

MONDAY MANNA

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WHEN GOOD GETS IN THE WAY OF THE BEST

By Ken Korkow

Have you ever considered that sometimes, doing good things can be the wrong things to do? When the Titanic struck the iceberg, the ship custodians might have been preparing to mop the floors. But a good thing like that definitely wasn't what was needed right then.

Life presents us with many "good things" we can do to consume our time, energy, and talents. We might say there is nothing wrong with doing good things – unless they prevent us from doing better things. In his devotional book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers observes in several of his meditations that "good is the enemy of the best." Time and experience have taught me that he was correct.

In the business and professional world, we encounter good things to do all the time. But if we want our lives – and our work – to really matter, to make a difference in the lives of people we touch every day, it would be wise to learn how to distinguish merely "good" things from the "best" things. This is especially true for those who desire to follow and serve Jesus Christ through our vocational pursuits.

Author Ray Comfort tells of an elderly man trembling as he spoke during a church service: "When I was a young man, I gave myself to sports!" In retrospect, he realised his preoccupation – at the expense of many important things – was a waste of time. The man pleaded with those who were listening, especially those who were young, to commit their lives to the best thing: Serving God in every area of their lives.

In the Scriptures we find this advice: "*Teach me to number my days, that I may gain a heart of wisdom*" (Psalm 90:12). And Ephesians 5:16 challenges us to be "*redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*" This does not mean time itself is evil, but we can't conserve time for use another day. It passes whether we want it to or not, so we should use it in the best ways we can.

Someone has said, "If Satan can't get you to do 'bad' – he is perfectly happy when you simply give your life to doing 'good.'" In other words, failing to recognise and pursue the 'best' things you could be doing.

Paul Tripp, another notable author and speaker, offers this insight on not confusing good things with those things that are best: "All of the glories of the physical created world serve this one purpose – to remind us of and point us to the glory of God.... The physical world is wonderfully glorious, but it was never meant to be our stopping point, any more than a sign that points toward something is meant to be the end of the journey.... The sign is not the thing; the sign points you to the thing.

"The same can be said of physical creation. It is not (what) you were made to live for. It was made to point you to the thing you were made to live for, and that thing is God and God alone. How sad it is when a person looks for what cannot be found in something that cannot deliver (what they seek). But many, many people do this every day. They look to created glory to find what cannot be found there."

So, what are those "best things" we should focus on? Growing in intimacy with God and obedience to Him, so that His character overflows into the lives of others is one of them. As 2 Corinthians 5:20 states, "*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*" What could be better than to serve and represent the Lord through our professional and personal lives, and help others to come to know Him as well?

Postal Address:

PO Box 8168,
Woolloongabba, QLD, 4102

ABN: 42 005 622 515

Office Address:

Suite CBMC,
Sung Do Lawyers,
14 Annerley Road,
Woolloongabba, QLD 4102

Email:

admin@cbmcaustralia.com.au

Phone:

07 3172 9365

Ken Korkow lives in Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.A., where he serves as an area director for CBMC. This is adapted from his "Fax of Life" column. Used with permission.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

How do you understand the statement, "good is the enemy of the best"? Do you agree with that? What might be an example of neglecting the "best" thing by doing something that is only "good" instead?

What is your reaction to the elderly man who concluded that he had wasted his life in pursuit of his interests in sports? Can you think of anyone who has come to a similar realisation, reaching the end of life and determining that much of it was spent on doing the wrong things?

Paul Tripp is quoted, saying he has seen many people who "look to created glory to find what cannot be found there." He suggests that instead, we should put our focus on the Creator, rather than the things created. Do you agree? Why or why not?

If you were to describe the things most important to you, the things you pursue by giving the most of your time, energy, and talent, what would they be? Explain why these things so important to you.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 19:20

Ecclesiastes 3:1-5, 9:10

Romans 1:12-23

Colossians 3:17,23, 4:5-6