

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.  
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9 (TNIV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters,  
whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**,  
whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable** —  
if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy** —  
**think about such things.**

<sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned  
or received  
or heard from me,  
or seen in me—  
**put it into practice.**

And **THE GOD OF PEACE** will be with you.

— PART 7 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

We get to **CHOOSE** what we allow our minds to **FOCUS** on. And Paul encourages us to **concentrate our attention** on some very specific things. Like...

“whatever is **TRUE** . . . **think about these things**” —  
“whatever is **NOBLE** . . . **think about these things**” —  
“whatever is **RIGHT** . . . **think about these things**” —  
“whatever is **PURE** . . . **think about these things**” —  
“whatever is **LOVELY** . . . **think about these things**” —  
“whatever is **ADMIRABLE** . . . **think about these things**” —

“if anything is **EXCELLENT**” . . . **think about these things**” —

Paul said “think about things that are **excellent.**” Not “**perfect.**”

If you are a perfectionist — *I know a few!* — mark well that distinction.

Strive for **excellence** and you will **go above and beyond** what people expect of you. You will **continue growing** (as a person/spouse/parent/student/employee/employer/human). You will **stay laser focused** on “the main thing” you are striving to accomplish.

Strive for **perfection** and you will get fatigued. You will experience bitter discour-

agement. Most painfully, you will never reach your goal.

God is perfect.

ISAIAH 40:25-26 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> "To whom will you compare me?

Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing."

You and I? Not so much.

ISAIAH 64:6 (NLT)

We are all infected and impure with sin.

When we display our righteous deeds,  
they are nothing but filthy rags.

Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall,  
and our sins sweep us away like the wind.

God calls us to excellence; not perfection. To give our very best. To serve Him,  
and others, with everything we've got. To "stir up the gifts that are in us."

On the one hand, we are instructed:

ECCLESIASTES 9:10 (NIV)

Whatever your hand finds to do, ***do it with all your might...***

On the other hand, we are encouraged to humbly acknowledge our imperfections.  
We may attain excellence in a variety of human endeavors, and be recognized for  
being swift, or strong, or wise, or brilliant, or learned. But in the end, that might not  
"perfect."

ECCLESIASTES 9:11 (NIV)

I have seen something else under the sun:

The race is not to the swift

or the battle to the strong,

nor does food come to the wise

or wealth to the brilliant

or favor to the learned;

but time and chance happen to them all.

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May we be drawn today to focus on, reflect on, and strive to live out "whatever is  
excellent,"

Pastor Doug

P.S. Praise God for his goodness and grace in allowing us to share **online** our first “distance learning” **EASTER CELEBRATION!** I hope you were able to be with us! But I sure miss being together in person, don’t you? I miss all your beautiful faces!

We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at [info@bethanyonline.net](mailto:info@bethanyonline.net)

P.P.S. Keep checking our “ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY” webpage — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 a.m. for more encouragement.