

QUALITY  
OF  
LIFE  
BIBLE  
STUDY



*Excellence*®

COMPILED BY  
S.MCRAE

## **EXCELLENCE** “Quality of Life Series”

**LEADER: Is 99.9% good enough? - WIT & WISDOM**

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/99.htm>

IF 99.9% IS GOOD ENOUGH THEN:

12 newborns will be given to the wrong parents daily  
114,500 mismatched pairs of shoes will be shipped/year  
18,322 pieces of mail will be mishandled/hour  
2,000,000 documents will be lost by the IRS this year

2.5 million books will be shipped with the wrong covers  
Two planes landed at Chicago's O'Hare airport will be unsafe every day  
315 entries in Webster's Dictionary will be misspelled  
20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions will be written this year

880,000 credit cards will turn out to have incorrect cardholder information on their magnetic strips  
103,260 income tax returns will be processed incorrectly during the year  
5.5 million cases of soft drinks produced will be flat  
291 pacemaker operations will be performed incorrectly  
3056 copies of tomorrow's Wall Street Journal will be missing one of the three sections  
A typical day would be 24 hours long (give or take 86.4 seconds)

**LEADER: Did your parents ever tell you...** “If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well?”

“Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.” - Lord Chesterfield 1694-1773 Author and 4th Earl of Chesterfield

**LEADER: Abraham Lincoln once said: “I do the very best I know how - the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing so until the end.”**

Source ~ <http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Excellence2.htm>

**READER: “The Pursuit of Excellence” - Ted W. Engstrom, The Pursuit of Excellence**

Source ~ <http://www.christianglobe.com/illustrations/theDetails.asp?whichOne=t&whichFile=talent>

In his fine book, Excellence, John Gardner says, “Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have excellence thrust upon them...They achieve it. They do not achieve 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.”

**READER: “Success: Being the Best” - Leading the Way by Paul Borthwick**

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/e/e-58.htm#TopOfPage>

Brian Harbour picks up on this theme in 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.”

**READER: QUOTE #1**

Source ~ <http://www.annabelle.net/topics/excellence.php>

“There is more credit and satisfaction in being a first-rate truck driver than a tenth-rate executive.” - B.C. Forbes 1880-1954 Author/Businessman/Founder of Forbes Magazine

**READER: QUOTE #2**

Source ~ <http://www.annabelle.net/topics/excellence.php>

“It's enough for you to do it once for a few men to remember you. But if you do it year after year, then many people remember you and they tell it to their children, and their children and grandchildren remember and, if it concerns books, they can read them. And if it's good enough, it will last as long as there are human beings.” - Ernest Hemmingway 1899-1961 American Novelist

**READER: QUOTE #3**

Source ~ <http://www.annabelle.net/topics/excellence.php>

“Those who are blessed with the most talent don’t necessarily outperform everyone else. It’s the people with follow-through who excel.” - Mary Kay Ash – Founder Mary Kay Cosmetics

**READER: “Mary Kay Ash”**

Source ~ <http://www.famoustexans.com/MaryKayAsh.htm>

After a successful career in direct sales, retired in mid-1963, -- for a month. During that month, she decided to write a book to help women survive in the male-dominated business world. Sitting at her kitchen table, she made two lists: one contained the good things she had seen in companies for which she had worked; the other featured the things she thought could be improved. Reviewing the lists, she realized that she had inadvertently created a marketing plan for a successful company of her own. With her life savings of \$5,000 and the help of her 20-year-old son, Richard Rogers, she launched Mary Kay Cosmetics on Friday, September 13, 1963.

Mary Kay’s goal was to provide women with an unlimited opportunity for personal and financial success. She used the Golden Rule as her guiding philosophy and encouraged employees and sales force members to prioritize their lives according to a simple but empowering motto: God first, family second, career third. Because of her steadfast commitment to her goals and principles, and her tremendous determination, dedication and hard work, Mary Kay Inc. has grown from a small direct sales company to the largest direct seller of skin care products in the U.S. and the best-selling brand of facial skin care and color cosmetics in the United States. The Company now has more than 500,000 Independent Beauty Consultants in 29 markets worldwide. Mary Kay Inc. was featured three times as one of The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America.

A dynamic speaker, motivator and entrepreneur, Mary Kay has been recognized for her achievements through numerous awards and honors including: Circle of Honor Award from the Direct Selling Education Foundation; First Annual National Sales Hall of Fame Award from the Sales and Marketing Executives of New York; Texas Business Hall of Fame Award; Texas Women’s Hall of Fame Award; and the prestigious Horatio Alger Award.

In 1980, Mary Kay’s husband Mel died of cancer. After watching him suffer, she became committed to the fight to find a cure for this disease. Having been involved in fundraising for more than 20 years, in 1996 she established the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation, a non-profit public foundation that provides funding for research of leading cancers affecting women. Mary Kay has twice served as honorary chairman of the Texas Breast Screening Project and was instrumental in helping pass legislation in Texas for insurance coverage of mammograms. She is also active in raising funds for cancer research programs through the Komen Foundation, the American Cancer Society and the Mary Kay Ash Center for Cancer Immunotherapy Research at St. Paul Medical Center in Dallas, which was dedicated in 1993. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Company and as a tribute to her efforts in breast cancer awareness and fund raising, the employees of Mary Kay Inc. presented to Mary Kay the Mary Kay/St. Paul Medical Center Mobile Cancer Screening Unit in July 1993. A cancer research wing at St. Paul Medical Center previously dedicated to Mary Kay Ash was expanded in 1995 and in 1998 the hospital dedicated the Mary Kay Ash Cancer Research Institute.

Mary Kay Ash’s book, “You Can Have It All”, was launched in August 1995 and achieved “best-seller” status within days of its introduction. Mary Kay’s two other books include her autobiography, which has sold more than 1 million copies, and “Mary Kay on People Management”, which is also a best-seller.

Mary Kay became chairman emeritus of Mary Kay Inc. in 1987. Today, she provides inspiration for her Independent Beauty Consultants worldwide. Her goal remains that of helping women everywhere achieve their full potential.

**READER: QUOTE #4**

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Behavior&id=2>

“Act the way you’d like to be and soon you’ll be the way you act.” - George W. Crane – Athletic Hall of Famer; All Star in 3 sports – turned down NFL for med school

**READER: QUOTE #5**

Source ~ <http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Excellence2.htm>

“Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody expects of you. Never excuse yourself.” - Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887 Greatest clerical orator of his time

**READER: “Pablo Casals” - WITandWISDOM**

Source ~ [http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1a/pablo\\_casals.htm](http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1a/pablo_casals.htm)

When Pablo Casals reached 95, a young reporter threw him a question: “Mr. Casals, you are 95 and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?” And Mr. Casals answered, “Because I think I’m making progress.”

**READER: QUOTE #6**

Source ~ <http://www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com/getquote.html?categoryid=86>

“Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.” - Og Mandino WWII Pilot/Author – “Greatest Salesman In the World”

**READER: QUOTE #7**

Source ~ <http://www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com/getquote.html?categoryid=86>

“Just make up your mind at the very outset that your work is going to stand for quality... that you are going to stamp a superior quality upon everything that goes out of your hands, that whatever you do shall bear the hall-mark of excellence.” - Orison Swett Marden 1848-1924 Motivational Author/Founder of Success Magazine

**READER: QUOTE #8**

Source ~ <http://www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com/getquote.html?categoryid=86>

“If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude.” - Colin Powell Former Secretary of State 2000-2004

**READER: “The Advantage” - Dr. Stanley Frager**

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/advantage.htm>

A lesson in “heart” is my little, 10 year old daughter, Sarah, who was born with a muscle missing in her foot and wears a brace all the time. She came home one beautiful spring day to tell me she had competed in “field day”-that’s where they have lots of races and other competitive events.

Because of her leg support, my mind raced as I tried to think of encouragement for my Sarah, things I could say to her about not letting this get her down- but before I could get a word out, she said, “Daddy, I won two of the races!” I couldn’t believe it! And then Sarah said, “I had an advantage.” Ahh. I knew it. I thought she must have been given a head start... some kind of physical advantage. But again, before I could say anything, she said, “Daddy, I didn’t get a head start... My advantage was I had to try harder!”

**READER: QUOTE #9**

Source ~ <http://www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com/getquote.html?categoryid=86>

“No man ever reached to excellence in any one art or profession without having passed through the slow and painful process of study and preparation.” - Horace 65-8 BC Poet/Philosopher

**READER: QUOTE #10**

Source ~ <http://www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com/getquote.html?categoryid=86>

“Excellence always sells.” - Earl Nightingale 1921-1989 Acclaimed Broadcaster/Successful Entrepreneur

**READER: QUOTE #11**

Source ~ <http://www.motivational-inspirational-corner.com/getquote.html?categoryid=86>

“It is a wretched taste to be gratified with mediocrity when the excellent lies before us.” - Isaac Disraeli - Author & Father of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli

## READER: QUOTE #12

Source ~ <http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Excellence2.htm>

“I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence, I can reach for; perfection is God’s business.” - Michael J. Fox –Actor; Founder Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research

## READER: “Kathy Rigby”

Source ~ [http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic\\_id=1508](http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=1508)

Cathy Rigby was a member of the U.S. Women’s Gymnastics Team in the 1972 Olympics at Munich, and she had only one goal in mind—to win a gold medal. She had trained hard over a long period. On the day she was scheduled to perform, she prayed for the strength and the control to get through her routine without making mistakes. She was tense with determination not to let herself or her country down. She performed well, but when it was all over and the winners were announced, her name was not among them. Cathy was crushed.

Afterward, she joined her parents in the stands all set for a good cry. As she sat down, she could barely manage to say, “I’m sorry. I did my best.”

“You know that, and I know that,” her mother said, “and I’m sure God knows that too.”

Then, Cathy recalls, her mother said 10 words that she has never forgotten: “Doing your best is more important than being the best.”

## READER: QUOTE #13

“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.” - Booker T. Washington 1856-1915 Slave to educator/Counsel to Presidents

## READER: QUOTE #14 From: Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.christianglobe.com/Illustrations/theDetails.asp?whichOne=t&whichFile=talent>

Former pro basketball star Bill Bradley tells that at the age of 15 he attended a summer basketball camp that was run by Easy Ed Macauley, a former college and pro star. “Just remember that if you’re not working at your game to the utmost of your ability,” Macauley told his assembled campers, “there will be someone out there somewhere with equal ability who will be working to the utmost of his ability. And one day you’ll play each other, and he’ll have the advantage.”

## READER: “Better Than Your Best” Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-06-21-05.shtml>

*I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. —Colossians 1:29*

When John became a salesman in a well-known insurance company years ago, his aim was to work effectively in his firm without compromising his Christian integrity. But there were those who considered him naive. In their view, one could possess either job security or Christian integrity—not both.

But John did not waver in his commitment to be a godly witness in the business world. Although he was in a job that required accurate calculations, he had a weakness when it came to simple arithmetic. This forced him to depend more on Christ in everything, which enhanced his witness.

John eventually became the company’s top salesman, and God used him to win many colleagues to Christ. Later, as a branch manager, John and his team became the company’s largest branch worldwide—all without compromising Christian integrity.

Are you striving to live and work without compromise in a tough place? Are you doing your best, but your best is not enough? Colossians 1:29 reminds us that dependence on God’s mighty power within us is what makes us effective. John, the businessman, summed it up like this: “God helps me do better than I can!” He will do the same for you. —Joanie Yoder

Savior, let me walk beside Thee,  
Let me feel my hand in Thine;  
Let me know the joy of walking  
In Thy strength and not in mine. —Sidebotham

Boast not in what you do for Christ, but in what Christ does for you.

**READER: “Plows From Jesus”** By Charles W. Colson From BreakPoint with permission

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2c/plows.htm>

Back in Galilee in the second century, the Christian apologist Justin Martyr said that during his lifetime it was still common to see farmers using plows made by the carpenter Jesus of Nazareth.

Think about it: the second Person of the triune Godhead spent much of His earthly life working in a woodshop. By that act alone, God forever established the significance of OUR work in this world.

In a new book entitled “The Call,” theologian Os Guinness reminds us that even the humblest work is important if it is done for God. “How intriguing,” Guinness writes, “to think of Jesus’ plow rather than His Cross--to wonder what it was that made his plows and yokes last and stand out.” Clearly, they must have been very well made if they were still in use in the 2nd century.

Today, Christians typically exalt spiritual work above manual work. After all, what’s making a plow compared with preaching to multitudes, feeding the 5,000, or raising someone from the dead? But the very fact that Jesus DID make plows--and make them well--suggests that any work can be done to the glory of God. Any work can be a genuine calling.

**READER: “Where’s the Piccolo?”** Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-11-17-02.shtml>

*There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many? —John 6:9*

At certain times in life we may feel insignificant and useless. Surrounded by people with greater talent than ours, we are tempted in our weak moments just to settle back and let somebody else do the work. We reason that what we have to offer won’t make much difference anyway.

We forget the truth suggested by our Lord’s use of five loaves and two small fish to feed a multitude (John 6:1-14). Each of us has something important to offer in His service.

Sir Michael Costa was conducting a rehearsal in which the orchestra was joined by a great chorus. About halfway through the session, with trumpets blaring, drums rolling, and violins singing their rich melody, the piccolo player muttered to himself, “What good am I doing? I might just as well not be playing. Nobody can hear me anyway.” So he kept the instrument to his mouth, but he made no sound. Within moments, the conductor cried, “Stop! Stop! Where’s the piccolo?” It was missed by the ear of the most important person of all.

It’s much the same way with the use of our abilities for the Lord. Whether our talent is great or small, the performance isn’t complete until we do our best with what we have. —Richard De Haan

The Master needs what you have to offer,  
No matter if you think it’s small;  
His work on earth is done through His children,  
So give Him your best, give your all. —Hess

In God’s eyes it is a great thing to do a little thing well.

**READER: “The Carpenter”**

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/carpenter.htm>

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife enjoying his extended family. He would miss the paycheck, but he needed to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and ask if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end his career.

When the carpenter finished his work and the builder came to inspect the house, the contractor handed the front-door key to the carpenter. “This is your house,” he said, “my gift to you.”

What a shock! What a shame! If he had only known he was building this own house, he would have done it all so differently. Now he had to live in the home he had built none too well

So it is with us. We build our lives in a distracted way, reacting rather than acting, willing to put up less than the best. At important points we do not give the job our best effort. Then with a shock we look at the situation we have created and find that we are now living in the house we have built. If we had realized that we would have done it differently.

Think of yourself as the carpenter. Think about your house. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. Build wisely.

It is the only life you will ever build. Even if you live it for only one day more, that day deserves to be lived graciously and with dignity. The plaque on the wall says, "Life is a do-it-yourself project.

Who could say it more clearly? Your life today is the result of your attitudes and choices in the past. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and the choices you make today.

**READER: "How's Your Work?" - TODAY IN THE WORD**

Source ~ <http://www.moody.edu/st/tiw/tdw/devotional.cfm?dy=09&mn=08&yr=2000>

Author and Christian financial advisor Larry Burkett writes, "Christian employees need two characteristics in their lives. The first is excellence. The apostle Paul said, *'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men'* (Colossians 3:23). The second is honoring those in authority over you. Proverbs 11:2 says, *'When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.'* If you are working for someone, regardless of what his or her personality type might be, God says you are to give that person honor. Pray for and do everything in your power to help that person daily."

Burkett's comments remind us of another important purpose for the work we do every day. It's one form of our witness to those outside the faith, giving us a ready-made platform to show the difference Christ has made in our lives. There are probably many readers of this devotional who can testify to the impact that faithful and honest work, performed with excellence, can have on unbelievers who watch them day by day.

The importance and value of work was an issue Paul had to deal with in Thessalonica more than once. Some of those believers were not quietly going about their own work or minding their own business (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Instead, they refused to work.

The problem wasn't just that these Christians were creating havoc in the church by their laziness. They were also giving God's people a bad name with their pagan neighbors.

Maybe you've heard your pastor or some other teacher say that as Christians, we should be the best employees on the job, giving our employers a full day of productive work.

It's true. The way we work will say much more about us than the words we say. Our unbelieving co-workers and neighbors know what we supposedly stand for, and they're watching to see if we measure up. Our work is one way we can honor the name of Christ.

Often unbelievers have higher standards for Christians than Christians do for themselves.

When it comes to our work, let's make sure we are holding ourselves to the high standards set in God's Word. We have the opportunity to "make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (Titus 2:10) to people around us by the way we do our jobs. Ask God to help you show Christ to your unsaved co-workers by your faithful work this week. How you do your job reflects Christ.

**READER: "Principles for EXCELLENCE" - In Search of Excellence, by Tom Peters.**

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/e/e-58.htm#TopOfPage>

In his book *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters outlines eight principles of operation that are practiced by the most excellent, innovative corporations. They are:

- Act quickly.
- Serve the customer.
- Encourage creativity and innovations.
- Know the value of your employees
- Stay close to your business.

- Do what you do best.
- Don't get fat at the top.
- Adhere to established values while allowing employee independence.

Peters points out that some of these characteristics are so basic that they are like “motherhood” and “apple pie.” They bore to yawns the average business student. On the other hand, says Peters, these qualities are almost conspicuously absent in most large companies.

**READER: “It’s Up To You”**

One song can spark a moment,  
 One flower can wake the dream.  
 One tree can start a forest,  
 One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,  
 One handclasp lifts a soul.  
 One star can guide a ship at sea,  
 One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,  
 One sunbeam lights a room.  
 One candle wipes out darkness,  
 One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,  
 One word must start each prayer.  
 One hope will raise our spirits,  
 One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,  
 One heart can know what’s true,  
 One life can make the difference,  
 You see, it’s up to you!

**READER: “Never a Quitter”**

Source ~ <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-06-25-04.shtml>

*Be steadfast . . . in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain.* —1 Corinthians 15:58

A preacher who was growing weary in the ministry had a dream. He saw himself pounding away at a huge chunk of granite with a pick-axe. It was his job to break it into small pieces. But hard as he tried, he couldn't chip off even a tiny piece. At last, tired and disappointed, he decided to give up.

Just then a stranger appeared and said, “Weren't you given orders to do that work? Your duty is to give your best regardless of what happens.” The preacher, with a renewed determination, lifted the pick-axe high in the air and gave the granite a crushing blow. It broke into a thousand pieces. He had almost quit—one blow too soon.

The Lord wants us to keep working at our God-given task no matter how difficult it might be. Even when success seems remote or impossible, we are to remain steadfast, assured that there will be an ample reward for those who persevere.

Have you grown tired in your service for God? Have you become so discouraged that you're tempted to “throw in the towel”? Remember that preacher's dream. Better still, remember God's promise spoken by Paul: “*Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*” (Galatians 6:9). —Richard De Haan

The service that we give to Christ,  
 If steadfast we will be,  
 Is sure to reap a rich reward  
 That someday we will see. —Sper

Failure is not defeat unless you stop trying.

**READER: 1 Peter 2:9**

*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

**READER: Philippians 1:9-10**

*"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, That you may approve the things that are excellent"*

**READER: "Approve Things Excellent" #1 (Excerpt) Today in the Word**

Source ~ <http://www.crusade.org/word/word276.html>

"That you may approve"....

The word "approve" means to test for approval. This is spiritual discernment. Discernment is the ability to distinguish between the chaff and wheat, the dross and the gold, the genuine and the superficial.

Automobiles need to be tested on a torture track before they are sold to the public. If a car's brakes do not meet the test, they are sent back for redesign. You do not put a car with faulty brakes on the market. Lives are at stake. In order to test those brakes, some standard for testing needs to be applied. A standard or measure for good brakes is needed. God wants us to test for approval, to have a criterion for whatever comes into our lives. That criterion is "excellence."

If we have this criterion, we can resolve the priorities of our life. Any problem or set of alternatives that is set before us should be measured by this standard. If we operate by this standard, we should be able to resolve any priority.

**READER: "Approve Things Excellent" #2 (Excerpt) Today in the Word**

Source ~ <http://www.crusade.org/word/word276.html>

"the things that are excellent"....

"Excellence" carries with it the sense of what is vital. In Greek, excellence means to bear apart or to differ between; as with metals, you learn to tell one from another, the greater from the lesser. So things of excellence are things of greater value.

We should be able to test for approval the things which are the most valuable in life. None of us operates in life without some scale of values. The question is not whether we have a scale of values; the question is more which scale of values we choose. Do we choose God's highest values or some set of values we may prefer?

Where there is no scale of values, utter confusion follows. If you want to live a flustered life, then live life without an adequate set of ultimate values. In this situation nothing is of value, nothing of importance. To live life with everything of equal importance is to live life at a trivial level. Lesser things are as important as greater things.

If we choose as our ultimate value to make and save as much money as possible, then we have chosen a lesser value in God's economy. If we choose to put God's glory first no matter how much money we make, then we live by God's scale of values. It is a matter of what comes first. If our main objective is to make money, then we are number one in our values and God is number two. We need to decide what is important.

**LEADER: Principle:**

Christians need to test for approval the things of greatest value in God's economy.

**LEADER: Application:**

Do we have God's scale of values? What is the highest item on our scale of values? What is first or most important to us? A good way to measure these questions is to ask ourselves how we use our time. Our answers will reveal what is important in our lives. Then we will have a sense of what is vital.

**READER: Philippians 4:6-9**

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

**LEADER: “Think on These Things”**

Source ~ <http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/phi4v1.html>

These thoughts are like beautiful pearls threaded on a chain of gold. What one thinks gives character to life. Bruce says, “As good food is necessary for bodily health, so good thoughts are necessary for mental and spiritual health.” Like eating good food, set your mind on these things and plan to act accordingly. Let this way of thinking become a mind-set or an attitude toward life. This can take place only in our attachment to Jesus Christ and fellowship with Him. Apart from Him there is no guarantee of peace of mind.

“Excellency” is the idea of moral excellence. God is like that and we are to be like Him.

**READER: 2 Peter 1:3-8**

*“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**LEADER: “Virtue is Excellence” #1 Today In The Word**

Source ~ <http://www.crusade.org/word/word816.html>

“Glory” in this context means heaven. Christians are headed for glory. He called us “to glory” (literally). God will glorify us in eternity because we believed in Christ in our lifetime.

**READER: 1 Peter 5:10-11**

*“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”.*

**LEADER: “Virtue is Excellence” #2 Today In The Word**

Source ~ <http://www.crusade.org/word/word816.html>

Glory is a term of dignity and refers to God’s essence but here it means more. Glory is the fact that God designed a perfect plan for us. God designed a plan where He and we cannot lose.

**LEADER: “Virtue is Excellence” #3 Today in the Word**

Source ~ <http://www.crusade.org/word/word816.html>

In the King James version 2 Peter 1:3 reads: *“Through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and virtue. Virtue instead of excellence.”*

“And Virtue”

“Virtue” occurs five times in the New Testament. God calls us to virtue. “Virtue” is excellence, praises (1 Peter 2:9). This word has lost some of its meaning to us today. “Virtue” means excellence in workmanship. The work of Christ is a work of excellence. God calls us by His own merit and workmanship. Virtue is a quality of excellence that belongs to God.

**LEADER: Philippians 1:6**

*“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it the day of Christ Jesus.”*

**COMMENTS IF TIME:**

**ALLOW TIME BEFORE CLOSING FOR  
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:**

**COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR YOUR READERS**

## READERS

### “The Pursuit of Excellence”

In his fine book, Excellence, John Gardner says, “Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have excellence thrust upon them...They achieve it. They do not achieve 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.”

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### “Success: Being the Best”

Brian Harbour picks up on this theme in 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.”

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### QUOTE #1

“There is more credit and satisfaction in being a first-rate truck driver than a tenth-rate executive.” - B.C. Forbes 1880-1954 Author/Businessman/Founder of Forbes Magazine

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### QUOTE #2

“It’s enough for you to do it once for a few men to remember you. But if you do it year after year, then many people remember you and they tell it to their children, and their children and grandchildren remember and, if it concerns books, they can read them. And if it’s good enough, it will last as long as there are human beings.” - Ernest Hemmingway 1899-1961 American Novelist

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### QUOTE #3

“Those who are blessed with the most talent don’t necessarily outperform everyone else. It’s the people with follow-through who excel.” - Mary Kay Ash – Founder Mary Kay Cosmetics

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## “Mary Kay Ash”

After a successful career in direct sales, retired in mid-1963, -- for a month. During that month, she decided to write a book to help women survive in the male-dominated business world. Sitting at her kitchen table, she made two lists: one contained the good things she had seen in companies for which she had worked; the other featured the things she thought could be improved. Reviewing the lists, she realized that she had inadvertently created a marketing plan for a successful company of her own. With her life savings of \$5,000 and the help of her 20-year-old son, Richard Rogers, she launched Mary Kay Cosmetics on Friday, September 13, 1963.

Mary Kay’s goal was to provide women with an unlimited opportunity for personal and financial success. She used the Golden Rule as her guiding philosophy and encouraged employees and sales force members to prioritize their lives according to a simple but empowering motto: God first, family second, career third. Because of her steadfast commitment to her goals and principles, and her tremendous determination, dedication and hard work, Mary Kay Inc. has grown from a small direct sales company to the largest direct seller of skin care products in the U.S. and the best-selling brand of facial skin care and color cosmetics in the United States. The Company now has more than 500,000 Independent Beauty Consultants in 29 markets worldwide. Mary Kay Inc. was featured three times as one of The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America.

A dynamic speaker, motivator and entrepreneur, Mary Kay has been recognized for her achievements through numerous awards and honors including: Circle of Honor Award from the Direct Selling Education Foundation; First Annual National Sales Hall of Fame Award from the Sales and Marketing Executives of New York; Texas Business Hall of Fame Award; Texas Women’s Hall of Fame Award; and the prestigious Horatio Alger Award.

In 1980, Mary Kay’s husband Mel died of cancer. After watching him suffer, she became committed to the fight to find a cure for this disease. Having been involved in fundraising for more than 20 years, in 1996 she established the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation, a non-profit public foundation that provides funding for research of leading cancers affecting women. Mary Kay has twice served as honorary chairman of the Texas Breast Screening Project and was instrumental in helping pass legislation in Texas for insurance coverage of mammograms. She is also active in raising funds for cancer research programs through the Komen Foundation, the American Cancer Society and the Mary Kay Ash Center for Cancer Immunotherapy Research at St. Paul Medical Center in Dallas, which was dedicated in 1993. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Company and as a tribute to her efforts in breast cancer awareness and fund raising, the employees of Mary Kay Inc. presented to Mary Kay the Mary Kay/St. Paul Medical Center Mobile Cancer Screening Unit in July 1993. A cancer research wing at St. Paul Medical Center previously dedicated to Mary Kay Ash was expanded in 1995 and in 1998 the hospital dedicated the Mary Kay Ash Cancer Research Institute.

Mary Kay Ash’s book, “You Can Have It All”, was launched in August 1995 and achieved “best-seller” status within days of its introduction. Mary Kay’s two other books include her autobiography, which has sold more than 1 million copies, and “Mary Kay on People Management”, which is also a best-seller.

Mary Kay became chairman emeritus of Mary Kay Inc. in 1987. Today, she provides inspiration for her Independent Beauty Consultants worldwide. Her goal remains that of helping women everywhere achieve their full potential.

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### QUOTE #4

“Act the way you’d like to be and soon you’ll be the way you act.” - George W. Crane – Athletic Hall of Famer; All Star in 3 sports – turned down NFL for med school

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### QUOTE #5

“Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody expects of you. Never excuse yourself.” - Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887 Greatest clerical orator of his time

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## **“Pablo Casals”**

When Pablo Casals reached 95, a young reporter threw him a question: “Mr. Casals, you are 95 and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?” And Mr. Casals answered, “Because I think I’m making progress.”

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## **QUOTE #6**

“Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.” - Og Mandino WWII Pilot/Author – “Greatest Salesman In the World”

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## **QUOTE #7**

“Just make up your mind at the very outset that your work is going to stand for quality... that you are going to stamp a superior quality upon everything that goes out of your hands, that whatever you do shall bear the hall-mark of excellence.” - Orison Swett Marden 1848-1924 Motivational Author/Founder of Success Magazine

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## **QUOTE #8**

“If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude.” - Colin Powell Former Secretary of State 2000-2004

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## **“The Advantage”**

A lesson in “heart” is my little, 10 year old daughter, Sarah, who was born with a muscle missing in her foot and wears a brace all the time. She came home one beautiful spring day to tell me she had competed in “field day”-that’s where they have lots of races and other competitive events.

Because of her leg support, my mind raced as I tried to think of encouragement for my Sarah, things I could say to her about not letting this get her down- but before I could get a word out, she said, “Daddy, I won two of the races!” I couldn’t believe it! And then Sarah said, “I had an advantage.” Ahh. I knew it. I thought she must have been given a head start... some kind of physical advantage. But again, before I could say anything, she said, “Daddy, I didn’t get a head start... My advantage was I had to try harder!”

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## **QUOTE #9**

“No man ever reached to excellence in any one art or profession without having passed through the slow and painful process of study and preparation.” - Horace 65-8 BC Poet/Philosopher

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## **QUOTE #10**

“Excellence always sells.” - Earl Nightingale 1921-1989 Acclaimed Broadcaster/Successful Entrepreneur

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## **QUOTE #11**

“It is a wretched taste to be gratified with mediocrity when the excellent lies before us.” - Isaac Disraeli - Author & Father of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli

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## **QUOTE #12**

“I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence, I can reach for; perfection is God’s business.” - Michael J. Fox –Actor; Founder Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research

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## “Kathy Rigby”

Cathy Rigby was a member of the U.S. Women’s Gymnastics Team in the 1972 Olympics at Munich, and she had only one goal in mind—to win a gold medal. She had trained hard over a long period. On the day she was scheduled to perform, she prayed for the strength and the control to get through her routine without making mistakes. She was tense with determination not to let herself or her country down. She performed well, but when it was all over and the winners were announced, her name was not among them. Cathy was crushed.

Afterward, she joined her parents in the stands all set for a good cry. As she sat down, she could barely manage to say, “I’m sorry. I did my best.”

“You know that, and I know that,” her mother said, “and I’m sure God knows that too.”

Then, Cathy recalls, her mother said 10 words that she has never forgotten: “Doing your best is more important than being the best.”

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## QUOTE #13

“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.” - Booker T. Washington 1856-1915 Slave to educator/Counsel to Presidents

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## QUOTE #14

Former pro basketball star Bill Bradley tells that at the age of 15 he attended a summer basketball camp that was run by Easy Ed Macauley, a former college and pro star. “Just remember that if you’re not working at your game to the utmost of your ability,” Macauley told his assembled campers, “there will be someone out there somewhere with equal ability who will be working to the utmost of his ability. And one day you’ll play each other, and he’ll have the advantage.”

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## “Better Than Your Best”

*I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.* —Colossians 1:29

When John became a salesman in a well-known insurance company years ago, his aim was to work effectively in his firm without compromising his Christian integrity. But there were those who considered him naive. In their view, one could possess either job security or Christian integrity—not both.

But John did not waver in his commitment to be a godly witness in the business world. Although he was in a job that required accurate calculations, he had a weakness when it came to simple arithmetic. This forced him to depend more on Christ in everything, which enhanced his witness.

John eventually became the company’s top salesman, and God used him to win many colleagues to Christ. Later, as a branch manager, John and his team became the company’s largest branch worldwide—all without compromising Christian integrity.

Are you striving to live and work without compromise in a tough place? Are you doing your best, but your best is not enough? Colossians 1:29 reminds us that dependence on God’s mighty power within us is what makes us effective. John, the businessman, summed it up like this: “God helps me do better than I can!” He will do the same for you. —Joanie Yoder

Savior, let me walk beside Thee,  
Let me feel my hand in Thine;  
Let me know the joy of walking  
In Thy strength and not in mine. —Sidebotham

Boast not in what you do for Christ, but in what Christ does for you.

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## “Plows From Jesus”

Back in Galilee in the second century, the Christian apologist Justin Martyr said that during his lifetime it was still common to see farmers using plows made by the carpenter Jesus of Nazareth.

Think about it: the second Person of the triune Godhead spent much of His earthly life working in a woodshop. By that act alone, God forever established the significance of OUR work in this world.

In a new book entitled “The Call,” theologian Os Guinness reminds us that even the humblest work is important if it is done for God. “How intriguing,” Guinness writes, “to think of Jesus’ plow rather than His Cross--to wonder what it was that made his plows and yokes last and stand out.” Clearly, they must have been very well made if they were still in use in the 2nd century.

Today, Christians typically exalt spiritual work above manual work. After all, what’s making a plow compared with preaching to multitudes, feeding the 5,000, or raising someone from the dead? But the very fact that Jesus DID make plows--and make them well--suggests that any work can be done to the glory of God. Any work can be a genuine calling



## “Where’s the Piccolo?”

*There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many? —John 6:9*

At certain times in life we may feel insignificant and useless. Surrounded by people with greater talent than ours, we are tempted in our weak moments just to settle back and let somebody else do the work. We reason that what we have to offer won’t make much difference anyway.

We forget the truth suggested by our Lord’s use of five loaves and two small fish to feed a multitude (John 6:1-14). Each of us has something important to offer in His service.

Sir Michael Costa was conducting a rehearsal in which the orchestra was joined by a great chorus. About halfway through the session, with trumpets blaring, drums rolling, and violins singing their rich melody, the piccolo player muttered to himself, “What good am I doing? I might just as well not be playing. Nobody can hear me anyway.” So he kept the instrument to his mouth, but he made no sound. Within moments, the conductor cried, “Stop! Stop! Where’s the piccolo?” It was missed by the ear of the most important person of all.

It’s much the same way with the use of our abilities for the Lord. Whether our talent is great or small, the performance isn’t complete until we do our best with what we have. —Richard De Haan

The Master needs what you have to offer,  
No matter if you think it’s small;  
His work on earth is done through His children,  
So give Him your best, give your all. —Hess

In God’s eyes it is a great thing to do a little thing well.



## “The Carpenter”

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife enjoying his extended family. He would miss the paycheck, but he needed to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and ask if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end his career.

When the carpenter finished his work and the builder came to inspect the house, the contractor handed the front-door key to the carpenter. “This is your house,” he said, “my gift to you.”

What a shock! What a shame! If he had only known he was building this own house, he would have done it all so differently. Now he had to live in the home he had built none too well

So it is with us. We build our lives in a distracted way, reacting rather than acting, willing to put up less than the best. At important points we do not give the job our best effort. Then with a shock we look at the situation we have created and find that we are now living in the house we have built. If we had realized that we would have done it differently.

Think of yourself as the carpenter. Think about your house. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. Build wisely.

It is the only life you will ever build. Even if you live it for only one day more, that day deserves to be lived graciously and with dignity. The plaque on the wall says, “Life is a do-it-yourself project.

Who could say it more clearly? Your life today is the result of your attitudes and choices in the past. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and the choices you make today.



## “How’s Your Work?”

Author and Christian financial advisor Larry Burkett writes, “Christian employees need two characteristics in their lives. The first is excellence. The apostle Paul said, *‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men’* (Colossians 3:23). The second is honoring those in authority over you. Proverbs 11:2 says, *‘When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.’* If you are working for someone, regardless of what his or her personality type might be, God says you are to give that person honor. Pray for and do everything in your power to help that person daily.”

Burkett’s comments remind us of another important purpose for the work we do every day. It’s one form of our witness to those outside the faith, giving us a ready-made platform to show the difference Christ has made in our lives. There are probably many readers of this devotional who can testify to the impact that faithful and honest work, performed with excellence, can have on unbelievers who watch them day by day.

The importance and value of work was an issue Paul had to deal with in Thessalonica more than once. Some of those believers were not quietly going about their own work or minding their own business (2 Thessalonians 3:11). Instead, they refused to work.

The problem wasn’t just that these Christians were creating havoc in the church by their laziness. They were also giving God’s people a bad name with their pagan neighbors.

Maybe you’ve heard your pastor or some other teacher say that as Christians, we should be the best employees on the job, giving our employers a full day of productive work.

It’s true. The way we work will say much more about us than the words we say. Our unbelieving co-workers and neighbors know what we supposedly stand for, and they’re watching to see if we measure up. Our work is one way we can honor the name of Christ.

Often unbelievers have higher standards for Christians than Christians do for themselves.

When it comes to our work, let’s make sure we are holding ourselves to the high standards set in God’s Word. We have the opportunity to “make the teaching about God our Savior attractive” (Titus 2:10) to people around us by the way we do our jobs. Ask God to help you show Christ to your unsaved co-workers by your faithful work this week. How you do your job reflects Christ.



## “Principles for EXCELLENCE”

In his book *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters outlines eight principles of operation that are practiced by the most excellent, innovative corporations. They are:

- Act quickly.
- Serve the customer.
- Encourage creativity and innovations.
- Know the value of your employees
- Stay close to your business.
- Do what you do best.
- Don't get fat at the top.
- Adhere to established values while allowing employee independence.

Peters points out that some of these characteristics are so basic that they are like “motherhood” and “apple pie.” They bore to yawns the average business student. On the other hand, says Peters, these qualities are almost conspicuously absent in most large companies.



## “It's Up To You”

One song can spark a moment,  
One flower can wake the dream.  
One tree can start a forest,  
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,  
One handclasp lifts a soul.  
One star can guide a ship at sea,  
One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,  
One sunbeam lights a room.  
One candle wipes out darkness,  
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,  
One word must start each prayer.  
One hope will raise our spirits,  
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,  
One heart can know what's true,  
One life can make the difference,  
You see, it's up to you!



## “Never a Quitter”

*Be steadfast . . . in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain.* —1 Corinthians 15:58

A preacher who was growing weary in the ministry had a dream. He saw himself pounding away at a huge chunk of granite with a pick-axe. It was his job to break it into small pieces. But hard as he tried, he couldn't chip off even a tiny piece. At last, tired and disappointed, he decided to give up.

Just then a stranger appeared and said, “Weren't you given orders to do that work? Your duty is to give your best regardless of what happens.” The preacher, with a renewed determination, lifted the pick-axe high in the air and gave the granite a crushing blow. It broke into a thousand pieces. He had almost quit—one blow too soon.

The Lord wants us to keep working at our God-given task no matter how difficult it might be. Even when success seems remote or impossible, we are to remain steadfast, assured that there will be an ample reward for those who persevere.

Have you grown tired in your service for God? Have you become so discouraged that you're tempted to “throw in the towel”? Remember that preacher's dream. Better still, remember God's promise spoken by Paul: *“Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart”* (Galatians 6:9). —Richard De Haan

The service that we give to Christ,  
If steadfast we will be,  
Is sure to reap a rich reward  
That someday we will see. —Sper

Failure is not defeat unless you stop trying.

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### 1 Peter 2:9

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### Philippians 1:9-10

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## “Approve Things Excellent” #1

“That you may approve”....

The word “approve” means to test for approval. This is spiritual discernment. Discernment is the ability to distinguish between the chaff and wheat, the dross and the gold, the genuine and the superficial.

Automobiles need to be tested on a torture track before they are sold to the public. If a car's brakes do not meet the test, they are sent back for redesign. You do not put a car with faulty brakes on the market. Lives are at stake. In order to test those brakes, some standard for testing needs to be applied. A standard or measure for good brakes is needed. God wants us to test for approval, to have a criterion for whatever comes into our lives. That criterion is “excellence.”

If we have this criterion, we can resolve the priorities of our life. Any problem or set of alternatives that is set before us should be measured by this standard. If we operate by this standard, we should be able to resolve any priority.

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## “Approve Things Excellent” #2

“the things that are excellent”....

“Excellence” carries with it the sense of what is vital. In Greek, excellence means to bear apart or to differ between; as with metals, you learn to tell one from another, the greater from the lesser. So things of excellence are things of greater value.

We should be able to test for approval the things which are the most valuable in life. None of us operates in life without some scale of values. The question is not whether we have a scale of values; the question is more which scale of values we choose. Do we choose God’s highest values or some set of values we may prefer?

Where there is no scale of values, utter confusion follows. If you want to live a flustered life, then live life without an adequate set of ultimate values. In this situation nothing is of value, nothing of importance. To live life with everything of equal importance is to live life at a trivial level. Lesser things are as important as greater things.

If we choose as our ultimate value to make and save as much money as possible, then we have chosen a lesser value in God’s economy. If we choose to put God’s glory first no matter how much money we make, then we live by God’s scale of values. It is a matter of what comes first. If our main objective is to make money, then we are number one in our values and God is number two. We need to decide what is important.

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**Philippians 4:6-9**

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**2 Peter 1:3-8**

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**1 Peter 5:10-11**

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