

THE GOOD NEWS GAZETTE

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Think on these things...

Philippians 4:8-9

Things of Excellence

Last in the group of things Paul instructs the Christians at Philippi to think on are things that are excellent or praiseworthy. What is excellent in our world today? What is worthy of praise? For me, excellence means practice. Not just any type of practice, but a practice that makes perfect. Whether singing a song, driving a car, or completing a task well at work, practice makes perfect and excellent. Excellence in things of virtue is praiseworthy.

This February, Olympic teams from around the world will compete for gold medals in Russia. These athletes have spent many years honing and perfecting their skills to become excellent at their sport. It takes approximately 10,000 hours of concentrated effort, practice, and dedication to become excellent at a skill. Performing at the olympic level is no easy task. How many of us would spend the years of sacrifice, effort, and devotion to learn to become excellent at a single sport?

Like Olympic athletes, Christians are instructed to be excellent in several ways. Paul says in I Corinthians 9:24-27, that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize. Paul told the Christians



in Corinth to “Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do

not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” Like an Olympic athlete, Paul was devoted to excellence in the practice of Christianity. He walked his talk by putting his all into the service of Christ.

In I Corinthians 12:31, Paul sums up his discussion of how the church, like a body, has many parts that need to work in harmony and concert to perform the tasks and role God appointed for it. He says in verse thirty-one, “But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most **excellent** way. What was the excellent way? First Corinthians 13 says it is to love and defines what love truly is. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new command I give: Love one another. As I have loved you, so **you must love one another**. By this all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another.” As followers of Christ, we must learn to **excel** in our love for each other. This is how all men will know we are Christians.

A second way in which we are called to excel is revealed in I Corinthians 14:12. It says we are to “**excel** in gifts that build up the church.” Hebrews 10:24 says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” To consider how to help one another requires thought and effort. It also requires action to spur. Just as you can not spur a horse if you aren’t with it, we can not spur one another on to love and good deeds if we are absent from each other. Who have we built up recently? Who have we considered? Who have we spurred toward love and good works?

Continuing in II Corinthians 8:7 Paul tells the Corinthian church, “But just as you **excel** in everything —in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us —see that you **excel** in this grace of giving.” Acts 20:35 entreats us to remember the words of the Lord when “Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Christians will be a giving people. This is a sign of excellence.

Titus 3:8 concludes Paul’s admonitions by saying, “This is a trustworthy saying. And **I want you to stress these things**, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are **excellent** and profitable for everyone.” To do good is excellent.

Those who compete in the Olympics go into strict training for a crown that does not last. Christians compete “for a crown that will last forever.” We are called to practice excellence in four specific areas. We are to be 1. loving as Christ loved us, 2. building up the church, 3. giving, and 4. devoted to doing what is good. Practicing and perfecting our skills in these areas will make us excellent in our walk with the Lord. It will be praiseworthy. Think on these things...

Robin Robbins House



DID YOU KNOW?

Where did John the Baptist preach?

Of what were John's clothes made?

What food did John eat?

Where did the people come from who heard John's message?

Who did John call a brood of vipers?

For what purpose did John baptize?

Who came from Galilee to be baptized by John?

What did John hear the voice from heaven say?

The answers to these questions can be found in Matthew chapter 3

RECIPES

Carrot-Coconut Bread

1/2 cup coconut oil at room temperature

2/3 cup packed light brown sugar

2 eggs

1 1/2 cups grated carrots

1 cup white whole wheat flour

1 cup all purpose flour

1 tsp baking powder

1/4 tsp salt

1 cup sweetened flaked coconut

1/3 cup chopped unsalted macadamia nuts (optional)

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Coat an 8 1/2 X 4 1/2 inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large bowl, beat oil, sugar and eggs 3 minutes, until well combined and fluffy. Beat in carrots until just combined. In a separate bowl whisk together flours, baking powder, and salt. Beat dry mixture into wet until just combined. Stir in coconut and add nuts, if desired. Put mixture in pan smoothing out the top. Bake 55" to 1 hour. Cool 15" then turn onto a rack and cool completely. Makes 10 servings.



Please feel free to submit recipes, positive quotes, comments, etc. to
The Good News Gazette at thegoodnewsgazette1@gmail.com

“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing.”

I Thessalonians 5:9-11



Photos by Robin House