

Why Do Your Best This School Year?

This week most of the kids in our church returned to school. Some to public, some to private or parochial and some to home school. I want our kids to do their best in school. Now is the time for students to make their goals a reality. The school year is beginning, the slate is clear and clean. Don't wait until you bomb your first semester to get serious about your studies. For those who are seeking scholarships, goofing off in early high school can make it difficult to pull your grade point average up to where it needs to be to attain these worthy goals. I am thinking right now about one young man in our church who is in his second year at West Point. He did not wait until he was a senior; he did his best and excelled as a freshman and sophomore. You don't have to be a straight "A" student, but whatever we do, we should do our best. There is nothing to be ashamed of if we make "C", if we gave it our honest, best effort. However, if we make a "C" when we could have made a "B", we should be ashamed. Solomon said, *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..."* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Here are some reasons I encourage youth to do their best in school:

1. Doing your best is right and doing right glorifies God.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31). When it comes to the study of Scripture, the Bible says, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (II Timothy 2:15). This idea can be transferred to all our studies. We should study in such a way that we are not ashamed. Teachers give homework assignments and in doing so, they prepare you for the material you'll be covering in your up-coming classes and future tests. If you are not prepared, here are words that will strike terror in your heart: "Put your books away, clear off your desk, except for two pieces of paper and two sharpened pencils." If you are prepared, you can thrill to the prospect of a pop quiz. If you are a slacker, the angst is miserable when sitting in front of a blank piece of paper with no answers...ashamed. I will go further to say that doing your best is a good testimony to others. Hear the clarion call of the Apostle: *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (I Timothy 4:12).

2. Doing your best opens up all options for your future.

A person who excels at doing his or her best has a bright future. If you don't do your best, your opportunities will be limited. There is nothing wrong with unskilled labor when we work hard and enjoy our work. But if you desire to do some skilled labor that requires advanced education, your choices will be limited if you squander and waste your time and fail at doing your best. And I am not just talking about going on to college. I am talking about the attitude that you assume as you try to further your education. When a prospective employer of a successful business is looking for a young person just finishing college, do you think the employer says to the college president or dean, "I am looking for your most popular kid with his peers, the real party animal. It doesn't matter how good he or she did, as long as they believed in having a good time." If you think conversations like this occur, you are living on another planet. Employers are looking for guys and girls that will bring their work ethic of excellence into their business.

Youth who do their best can have a choice to be a preacher, a homemaker, a geologist, an engineer, a future ceo or president of a corporation, a doctor, a scientist, a lawyer, a zookeeper, a senator, a congressman or president of the United States. You can do anything God has called you to do! There is always a prepared place for a prepared person. And a prepared person is basically someone who does his or her best.

3. Doing your best makes life a learning and rewarding experience.

Don't let mathematics conquer you; do your best until you conquer math. Don't resign yourself to not reading because reading bores you. Read until it becomes interesting. Many a book failed to hold my interest until after about 30 or 50 pages were read. Don't get squeamish and beg the teacher to let you out of dissecting a frog. Do your best! Put a mask and rubber gloves on and become a great "cut up." Even a simple frog will show you how man is more wonderfully made.

Learning should be a never-ending process. A doctor keeps studying medicine, a lawyer keeps learning law, a preacher keeps studying theology, and a horticulturalist keeps studying botany. A person who does their best will never live a boring existence. They will keep growing in life. Hear the voice of a man who did his best: "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after...*" (Philippians 3:12).

4. Doing your best places you in good company.

There is a repeated phrase in Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, and 25. The phrase is "*after his (or their) kind.*" The apple tree reproduces other apple trees, whales produce other whales, cattle produce other cattle, and creeping things produce other creeping things in the earth. It is not a stretch to make the application that as we live, we attract others of like kind. A troublemaker hangs out with other troublemakers. I have seen many a well-behaved youth fall into wrong company and develop wrong behavior. The Bible says, "*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*" (I Corinthians 15:33). Elisha-types hang out with Elijah-types, Ahabs marry Jezebels. "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*" (Proverbs 13:20). Doing your best puts you into the company of wise individuals. Fire begets fire.

5. Doing your best sets a winning pattern for life.

Joseph, as a son to Jacob, servant in Potiphar's house, captive in jail, second highest ruler in Egypt and finally caretaker of the nation of Israel excelled in all areas of his life. The Bible reveals Potiphar's observation of Joseph: "*And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand*" (Genesis 39:3). Later God shows us the jail warden's statement of scrutiny, "*The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper*" (Genesis 39:23). Joseph simply did his best and God helps and blesses such consistent conscientious action! Learn to do your best now; make it your habit. Habits leads to patterns, patterns shape character and men and women of character change the world for good.

6. Doing your best gives deep and lasting satisfaction.

Phrases such as "I should have... if I had to do it over again... if only I had..." are eliminated from your life when you simply do your best. "Good, better, best, never let it rest 'til your good is better and your better is best." I learned that saying in college and never forgot it. We can live with a good conscience when we know we've done our best. If things don't turn out the way they should, we have the satisfaction that we obeyed God and did what we could. How can we be certain that "*all things work together for good...*"? The answer is found in that same verse (Romans 8:28). We can know this if we love God because the verse in it's entirety says, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). All things work together for good to those who love God. Returning to our first point, doing our best is right and this glorifies God. It matters not what worldly acclaim we attain - if we did our best, we live happy lives. Henry Clay was one of the greatest statesmen who ever held office in Washington. While running for president, Senator Clay was told, "Henry Clay, you'll never

become president if you don't compromise." Clay's response was, "I would rather be right than president." Better to fail with a clear conscience than succeed by doing wrong. After all, if you did your best - you won, you are not a loser. Let us live to hear Jesus say these words, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord*" (Matthew 25:21).

- Pastor Pope -

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