

BE ALL YOU CAN BE

Doing More Than the Minimum
(Getting by is not good enough)

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INTRODUCTION

In other words, "doing the minimum, is not good enough".

We want you to think about Philippians 1:10-11, "*So that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.*" What is best, pure, blameless, and filled with fruit? That ought to be the desire of your heart. That ought to turn you on. That ought to be something you say, "Yes, this is for me." Getting by is not good enough. There are several things we neglect, when we work just to "get by":

I. SOMETIMES WE FAIL TO SET GOALS

Sometimes we fail to set goals. Is it easy to set a goal? No, it is much easier not to set a goal.

Sometimes we fail to set goals and try a little harder. I cannot set your goals. I do not know your lifestyle. I do not know how many hours you need to work and how far you need to walk, or how long it takes to prepare your lesson. You must make a plan, and with every plan you must have a date or a time. I must finish preparing my lesson by this date. Or at such and such a time, I must be at my lesson. Sometimes we fail to try a little bit better.

"Mr. Bible has got so many good ideas. Now if he only had one or two, maybe I would try. But he has got so many. Forget it. I will not even begin to try." That is sin. I am not going to stand in eternity and say, "How well did you do with your lessons?" Jesus is going to take care of all that. He asked me to help you to become a better, capable Christian person. We try to give you help.

II. DO NOT PUT YOUR "STAMP OF APPROVAL" ON ANYTHING THAT IS NOT EXCELLENT

Nothing less than excellence is acceptable. "Excellent" is the idea. When it is average, you do not want to have anything to do with it. You want to make sure it is excellent, if it is not excellent, make it excellent. Do not let your name be associated with something that is not above average. You do not want to have your name on it. Everything that is circulated, whether it is gossip, or a booklet, or a request, or a letter, whatever, only has your name on it, if it is above average. It ought to be your standard. It ought to be automatic. Somebody wants to do something with you, maybe co-teach, maybe sing in a little group, maybe organize a birthday party, maybe make a birthday cake, but unless it is better than average you say, "um, um" (negative). It must be a very nice cake, better than normal. Excellence ought to become your lifestyle.

A couple of months from now you may be organizing some Bible study groups, or maybe next September, you will become a small group study leader. The only thing that is good enough is above average. So when somebody asks to do something with you, you ask a



few questions about, "What are you going to do?" "What help do you want?" And in your mind you very quickly decide, "Is this going to be normal, or above normal." If it is normal you say, "I am sorry. The answer is no. "NO – no." If you think, "Yes, this is going to be a good party, say "Yes I will help". Then they can tell everybody, "Ivan is helping with this." And everyone is going to think, "Oh, it is going to be a success, if Ivan helps it will be a success."

III. SINCERITY

It comes from a word meaning "without wax". You see the real leather. You get the real word. Not something that is just waxed or just lacquered. That is how you ought to be. That is the kind of person, you ought to be. You ought to be a sincere person. Nothing hidden, no secret agendas or secret plans. No ulterior motives. No big beginning and a small ending. What you see, is what you get. Quality work. That is what God needs. That is what your church needs. That is what your province needs. Quality.

Example: I am reminded of one of my friends, probably one of my dearest friends. He was my discipler when I was a young person. And he is so pure. Somebody many years later came to me and he happened to mention his name. He did not know that I knew this man. And when he mentioned his name, and I said, "Oh, yes! Clarence." "Oh, you know him?" "Yes, I know him." He said. "He is such a beautiful person, and as clear as crystal." Everybody that knows Clarence would say that. He does not want more money. He does not want a better job. He is not looking for prestige or recognition. He just wants to serve Jesus as good as he can.

IV. WITHOUT OFFENSE

We ought not to offend people. Now some people want to be offended very quickly, very easily. Some people ask for it, they stick their foot under yours. We ought to be very careful, especially the younger ones, that we do not offend the leaders.

Example: Here is a person. He is 60 years old. He has been a leader in a church, under communism. It was easy. All he had to say was, "No," to the communists. Now he feels like, "What am I going to do? There is evangelism. There are new believers, new churches." He feels like he is almost going to fall over the edge. Then you come and say, "I have learned some good ideas in the New Life workshop", and he thinks you want to push him right off.

Many people are afraid. They do not know what to do in this new lifestyle now. They were not brought up this way. They did not have an opportunity to study the Bible. They just do not know what to do and they are scared. Therefore, they tend to interpret many things that you do as being against them. They tend to think that everything you do is one push further. That is not right, but they have authority. They can say, "No, we do not like what he is doing or she is doing", and you will not receive a good reputation. And students will be afraid to come to your lessons.

So you must learn to work without offense. Why do you need to learn to work without offense? "*So that you may be... filled with the fruits of righteousness*" (Philippians 1:11). Filled with fruits. And the word fruits is in the plural form. So that you may have many, many results. So you need to develop regular contact with your church leaders.

Example: You may make a photocopy of some of your lessons and give them to read to your church leaders. Maybe you write down the title, or give them your lesson plan and say, "This is what I am going to teach next week. Would you pray for me? I want you to have that so that when you see it, you know how to pray for me."

Example: Think about your pastor or superintendent when he has a birthday. Have your class prepare a little birthday present. You must simply learn to do what is right. So that the leader will say, "Well, I do not know whether that is a good thing or not, but I know you love Jesus and you do not want to do anything bad. To other people he would say, "Well, I do not really understand it either, but he is a very pure person. He does not do anything bad to us. He always gives me information and asks me to pray for him.

V. THINK ABOUT DEVELOPING AN ALTAR

Every man ought to have a holy place where he meets God. I know one famous pastor in Chicago, who has a special piece of beach where he goes every Friday morning at 5 o'clock to pray and talk to God. He just walks up and down in that quiet place on the beach and he pours out his heart to God.

Every one of you ought to have a place where you go once a week, or once a month and have a special time with God. In one of the *Basic Christian Life* courses you learn about having a day of prayer. You ought to have at least a half a day or so, every month for prayer in a special place that is your own personal holy place.

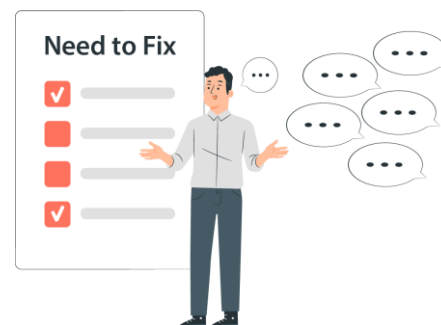
There are sixty references to Moses' altars in Exodus. If you study the altars in the Old Testament, from Abel to Solomon you will see how the altars get better and better and better. They improved as people learned to worship God in a better way. We have an even better altar – read Hebrews 13:10. So try to develop a holy place in your life.

VI. LISTEN TO AND LEARN FROM YOUR CRITICS

There are only two people in the world who tell you the truth. One of them is your closest friend, the other is your critic. A critic usually has something right to say about you. Now he is right, but he does not say it very nicely. But he is right. There is something you can learn from your critics — people that disagree with you.

Listen to them. What are they saying?

- Are they talking about my students?
- Are they talking about my lesson?
- Are they talking about me?
- Are they talking about my home life?
- Are they talking about my relationships?



Pay attention to your critics. Learn from what they have to say. Let them talk until they are finished. Let them talk it out. Be humble and just sit there and listen, even though it is very uncomfortable.

Then you need to do some evaluating. So do not just brush critics away.

VII. RETHINK YOUR IDEA OF CHURCH BASED TRAINING

Rethink about it. Rethink about its value. Rethink about how much has happened since the beginning of the year. In just a number of months ago. Have you had any other time in your life that more important spiritual things happened, than in the last several months when you were leading a group?

Get your minds off minimum funds and onto maximum quality. There are a number of us that think of money, money, money. Sunday school conference, "How are we going to pay for it?" "How much money do we need?" You had eight pastors for your pastors' conference. For your Sunday-school teachers conference you probably had forty. No problem! You already had experience. With that experience, you can do better.

You know something? God has enough money for every program that He wants to have here on earth. No problem. If it is real, if it is genuine, if it is maximum quality, so that it is pure and blameless, He will give you fruits or results. When you have results, money will come. Money is never something you start with. It comes as you are doing God's will.

VIII. TEAM TURNOVER

This idea is definitely for leaders, but all coaches can learn something from this. Teams that do not stay for a long time, they come quickly, then go. Somebody else comes and goes. Turnover.

Example: There are many Christian organizations now in which they have already had three or four leaders. Some of them go through new teams every three or six months. "Oh yes, I will do this." "You are paying more? Well, I will do this." "Oh, you have a nicer car. Sure!" We find Christian workers switching jobs all the time. This is terrible. We ought to learn to work long term, for one ministry.

Example: I think of one New Life director. Somebody came to him and said, "I will give you *double* the salary if you work for us." He said, "Thank you, but this is something I can really do for Jesus. I am not changing. I am not working for money, I am not working for a human boss. And when Jesus is angry or if He ever makes a mistake, OK, then I will quit."

There are many people who think, "Oh, this is not comfortable, this is not nice, this is terrible, this is hard, maybe if I will work over there, it will be much easier, much better." We have a saying that says, "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence." Do you ever say anything like that? Let me tell you what happens when you quit your work, and go to work for another organization. You quit problem A and you start problem B. In the other place there are also going to be problems. These people are not perfect. They are going to make mistakes. Oh, they will not make the same mistakes, they will make other mistakes. That makes it even harder. Because you

have just learned how to live and handle and react to these problems. And now you switch to another situation and you have to start all over learning about the new problems of the new situation.

If you are a leader, be sure you make the circumstances for the coaches nice and comfortable. Make sure you take good care of them personally. Make sure you take care of their families. Make sure you make your coaches successful. And if you are a coach, point number one is 'Do not quit!!' Stay right there and keep on working. Work as unto Jesus.

IX. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FORM AND CONTENT

Many people want to make it look nice on the outside, but on the inside it is shallow. The first two lessons, they are fantastic. Then they do a few average lessons. Then the remaining lessons are like a balloon with the air blown out. It should not be that way. You need to learn to distinguish between form and content.

Check for professionalism.

- A. Is your job a professional job?
- B. Would you be proud if the superintendent came one evening to observe?
- C. Would you be proud if a schoolteacher came to visit your group?
- D. Are you doing a professional job?

Some of us give professional work to the places of work, and in the evening we give our second best to Jesus.

X. LOYALTY IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Leaders are to:

- A. Give attention to detail
- B. Keep commitments to the team



XI. KEEP PHYSICAL APPEARANCE UP

Shabbiness reflects:

- A. your attitude: that you do not care
- B. your poor self-image.

"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." (Hebrews 6:11-12).

CONCLUSION

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." (Hebrews 6:10)

Thank you Jesus! Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus. Amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- For each of the 11 points presented in this lecture, write down 2 specific things that you can do to improve that area in your life and ministry. At the soonest possible time make the appropriate



changes and check them off your list. Bring the list to the next conference to share with other leaders.