

週一嗎哪 午間查經分享祈禱會

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STRIVING FOR QUALITY IN EVERYTHING

By Jim Mathis

Being a creative person by nature, I have always been interested in many forms of artistry, including going to art and craft fairs to see many examples of individual creativity. What I have found at those events has changed greatly through the years.

Art and craft fairs began to spring up around the U.S.A. in the 1960s and '70s. Workmanship back then often left much to be desired. Just about everything could be called "folk art." The apprenticeship system of learning had all but disappeared, so people wanting to make things with their hands had to develop skills on their own. Opportunities to learn were limited; so was the quality of the tools available.

Since that time, however, the tools for making things out of wood, glass, ceramics, and many other things have improved dramatically. We can now attend workshops or seminars, live and online, to learn whatever we want. The result has been an amazing level of quality at art shows and crafts fairs. Amateur or part-time jewelers, potters, and woodworkers are turning out beautiful objects that were unimaginable 50 years ago. The same holds true for other crafts such as sculpture, photography, and painting.

This pursuit of quality has transferred to manufactured goods as well. Cameras, televisions, home appliances, and automobiles all have improved in just about every way over the past 10 years. I have owned many cars in my lifetime, and each of the last three or four vehicles was the best I had owned to that point. And my newest car is better than any of them. The same is true of my current camera.

The lesson for those of us in business is we need to keep producing better products. Pursuing quality is the best business strategy in the long-term. At a specialty coffee makers' conference years ago, one of the speakers asked a key question: "Are you Nordstrom's (a high-quality department store) or the Dollar Store (a bargain-priced store)?" Since we were all in the specialty coffee business, the implication was we needed to do better. No more handmade signs or worn-out furniture. Quality is important for everything.

An article in a recent newsletter reminded readers that "How we do anything is how we do everything." That is why we can judge a restaurant by how clean the floor is or if the front door needs to be painted. A noted businessman said when he was operating an auto repair business, he put on a clean pair of white coveralls for every car he worked on. He did not want to start working on a customer's car in greasy clothes. Doing the best we can in every area of our life should be both a habit and a lifestyle.

There is also a spiritual aspect to this emphasis on quality. The first book in the Bible recounts

由香港工商基督徒協會 (CBMC Hong Kong Ltd) 逢週一發放

地址: 香港上環禧利街 2 號東寧大廈 20 樓 2004 室 Tel: (852) 2805-1923

Email: enquiry@cbmc.org.hk Web: www.cbmc.org.hk

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how God created light; the heavens and the earth; water and sky; the stars; all living creatures, including animals and plants and ultimately, human beings. At the conclusion of all His work, it says, “*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*” (Genesis 1:31). As someone has said, “God doesn’t make junk!”

It is interesting that the Scriptures challenge us to follow His example. In Colossians 3:17 we are told, “*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.*” Then several verses later, perhaps to reinforce the point, it exhorts us, “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.... It is the Lord Christ you are serving*” (Colossians 3:23). If we are serving and seeking to honor God, the consummate Workman, dare we offer Him less than our very best?

© 2022. *Jim Mathis is a writer, photographer and small business owner in Overland Park, Kansas. His latest book is The Camel and the Needle, A Christian Looks at Wealth and Money. He formerly was a coffee shop manager and executive director of CBMC in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri.*

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about the quality of things made today – whether works of craftsmanship made by hands or products that are manufactured – compared to the quality of similar things years ago? To what would you attribute the difference in quality overall?
2. Can you think of any areas where quality of products continues to fall below expectations? If so, give an example. Why do you think this might be?
3. When you think of striving to achieve the highest quality possible, should sales and profits be the primary motivation? Why or why not?
4. Thinking about the Bible’s exhortations to “do everything in the name of the Lord,” and “whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,” how do you respond? What do these commands mean to you? What does our response have to say about the depth and quality of our faith?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 10:5, 12:24, 18:9, 21:5, 22:29; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Ephesians 6:7-8

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