

# Living Life on a Whole New Level

by Joyce Meyer

**You and I have been given a tremendous gift—the freedom of *choice*. And with every choice we make, there is a certain consequence we can expect. I believe there are three main choices that are constantly before us: the choice to be lazy, the choice to be mediocre, and the choice to be excellent.**

While the majority of mankind is stuck in the “mire of mediocrity,” those who pursue a walk of excellence find the real rewards. They live life on a whole new level, experiencing true fulfillment and satisfaction that many others miss out on.

In order to cultivate a desire to come up higher and be the best we can be, we need to have a clear understanding of the differences between being lazy, mediocre and excellent. Although we may not fit entirely into the category of laziness or mediocrity, I think all of us have room for improvement.

## **Leave the Lower Level of Laziness**

Of the three choices, laziness is the most destructive. The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about the lazy man. Proverbs 24:30,31 says, *I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, behold, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles were covering its face, and its stone wall was broken down.* This description reminds me of many neglected houses I’ve seen. The windows were boarded up, the grass wasn’t cut, and there was trash all over the yard—everywhere I looked, there was a mess. It is a sad sight to see, but it is a perfect example of the fruit of laziness.

A lazy man does just what he feels like doing, which is usually nothing. He wants everything to be easy. As a result, he winds up going through life unhappy and usually filled with jealousy, envy and resentment over what others have. He is normally not alert, doesn’t plan ahead and fails to take care of things. Sooner or later, everything from his checkbook to the lives of his children winds up in a mess. Just as the scripture says, *...a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come as a robber, and your want as an armed man* (Proverbs 24:33,34).

Even though most of us don’t fall entirely into this category, I believe that there are certain areas of our lives where we may have a lazy attitude—we’re passive instead of active in the way we deal with things. For instance, we may *wish* we had a pastor who was a powerful preacher, but we’re not willing to make the effort to pray for Him. We may *wish* we had a better government, but we won’t take the time to be informed on the issues and get out and vote. Or we may *wish* we had victory over temptations such as gossip, worry and fear, but we are not willing to stand against them by speaking the Word. In other words, we recognize that there is a problem, but we are not willing to commit ourselves and put forth the effort to be a part of the solution.

The only way to see this mindset change is to recognize what we are doing wrong and submit ourselves to the inner working of the Holy Spirit. I did not overcome fifteen years of abuse by *wishing* things would change. I learned to take hold of God’s Word and apply it to my life day after day, situation after situation. In time, *He* brought about change, and He will faithfully do the same thing for you.<sup>1</sup> He will take your “wishbone” and replace it with “backbone.” He will substitute the sluggishness of your soul with a determination to see transformation.

## **Cut Out the Middleman**

Although many people struggle with laziness, I believe the area that people wrestle with more often is the temptation to accept a “middle-of-the-road” mentality. This is the mindset that says, “I’m okay—I’m just as good as anyone else. Besides, everybody is doing it.” This mediocre type of thinking is what is plaguing the majority of our society, including many Christians.

Mediocrity means average, status quo, moderate to low in quality. The mediocre man is not really bad, but he is not really good either—he is not worse than anybody else, but he’s certainly not any better. He is a person who is halfway between failure and success, and as a result, he is frustrated and unfulfilled. This “average guy” does just enough to get by but never goes the extra mile.

The mediocre man is the type of person who misuses and abuses the hotel room because he doesn’t have to clean it. He will set a wet drinking glass on the wooden furniture in another person’s home without a second thought. When he goes grocery shopping and realizes he has picked up more than he can pay for, he takes things out of his basket and puts them down in the first available place. He’ll put a head of lettuce in the freezer case, a can of cleanser by the bread, and a bunch of bananas by the dog food. Why? Because he doesn’t care. He feels like, “It’s not my job, so why should I worry about putting things back where they belong?”

I remember a time years ago when I was walking down the hall of a hotel after finishing a meeting. I stopped to get a cup full of ice from the machine, and as I turned to walk away, a piece of ice fell out of my cup onto the floor. With my hands full and my feet hurting, I decided to kick the ice off to the side. Well, I got a few feet down the hall and the Holy Spirit said, “Go pick it up.” I responded, “I can’t pick it up. My hands are full, and besides that, my feet are tired.” Again, He said, “Pick it up.” I said, “But Lord, it’s dirty. What am I supposed to do with it anyway?” He said, “If this was your hotel, would you want people kicking ice into the corners, leaving it to melt and mess up the carpet?” Obviously, my answer was no, so I put my stuff down and picked up the ice.

Now some may think I am being ridiculous, but I don’t think so. Mediocrity may be acceptable in society, but I don’t believe it is applauded in heaven. If we want our lives to make an impact on those around us, then we have to choose to move beyond mediocrity. Think about it. Average, mediocre people are not remembered. The heroes found in history books and the Bible are not average people—they are people who did extraordinary things. They are the ones who went above and beyond what was expected of them. If you and I want to be remembered, we are going to have to choose to be people of excellence.

## **Become a Person of Excellence**

A person who is excellent is one who exceeds the status quo—he does more than what is expected of him. As people of excellence, you and I need to do what is right even when no one else is around. We need to realize that God sees everything, and that everything we do in secret will eventually come out into the open—both good and bad. So whatever task we work at, we need to ...*work at it heartily (from the soul), as [something done] for the Lord and not for men, knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [and not from men] that [we] will receive the inheritance...* (Colossians 3:23,24).

Excellence should be seen in everything we do—our conversation, our dress, the way we care for our home and car, the way we treat people, and so on. If we are people of excellence, we will be excellent employees. For instance, if we are required to work from 8 am to 5 pm, then we should strive to get there around a quarter till eight and leave about a quarter after five—not clock in at eight and start straightening our desk fifteen minutes before five. In other words, as people of excellence, we should make it our goal to go the extra mile.<sup>2</sup>

The fact is, you and I do not serve an average God. We serve a God of excellence—One Who does exceedingly and abundantly above all that we could ask or think.<sup>3</sup> As His representatives, we are called to show forth His character in everything that we do. And with that call, we have been equipped with His Seed of greatness—the Creator Himself is living on the inside of us, giving us the power to be extraordinary people.

Excellence is not perfection. When I say we should choose to be people of excellence, I don't mean that we try to be perfect—that has a tendency to overwhelm us and those around us. What I do mean is that we choose to have an excellent spirit. There are rich rewards for those who choose to have an excellent spirit. The Bible says in Daniel 6:3, that ...*Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.* I believe that this excellent spirit is many times just a matter of having an excellent attitude. This is the kind of attitude that says, "I'll do whatever you need, however you need it, and whenever you need it done." The person with an excellent attitude takes what he has and does the best he can with it.

God worked to bring about change in my life for many years in private before He elevated me to the public position I'm in now. I was probably not too lazy, but I was definitely mediocre and did what everybody else was doing. One of the things that God told Dave and me early in ministry was that if we wanted to have a successful ministry, we needed to be people of excellence. I am happy to say that our choice to walk in excellence has truly paid off. I love my life, and I am more blessed than I could have ever imagined.

### **The Choice Is Yours**

God ordains a destiny for each of us, but just because He ordains it doesn't mean it is automatically going to happen. It is up to us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and make right choices, and the choice to walk in excellence is extremely important.

Wherever you are right now in your life, you got there by a series of choices. I realize that as children, other people made choices for us that may have been unwise or damaging. However, just because we started out somewhere doesn't mean we have to finish there. God doesn't show partiality—He sets the same opportunities for success before everyone.<sup>4</sup> His promises are available to *whosoever* will believe and obey His Word.

If you want your life to change, then your choices have to change, and today is the best day of your life to begin. I challenge you to draw a line separating you from your past, and make the choice to move forward as a person of excellence. Surrender your soul—your mind, will, and emotions—to God, and let Him give you His grace to *see* and *choose* the more excellent ways. Start doing what you know in your heart is the better thing to do. Don't choose to be lazy or mediocre. Choose to be a person who will go the extra mile—a person of excellence! 🍎

(1) 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24 (2) Matthew 5:41 (3) Ephesians 3:20 KJV (4) Romans 2:11