

Overcoming Mediocrity

1. God created us and has good things planned for us to accomplish in this world.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well... All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV)

“For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to do our best.

“And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father... Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.” Colossians 3:17, 23-24 (NLT)

“If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”

Romans 12:7-8 (NLT)

2. We must not allow ourselves to settle for mediocrity.

Mediocrity = “not very good.”

a. Some of us settle for mediocrity because we lack clarity/purpose/vision.

“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.” 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (NIV)

Life Application: A great way to overcome lack of clarity/purpose/vision is wise counsel.

“The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.”

Proverbs 20:5 (NIV)

b. Some of us settle for mediocrity because we don't believe we are good enough.

Moses pleaded with the LORD, “O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.” Then the LORD asked Moses, “Who makes a person's mouth? ...Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.” Exodus 4:10-12 (NLT)

Life Application: A great way to overcome our insecurities is meditating on the truth that God believes we are good enough and will be with us.

“This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

c. Some of us settle for mediocrity because we are afraid of criticism.

“Sanballat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage and mocked the Jews, saying in front of his friends and the Samarian army officers, “What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they're doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap...?” Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, “That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!” Nehemiah 4:1-3 (NLT)

Life Application: A great way to overcome fear of criticism is encouragement from Christian friends.

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

d. Some of us settle for mediocrity because we are lazy.

"I walked by the field of a lazy person, the vineyard of one with no common sense. I saw that it was overgrown with nettles. It was covered with weeds, and its walls were broken down. Then, as I looked and thought about it, I learned this lesson: A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - then poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber." Proverbs 24:30-34 (NLT)

"Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper." Proverbs 13:4 (NLT)

Life Application: A great way to overcome laziness is accountability.

"Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine."

Psalm 141:5 (NLT)

3. We must engage in the spiritual battle going on for control of our minds.

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)

"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."

John 10:10 (NLT)

Life Application: We must use the weapons God has given us.

The Bible: "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires."
Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

Prayer: "Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere." Ephesians 6:17-18 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Read Ephesians 2:10. Do you consider yourself to be a masterpiece? Why? Why not? What good things does God want you to accomplish? Who could help you figure this out? (see Proverbs 20:5)
2. Who believed in you enough to encourage you to pursue your dreams? Who could you encourage the same way?
3. What does settling for mediocrity look like in your personal life? ...in your home? ...at work? ...with God?
4. Read Colossians 3:23-24. Would it make a difference in your work performance if Jesus were your boss? If so, what attitudes/behaviors would need to change? Why does Paul encourage us to work this way all the time?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 6:11-19. What does it look like to be successful in spiritual battles? What protection do we have? What weapons do we have? How can you help others in your connect group battle more successfully?
6. Read Exodus 4:10-12. Have you ever made excuses for not doing something you knew God wanted you to do? What held you back?
7. Discuss the following quotations:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." Calvin Coolidge

"God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I am so far behind that I will never die." Bill Watterson

"Nothing is as approved as mediocrity, the majority has established it and it fixes its fangs on whatever gets beyond it either way." Blaise Pascal

"The way we respond to criticism pretty much depends on the way we respond to praise. If praise humbles us, then criticism will build us up. But if praise inflates us, then criticism will crush us; and both responses lead to our defeat." Warren Wiersbe

"Since God intends to make you like Jesus, he will take you through the same experiences Jesus went through. That includes loneliness, temptation, stress, criticism, rejection, and many other problems." Rick Warren