

## **Don't Settle For Second Best**

**By Alan Smith**

The story is told of a professor who stood before his class of 20 senior organic biology students, about to hand out the final exam. "I want to say that it's been a pleasure teaching you this semester. I know you've all worked extremely hard and many of you are off to medical school after summer. So that no one gets their GPA messed up because they might have been celebrating a bit too much this week, anyone who would like to opt out of the final exam today will receive a B for the course."

There was much rejoicing amongst the class as students got up and passed by the professor to thank him and sign out on his offer. As the last taker left the room, the professor looked out over the handful of remaining students and asked, "Anyone else? This is your last chance." One final student rose up and took the offer.

The professor closed the door and took attendance of those students remaining. "I'm glad to see you believe in yourself," he said. "You all have A's for the final."

Too often, we're content to settle for second best. A lot of students would be thrilled to settle for a B ("That's better than I usually get. That's doing better than most of the others I know."). And most students, I think, would rather get a B with little time spent studying, than to make the effort it takes to get an A.

A lot of us are content to settle for second best in our spiritual lives as well. We're close to God (at least we think we are closer than many people we know), but we aren't willing to take the time and the effort to have the kind of relationship we know God wants us to have with Him. The biggest problem with settling for second best is that we miss out on what is truly best.

"Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me. And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

What Martha was doing was good (second best), but "Mary has chosen what is better." May we always seek out and choose what is better in our relationship with God, rather than settle for what is good."

## **Do You Know Who I Am?**

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The following story is told about a United Airlines gate agent in Denver, Colorado who was confronted by a passenger who probably deserved to fly as cargo: During the final days at Denver's old Stapleton airport, a crowded United Airlines flight was canceled. A single agent was rebooking a long line of inconvenienced travelers. Suddenly an angry passenger pushed his way to the desk. He slapped his ticket down on the counter and said, "I HAVE to be on this flight and it has to be FIRST CLASS."

The agent replied, "I'm sorry sir. I'll be happy to try to help you, but I've got to help these folks first, and I'm sure we'll be able to work something out."

The passenger was unimpressed. He asked loudly, so that the passengers behind him could hear, "Do you have any idea who I am?"

Without hesitating, the gate agent smiled and grabbed her public address microphone. "May I have your attention please?" she began, her voice bellowing throughout the terminal. "We have a passenger here at the gate who does not know who he is. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to gate 17." The folks behind him in line began laughing hysterically. Although the flight was canceled and people were late, they were no longer angry at United Airlines.

I grew up in a time when people spent a lot of time trying to “find themselves” (though I never quite figured out exactly what they were looking for). Do we have any idea who we are? Those of us who are Christians are children of God. That doesn't make us special, but it does give meaning to our lives.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:14-17).

### **The One Who Serves**

“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25-28).

In Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, Malvolio comments: “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.” There is a measure of truth in this observation; that is, so far as the world is concerned. However, Jesus showed how true greatness is obtained for the Christian. It is not by being born great or having greatness thrust upon him, but it is by humble service. Truly, the greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves.

### **Dying to Self**

When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take in all in patient, loving silence, that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any impunctuality, or any annoyance; when you stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility -- and endure it as Jesus endured, that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances, that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self. (Author Unknown)

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:24-25).

### **A Moments Wisdom**

Destroy gossip by ignoring it.

Jesus took my place on the cross and gave me His place in heaven.