



## **Overcoming Perfectionism**

*“So don’t be too good or too wise! Why destroy yourself? On the other hand, don’t be too wicked either. Don’t be a fool! Why die before your time? Pay attention to these instructions, for anyone who fears God will avoid both extremes. Ecclesiastes 7:16-18*

Perfectionism.

A monster disguised in pretty clothes. Its victims look put together at all times. Their homes are spotless. Their grades, commendable. Their hair is in place any time they hit the door.

If you are a woman, I guarantee you’ve been jealous of a perfectionist before.

But as it is in many things in life, when it comes to the Joneses, there is so much more than what meets the eye.

I know it well. A recovering perfectionist, for many years I struggled with thoughts of inadequacy and failure. I strived for straight As and dreamed of straight hair. Perfectionists were usually raised by a perfectionist parent and therefore their tendency to strive to be the crème de la crème in everything they do is usually a cry for love and acceptance. Unfortunately, unless they recognize the issue, they carry on the legacy to the next generation, unintentionally pushing their poor children into the same trap.

We live at the age of airbrushed, anorexic beauty. My anti-age cream is advertised by a gorgeous 20 year-old model, who won’t see a wrinkle on her face for another, well, 20 years. 50 year old millionaire actresses sell us the lie that we can fight the losing battle of sagging, wrinkling and hormonal changes at the blink of an eye.

Without a doubt, physical perfectionism plagues our society, infiltrating our families and distracting even many of our beautiful young girls, who are hiding in the restrooms, drowning in the hopelessness of anorexia and bulimia.

Then there’s performance perfectionism. Many of us believe that we must be perfect in all we do. Our homes must be perfectly clean. Home decor must change with the seasons.

We may find ourselves comparing our marriage to some of our friends’, who may seem to have more “sparks” flying around, or whose husband seems to be more romantic than ours. Before we know it, we are nagging John to death, trying to change the man we fell in love with into someone he’ll never be.

And let's not forget our children's school performance and sports galore! The pressure to be on accelerated programs and Honor Rolls steal many children's hide-and-seek moments today. Our baseball, softball and football fields and filled with young boys and girls who are missing their summers for another championship. Missing church for another trophy. We push them. They push themselves. And we all miss the mark.

We fight to perfect ourselves, our children, our spouses, our homes.

And we all become miserable, tired and broken together.

It's not an easy trap to escape from. But if we want to have an abundant life, escape we must!

We can start by reminding ourselves of this truth: That God is not impressed by our looks or performance. He wants our hearts (Deut 10:12).

Hearts that understand that our perfection is only found in him (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Hearts that make His priority list ours. (Psalm 18:30)

Hearts set less in seeking perfection and more in perfecting our love and devotion for Him. (Psalm 51:10)

Indeed, today I realize that perfectionism is the world and Satan's way to make me rely less and less on God.

And more and more on fallible, inadequate me.

Instead of attaining perfection, the result will always fall short of our target: We become stressed out, needy of approval, self-indulgent, impatient.

Simply hard to deal with.

### **Through the Grid of God's Grace**

Our good works and great performance should be viewed through the grid of God's grace. By grace we are lavished each day with opportunities, gifts and talents which allow us to do our best and be our best.

As Dallas Willard said "Grace is God acting in our lives to do what we cannot do on our own."

Indeed, God never designed us to accomplish perfection without him. The point of the gospel is that we are unable to be perfect. We all "fall short"; we all "miss the mark" (Romans 3:23). Sinners need a Savior, and that's why Jesus came. When we trust in Him, He forgives our shortcomings, imperfections, and iniquities.

We can then stop striving for unreasonable, unattainable worldly "perfection" and rest in the Perfect One (Matthew 11:28).

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**Verses to Meditate Upon:**

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6

For without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

“As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him”  
(Psalm 18:30).

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