excellence is not a gift, but a skill that takes practice. We do not act *rightly* because we are *excellent*, in fact, we achieve *excellence* by acting *rightly*” (Plato).

Excellence is achieved through the daily habit of getting better. Never stop learning, growing, developing in your relationship with Jesus. The pursuit of excellence is a choice that we all must make.

Reflect: How will you choose to go after that which is excellent today? What is one daily action you can change today that will move you one step closer to excellence?