

Serving God with Excellence

Each one of us is given only a limited time to serve God. That limited time is called "Day." We say limited because the "Night" is coming when no one can work.

Night represents the end of our opportunity to serve God. We identified five nights that can come to us to remove our opportunities to serve God:

1. **Death**
2. **Disability**
3. **The Rapture**
4. **Backsliding**
5. **Old Age**

Decide to serve God today. Do not delay. Do not deny God of your service. Do not waste or squander your time.

SERVING GOD WITH EXCELLENCE.

- **Personal Excellence**
- **Vocational Excellence**
- **Relational Excellence**
- **Moral Excellence**
- **Spiritual Excellence**

ILLUSTRATION: Paul Harvey one time told the story of a woman who called up the Butterball Turkey Company's consumer hotline and asked about the advisability of cooking a turkey that had been in her freezer for 23 years.

The customer service representative told her that it would be o.k. to eat if the freezer had maintained below zero temperature the entire time, but even so, the flavor would have deteriorated so much it wouldn't taste very good. Then the caller said, "Oh, that's what we thought. We'll just donate it to the church.

To be fit for this current Century we need to pay attention to the **quality** of what we do. The Church is not the place for the bad leftovers. It's not the place to do the minimum required. It is surely not the place for mediocrity. It is the place for Excellence!

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the sunny noon;
Fill brightest hours with labor,
Rest comes sure and soon.
Give every flying minute,
Something to keep in store;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man works no more.

Work, for the night is coming,
Under the sunset skies;
While their bright tints are glowing,
Work, for daylight flies.
Work till the last beam fadeth,
Fadeth to shine no more;
Work, while the night is darkening,
When man's work is o'er.

WHAT EXCELLENCE MEANS:

Excellence means giving or doing the maximum. Many people give their minimum to God.

Excellence is NOT perfection.

Excellence is a reflection of the God we serve.

Excellence does not happen by accident. Excellence is a deliberate effort or action. It is well-thought out, it well-planned, and it is well-executed.

Excellence shows up in the details.

If you can still do something more, then you have not yet done your excellent. (Example: if you get an 85 in Math, but you can get a 90, then you have not yet done your excellent.)

Excellence is a lifestyle (habit): Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do." Excellence is not an act. It is a habit."

Each one has a different LEVEL of excellence.

God does not accept anything less than our excellence. (Malachi. God was angry that they gave him the worst animals in their collection of animals.)

There are three areas where we need EXCELLENCE:

I. Excellence in Our Motivations

There are different motivations for Serving God. Identify which motivates you:

Some motivations are not worthy of God or Christians. Though service may result from those who are improperly motivated, it is not really God that these people serve, but themselves.

1. **Legalism:** Some people may try to serve God in hopes that this will either earn them eternal salvation or help them hang on to it. Of course, this is contrary to the grace of God in salvation and in sanctification (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:1-9).
2. **False guilt:** A failure to trust God to forgive their sins may cause some people to try to serve God in order to work off their guilt, as in works of penance. But this ignores God's promise of complete forgiveness to all who confess their sins (Col. 2:13; 1 John 1:9).
3. **Self-seeking:** Financial gain, preeminence, power, or self-aggrandizement may motivate some to try to serve God. Obviously, they are only serving their own selfish desires. The Bible has examples of those who were so motivated (Matt. 6:1-6; Mark 12:28-40; Phil. 1:15-18; 3 John 9; 2 Pet. 2:14-15). The apostle Paul taught against such motives (2 Cor. 4:2-5; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:3-6; 1 Tim. 6:1).

Legitimate Biblical motivations

The Bible presents some powerful and clear motivations for service and godly living. Good motives may overlap, and some seem higher in principle than others. Here are five easily identifiable motives from the New Testament in somewhat of an order of priority.

1. **Love:** This includes first a love for God, then an accompanying love for others (Matt. 22:37-39). A Christian motivated by love works for the benefit of the One loved. Love for God is often demonstrated through obedience (John 14:21; 1 John 5:2). Love also expresses itself in a desire to glorify (John 12:27-28), please (Col. 1:10; 3:20; 1 Thes. 4:1), and know God (Phil. 3:10-14; 1 John 4:16). Love for God would also mean love for that which God loves, thus we love other people (2 Cor. 5:14; 12:15; 1 John 4:11; 5:2).
2. **Gratitude:** Because we benefit from God's actions, we may wish to respond gratefully. Our service and our lives become a "Thank You" to Him. In light of God's blessings, we are motivated to offer our bodies to Him (Rom. 12:1-2) and to live for Him (Gal. 2:20). Paul was motivated to serve God with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 1:12).
3. **Eternal Significance:** We can be motivated to fulfill our longing for some significance beyond this temporary life according to God's original purposes. God created us to participate in His rule over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). This will be fulfilled in His coming kingdom to the degree that we are faithful in our responsibilities in this life (Matt. 19:27-30; Luke 19:11-27) or our faithful endurance in suffering (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12). The enjoyment of this earned inheritance should inspire godly conduct (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). The book of Hebrews promises those who are faithful a share in Christ's future rule (Heb. 1:14; 3:14; 4:1, 9; 6:11-12). Eternal significance can begin when we engage in serving Christ in this life (Matt. 10:38-39; 16:24-27; Luke 9:23-26).
4. **Rewards:** We can also be motivated by God-given rewards in this life (Mark 10:28-31) and in eternity (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12). The judgment seat of Christ is the scene of future rewards. There all Christians will appear and give an account (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:9-13). Eternal rewards include treasures (Matt. 6:20) and crowns (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8). Motivation also comes from the possibility of losing out on eternal rewards (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:14-25; Luke 19:11-27; 1 Cor. 3:12-15). Rewards are not a selfish motivation if our goal is to use them to glorify God in the end.
5. **Duty:** Some Christians will serve God because they have made a commitment to do so, or because they are living up to that which God has called them to do. Duty does not expect a reward, but is performed out of obligation (Luke 17:7-10). This is seen in Jesus' own commitment to do what God had called Him to do (Mark 1:38; John 12:27; 17:4; Heb. 2:17; 5:5-10). Paul was motivated to live up to his calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 1:1, 11; 2:7). Christians might also feel it their duty to be faithful stewards of their gifts (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) or the gospel (1 Cor. 9:17-18; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:11, 18; 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:14; 2; Titus 1:3).

6. **Fear:** This motivation is inferior to love (1 John 4:18) but can motivate the Christian away from sin or unfaithfulness and towards godly conduct. One might fear a negative judgment at the judgment seat of Christ (James 2:13; 3:1) which can include shame (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 John 2:28) or loss of reward (1 Cor. 3:13-15; 9:27). The Christian may also fear God's temporal discipline (1 Cor. 5:5; 11:29-32; Col. 3:23-25; 1 Tim. 4:14; James 5:15-16, 19). The book of Hebrews effectively uses five fearful warnings to motivate its readers away from apostasy and on to maturity (Heb. 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:1-12; 10:26-31; 12:25-29). There is also a positive aspect of fear in the sense of reverence, which is also a motivation for the Christian (Acts 10:2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 12:28).

Of course, the excellent motive for service is LOVE.

II. Excellence in our Attitudes

In Malachi 3 we see the attitudes of the Israelites in their service for God.

1. **"Serving God is Futile." (Useless) Selfish, Self-centered Perspective.** They do not know God.
Malachi 3:13-18 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee? Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.
2. **"Serving God is Burdensome." (Servant Self-Concept)** When you think you are just a servant, then doing what you are doing for God becomes intolerable and burdensome. You have no part in it. This was the concept of the First Son in the Parable of the TWO SONS.
3. **"Serving God is Exciting and Enjoyable." (Mature Child Concept)**

III. Excellence in our Performance

Quality and Quantity.

Doing your best over doing your good. Continually becoming better.

Giving your maximum compared with doing the minimum. Giving God more than what is required.

Giving God the second mile. Don't just attend the service, do something for God! Don't just do something for God, get trained to do it! Don't just get trained to do it, do it! There's always more. Excellence means giving God more!

Conclusion:

Make a commitment to excellence today! Lord, I will never give you my second best, I will never do the minimum for you, I will never give you my leftovers. I will give you my best every day.