

Faith & Life – Excellence

Excellence. I have to confess that the first image that popped into my mind was Mr. Burns, the rapacious industrialist from the TV series *The Simpsons*. I could see Mr. Burns sitting at his huge desk, tenting his fingers and saying (in that greedy rasping voice of his) “*Excellent!*” as another of his nasty schemes comes to fruition.

Mr. Burns, by his actions, by his everyday behaviour, defines excellence as a continuous quest for superiority. He is constantly in competition with others, struggling to outdo them and come out on top. Now all of these things may have some value in a business environment or the sporting world but is this definition of excellence acceptable in a Christian context? The answer to that question has to be a resounding NO!

Our territorial description of excellence states that “*We strive to be the best at what we do and a model for others to emulate.*” When we aim for excellence do we want our role model to be Mr. Burns or our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? The answer is, of course, obvious.

As I looked for scriptures that would guide us all in this quest of being the best we can be, I kept coming back to Hebrews 12:2 (CEV) which tells us that “*We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.....*” As individual Christians, as Salvationists, as a movement, a denomination (or however we view ourselves), all that we do and are has to begin with Jesus. We need to be defined by who Jesus is and by how he demonstrates excellence.

Excellence is not about us patting ourselves on the back because we’re better at preaching or teaching than that other guy, we run a bigger shelter than that other group or we do more hampers than those peopleit’s about our everyday activities and tasks being God centered not self-centered. Christian excellence is all wrapped up in Jesus’ commandment to “*Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.*” (Matthew 5:16, CEV)

Pursuing Christian excellence is an act of worship. It is as much an act of worship as singing, praying, or preaching. Excellence is what Jesus modeled for us.

John 13 tells us how, the night before his crucifixion, while Jesus and his disciples were gathered around the Passover table, Jesus got up from the table, removed his outer garments, wrapped a towel around his waist and washed the feet of those who later would betray him, deny him and abandon him. His direction to them? “I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you.” (John 13:15, CEV)

We strive to be the best at what we do and a model for others to emulate because the one we serve has already done this and more for each and every one of us.

Major Geoff Groves is the corps officer at Midland Community Church on beautiful Georgian Bay in Ontario.

