

# God's Quality Way Of Life

by Staff

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"Quality—we make it a way of life." These words are emblazoned on one side of my company van. Residents of British Columbia, Canada, will recognize the phrase as a recent advertising logo of the British Columbia Telephone Company (or "BC Tel," as it is commonly known), which it displays on hundreds of its vans. It is just one of the phrases that the company has used in recent years to discourage customers from moving their long-distance calling business to its new competitors in the industry.

It is also intended to encourage its employees to take pride in their work. BC Tel adopted other such programs over the past few years, including the "Towards Excellence" program made famous by Thomas J. Peters. In the in-house "Best" program, employees were encouraged to claim that "we are the *best* men and women for the job," able to do the job better than anyone else, including our competitors.

Unfortunately, one experience led me to believe that not all BC Tel employees really make quality their way of life. A few years ago I was helping to install a temporary telephone system for our church youth camp at Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island. In the midst of what church members considered to be "the camp of the saints," Satan had planted one of his representatives—a wolf in sheep's clothing—a BC Tel installer who did not believe in quality, though the van he drove proclaimed that he did!

The contrast was incredible! He stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb. While the camp staff, ministers and other helpers were cheerfully hard at work putting together various parts of that year's summer camp, the BC Tel employee stood around with his hands in his pockets, making excuses why the telephone work could not be done. While the members laced their labors with positive, Christian talk, the installer fouled the air with blasphemy and cursing. He did not give God's people the quality telephone system they had requested and paid for. He certainly gave nothing that resembled quality service.

After many prayers about the situation, the events of the following day seemed like a refreshing dawn following a dark and dismal night. God responded by sending us four telephone installers and two supervisors, all of them hardworking and cheerful, with positive attitudes and the ability to speak somewhat better English. They completed the job—and it was quality work!

## How About Us?

Do we believe in quality, excellence, always giving our very best? Does God have anything to say on the subject of quality and excellence? Yes, He does. He says a great deal about it in His Word. God wants His children to make quality their way of life!

The English word "quality" does not appear in the Bible, but the similar words "excellence" and "best" (the other BC Tel buzz words) do. A great deal of material throughout the Word of God proves that He loves quality and that He wants us to follow suit. Let us home in on just two points:

## 1. Christians are to grow in excellence.

In his *natural* state, would we describe man as inherently excellent? Many philosophers think that man *is* excellent, that he is the fabulous end-product of an evolutionary line. But what does God say?

Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. (Psalm 39:5)

God inspired His servant David to announce that, in his very best state, man is vanity. Not quality, not excellence—vanity! Although God made man "very good" (Genesis 1:31), He purposely made him temporary and incomplete (II Corinthians 4:18; II Timothy 3:17; James 1:4).

If God says that man is just vanity, does anyone inherently possess true quality and excellence?

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted [excellent, KJV]; His glory is above the earth and heaven. (Psalm 148:13)

God's name alone is excellent. His names are not just titles; they describe what He does and what He is.

But what about human beings? What about Christians? Are we cut off from true quality and excellence? God answers through the apostle Paul, writing to the Philippi congregation of the church of God:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. . . . And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and in all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11)

Paul was writing about their growth from their state of vanity before their conversion (when God's "good work" was begun in them) up to that time and through to a state of perfection at the return of Jesus Christ. His mention of excellence in verse 10 is associated with their increase in true Christian love, knowledge, discernment, sincerity and the fruits of righteousness. The apostle prayed that God would grant them even more excellence in these godly traits.

## 2. True quality depends on a Christian's outgoing love.

It makes sense that, if we have love for our colleagues and customers at work, we will put quality into whatever we do for them. If we love our brethren, we will put quality into serving them. If we love our families, we will strive to put quality into our relationship with each family member. If we love God, we will put quality into everything we do for Him: praying, studying, fasting, meditating, tithing and obeying. Love cannot work any other way!

Paul writes, "But earnestly desire the **best** gifts. And yet I show you a more **excellent** way" (I Corinthians 12:31). Wow! Two BC Tel buzz-words, "best" and "excellent," in the same verse! But

what is Paul writing about here? This verse serves to bridge the subjects of I Corinthians 12 and 13. Chapter 12 deals with various functions and positions within God's church. Paul calls them "gifts" and instructs the Corinthians—and, by extension, all of God's people—to desire and pursue the "best gifts" earnestly. The Modern Language version renders it, "the more valuable spiritual gifts," and the Revised Standard Version reads, "the higher gifts." Then he tells us that he will show us a more excellent way and launches right into chapter 13, the well known "love chapter."

What is God teaching us here in this powerful little verse? He is showing us that, from His point of view, true quality and excellence do not depend upon one's rank, function or position in His church. God does not consider us to be of lower quality or to have less ability to exhibit quality just because we are not all apostles, elders or deacons. Rather, as Philippians 1:9 says, a Christian's true quality is directly proportional to his or her outgoing love.

Finally, quality and excellence do not always have to cost more. This is true on the human plane, and it is even more relevant from God's point of view. Notice what Jesus thought of the widow's mites:

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Him, and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury: for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, even her whole livelihood." (Mark 12:41-44)

This lady's tiny offering, amounting to pennies, was nowhere near the magnitude of the huge sums given by the rich. But it was a hundred percent of what she had, and like Abel's offering, it was righteous in God's eyes because of the excellent attitude that was behind it. The quality of her work lay not in the size of her contribution but *in the quality of the attitude* in which she gave it.

In all areas of our lives—at home in our families, at work, in church activities and in our relationship with God—in whatever He has given us to do, let us do it with all of our might. Put forth the effort to produce quality work, both physically and spiritually. In the future, whenever you see a telephone company van, say to yourself: "The church of God—Quality: WE make it a way of life!"