

# Raising the Bar

## *Do Hard Things*

### *Wk. 2*

Last week we started this series on doing hard things, we talked last week about believing the lie that your teen years were all about you just trying different things out with little to no consequence. That lie compares to the illustration we gave concerning the elephant that is taught to believe a lie. Many times we believe lies about our teen years because the standard has been lowered so much, when actually, biblically we're supposed to live as adults.

Now that we are beginning to have an understanding of the problem, we're going to begin to look at the solution. Have you ever heard the phrase, "just do your best"? It's one of those phrases that is supposed to make us feel better even though we rarely do because most of the time we're able to use it as an excuse to get off without giving our best. The reality is that many times we gave it a shot and we're good with that.

Look at it this way, (p86-88 illustration). You see what we do too many times is we define our best by the grade around us or our peers, when our best is really between us and God. As a result we become lazy and/or complacent. Have you ever put your homework off to the last minute because you knew you could pull off a B or C and not even try? Have you ever stayed up late the night before a big game or competition just because you believed it wouldn't affect you? Sometimes we get away with it, other times we don't but the fact here is that we didn't give our best only enough to get by. In order to be the person, the adult that God calls us to be, created us to be, we need to exceed the low expectations set for us and reject the complacency and laziness that we fall into too often and that we see all around us.

The choice to do **your** best, even when no one is watching takes your integrity and lays it on the line. What type of person are you, really? When we choose to exceed the expectations set for us, it can be a lonely place, but many times it's when God uses us the most. Think for a second of David, if he hadn't stepped out to face the giant and instead sat at the expectations of his family would he have beat the Goliath and eventually led Israel? If Joseph had sat at the expectations of a slave and/or a prisoner in Egypt would God have used him to save the Israelites from the famine? And what about Peter, if he had remained at the standard of a fisherman instead of following Jesus, would he have pastored and written parts of the NT? The common threads in all of these situations is that Jesus used these young people, who were giving it their all, to accomplish amazing things for the kingdom of God. Why wouldn't we want to be a part of something like that?

Complacency tells us the opposite though, it tells us that we don't want to be a part of what God's doing, complacency says...

- everyone already thinks your great, why would you want to risk that?
- you're ok where you are at, why try to improve anything
- you're better than most people, why try something difficult, what if you fail?
- there's plenty of celebrities out there who haven't done anything hard and they've made it big

Listen to Mr. Complacency long enough and he'll tell you to take a nap...

"Complacency is a blight that saps energy, dulls attitudes, and causes a drain on the brain. The first symptom is satisfaction with the way things are and the second is rejection of things as they might be. 'Good Enough' becomes today's watchword and today's standard. Complacency makes people fear the unknown, mistrust the untried, and abhor the new. Like water complacent people follow the easiest course- downhill. They draw false strength from looking back"

Scripture is even more clear on the dangers of complacency:

*"Pr 1:32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them"*

Which is why scripture states:

*Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

*Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, Col 3:24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

The questions we have to ask ourselves is what is the purpose in the things I'm doing? For whom or what am I playing football, going to school, in this relationship with? You see when we serve ourselves we never give our personal best, because there's nothing greater than ourselves, there's nothing really at stake and no one to hold us accountable. However, when we serve God with all of our heart we working for and toward something greater than ourselves. Listen to the question God ask through Isaiah,

*Isa 55:2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Isa 55:3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.*

Why live only for ourselves, when we have been created to give **our** best for God? God's always been about doing things that challenge and push our limits. That's why when we obediently follow in His footsteps he does amazing things through us, we're forced to give more than we are comfortable with, more than we are able so His strength is made perfect through our weakness.

There is three ways we can work toward doing hard things, the first is this;

1. Do what's hard for you...

We all know we have strengths and weaknesses, there are things that just come easy to us and other things that we really struggle with. We're all human. What we do most of the time is use those things that come naturally to us as an excuse not to work on and through the things that are more difficult. (examples p94-95)

Because most people don't have the same strength they'll look at yours and think you're working hard, when in your gut you know you're not it just came naturally. Look for the things that are tough for you, things which God call's you to. Maybe it's loving your enemies, obeying your parents, or just getting up in the morning. Work on those things, despite who see's or doesn't see it. Do as unto the Lord for he is the one who rewards, but not typically the way the world does.

2. Be known for what you do, more than what you don't

We've all meant people with really high and positive standards, some of us even fall into that category. People look at us and say how good of person we are or what a "strong believer" we are, we don't smoke, drink, sleep around, do drugs, whatever.... (Ill. p96-98) Those things are all good and even to a certain extent great, but is that really enough. Those biblical characters that I mentioned earlier, we see little record of the things that they stayed away from, the things they didn't do, but we see much more in scripture about what they did do.

Psalm 1:1-2 tells us two things;

*Ps 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. Ps 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Scripture first tells us what not to do, walk in the counsel of the wicked. We hear things like this all the time, but far too often we don't see what we need to do. According to verse 2, the man who is blessed does not only stay away from the wicked, but he delights and

mediates on scriptures. You see the standard which we even in church set is below God's, the do nots are not enough, what are we doing and why?

3. Pursue Excellence, not excuses...

There are things that we're great at, but is that an excuse to not live up to a higher standard? (Ill. p99-100). As mentioned earlier there's far too many of us who don't work as hard, or don't live up to our full potential because people or a cultural standard (grades, making the team) has already deemed us to have arrived. As a result we never explore the true extent of our potential. We fall into this trap most of the time because we compare ourselves (or other people in our lives compare us) to those in our surroundings. The kicker is you're not like everyone else in your surroundings. You're you, "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for *you* to do" (Eph. 2:10) His standard is not for us to be the godliest Christian in a youth group filled with half-heartedness but for us to be holy. Not to be the teacher's pet, but to be a servant of all (Mk 9:35).

"God set his standards this high so that we won't make the mistake of aiming low. He made them unreachable so that we would never have an excuse to stop growing".

So why do we stop growing? We've allowed the standard of those around us to be our standard instead of God's, as a result we become complacent only doing things that are easy or come naturally instead of living to be what God created us for.

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. What areas of my life do I not care about that I know I should care about?
2. In what areas have I fallen short of God's standard and my own potential?
3. In what areas have I settled for just getting by when I know I could do better if I really tried?
4. In what areas have I decided that things "will always be this way", without ever putting in the kind of effort that really changes things?