

Practice makes Perfect

I am sure you are familiar with this saying, but I believe it is one of the most reasonable pithy statements for Learning to Live Well. Just think about it, would you like to have an operation if your doctor had never done one before or only just a few once in a while? I think you can see my point that practice is essential to almost everything we wish to do well. Another question, that I am sure you have heard as well, How do you get to Carnegie Hall? The proverbial answer is, Practice, Practice, Practice. But think about this a little more and you may discover something else about practice that is extremely essential. **Practice only makes one perfect if one practices correctly!**

Practice that makes you perfect is not just simply doing the same thing over and over again. Practice must first be informed and be done correctly before it really helps. *"You have heard it said that practice makes perfect. However, that is not necessarily true. Practice makes permanent, so you have to make sure you are rehearsing the right things."* [<http://www.bookmarketingworks.com/MediaTraining.htm>] You would not go to someone who claimed to be a doctor without the required education to earn that title. It is also important that this doctor keeps up to date through continuing education and training. It is the specialist who has repeatedly done the procedure you may need along with continuing education that leads to a more successful outcome for wellness.

Planning
Regular
Activity
Causing
Total
Internal
Change
Effectively

This concept is vital to almost everything in ordinary day-to-day living. Living well is not necessarily automatic. Doing what comes naturally may not always be healthy or productive. Planning is an important requirement if you want to take a trip unless you just want to wander around for a while to pass some time. It is customary to use a map to locate your destination and then plan the route you will take to go directly or to plan stops along the way. This process is both an inward and outward consideration. Most changes in life's activities involve the engagement of our mind and heart. This enables the possibility of a complete and effective adventure. Additional planning and investigation may also be necessary if we want the experience to be inclusive and enjoyable. To make sure of your intentions you may wish to practice the activity in your imagination and then express it in writing. A good trip is usually noted on a map for details unless you are using the automated details of GPS.

Perfect - "1 a: being entirely without fault or defect: flawless <a perfect diamond> b: satisfying all requirements: accurate c: corresponding to an ideal standard or abstract concept <a perfect gentleman> d: faithfully reproducing the original; specifically: letter-perfect e: legally valid" [<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perfect>]

Perfect is rather impossible for a normal human being and more like a goal in life. As I look at the definition of the word perfect above there may only be a few, if any, times in life that anyone might claim perfection. When you realize how many flawless diamonds there are you may begin to see that there is not much perfection in nature either. Before I share another point of view on perfection with

you from the Scriptures, perhaps it would be good to say that none of our goals need to be flawless. We do, however, need goals in life even if we never actually attain them at all. Goals are like an “end point” in a map as we plan for a trip. Without an “end point” we are simply wandering about as in a Sunday afternoon drive.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew we are told, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”*. [Matthew 5:8] Again, in chapter 19, Jesus is speaking with a young man who is very wealthy; *“Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” “Which ones?” the man inquired. Jesus replied, “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.” “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” “When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.” [Matthew 19:16-22]*

The word “perfect” in St. Matthew comes from the root word *Te’leios* [Teleio] in Greek that basically means: *“having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect”*. [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature, by Arndt & Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, pg. 816] I think these scriptures give us a better sense of how we might understand the use of the word perfect for the practical value in life we wish to claim. Our goals that we wish to attain require an end or purpose. We need to be attentive in an active way if we expect to attain any goal that we have set. We may then arrive even though the process and the attainment of the goal were not flawless. This is the way our Universe functions, this is the “spirit” of our religious hope described in the Scriptures, it is the process of every human development and the way we should expect life to be.

So learn how to practice well and be an active practitioner throughout life. Make and pursue all the goals that are necessary for the life you believe is yours to live. Move forward with confidence and never torment yourself with an unrealistic definition of perfection.

May the caring peace of God that goes beyond human comprehension, declare God’s love for you in your heart and mind as we see it in Jesus Christ; and may the blessing of God, loving Creator, gracious Liberator, and life giving Spirit keep you steadfast now and always. Amen.