

Fits & Starts

A Caveat on the Road from M² (*Morass of Mediocrity*) to E² (*Equilibrium of Excellence*)

I learned the best kind of lesson a short time ago – by observing someone else do what I had been doing myself, but only recognized the folly of it when I saw them do it! Oh, how great to stop making a mistake over and over when you see in someone else an error in yourself! One key aspect of wisdom is being able to see and learn from the mistakes of others rather insisting on only learning from the pain of personal mistakes and errors.

It is totally logical that if you ever expect to get excellent at anything you had better get started and you had better do it now! Getting back to the recent small example I saw, someone talked about wanting to start keeping things in order so for the umpteenth time they stopped everything else, spent hours straightening and cleaning and almost got it done. Now they would try to keep it this way! This is logical: when something gets bad/dirty/messy enough we attack it, clean it and move on to the next mess. The reality, however, is that there are too many messes in life for this approach to be effective. So we find, when we stop trying to be logical and simply observe what actually works, we discover (as is often the case) the counter-intuitive works while the logical doesn't.

The big hurdle to achieving E² is ***not getting to where we want to be***, but deciding we need to ***start*** on the path there – we need to change our current low point of equilibrium (living in M²: the Morass of Mediocrity) with a higher level of equilibrium. In Christian parlance this is called *repentance*. For this reason I am not, in the least, discouraged because I am not excellent in anything – rather I am excited because, by Grace (the absolute necessary ingredient for achieving any meaningful excellence) I am seeking excellence on several fronts.

The **path** to E² is just that (not a point or a destination): a route, step-by-step, to changing a mediocre level of equilibrium with a higher plane. It may be physically, financially, relationally, educationally, spiritually . . . or, better (and easier) yet, a combination of several or all. It is easier to recognize and lament over a general equilibrium of mediocrity (repent and find the Grace on several fronts) than to decide, for a single area of life, to make improvements; excellence does not co-exist very well with mediocrity – it tends to crowd it out (just as mediocrity and sin, in one area of life, invariably spills over to other areas). How many parents, for example, have noted problems with drugs simply because their children's grades dropped? Mediocre breeds mediocrity just as excellence inspires quality. Or to use an analogy that best describes this:

I rising tide



lifts all boats.

For example, a person's physical aspects of their life – the spiritual, mental . . . Likewise, mental laziness (M²) does not partner very well with Excellence spiritually, financially, etc. Being a mess financially typically causes relational, health, spiritual mediocrity . . . you get the point – excellence tends to “breed” excellence while mediocrity attracts and best co-exists with mediocrity (*Birds of a Feather*).

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financial, relational,

The concept of compartmentalization is a flawed concept as old as man – Adam and Eve attempted to “compartmentalize” their “little” sin as a trivial. There is probably no greater temptation and tool of the devil than encouraging us to justify and embrace a sin as “just one part” of us, not affecting the remainder (“OK, so I am not perfect in this one area, overall I am pretty good! Who is perfect?”). But a husband committing adultery does so against his children as much as his wife. Poor finances, far from being compartmentalized, have destroyed many marriages. We can’t compartmentalize poor physical health from our emotional and spiritual “health.” Poor sleep disciplines cannot be pigeonholed from other aspects of life . . . compartmentalization (or, more rightly, the **attempt** to compartmentalize) is a fool’s game.

Therefore, as said, it is totally logical that if we ever expect to get excellent at anything we had better get started and do it now! The problem is that there are too many messes in life for this approach to be effective. So, to be successful in this attempt to improve, we find counter-intuitive truths work the logical ideas don’t!

We need, **somehow**, to change our current low point of equilibrium with a higher level; replacing M² (the Morass of Mediocrity) with E² an Equilibrium of Excellence (or, at least, a movement in that direction)! The envelope: *Simple* suggestions please.

- Consider uncomplicated and *relatively* easy disciplines. OK, we need Grace for even these, but, with Grace, they are relatively easy (“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done **through** God.” John 3:21). In other words, Seek Grace!
- Start concentrating and implementing those that are the most synergistic – disciplines that, while relatively simple, have the greatest impact on multiple areas of life – those providing the “biggest bang for the buck.”
- Simplify and focus life – replacing what is wrong (stop sowing weakness and destruction) with what is right (and reap the rewards).

A few “big bang” disciplines?

Be Thankful!
Proper Rest
Dedicate Time To:
Exercise
Disposing of clutter
Take Sunday off!

To repeat the basic principle:

Achieving E² is ***not getting to where we want to be***,
but deciding we need to ***start*** on the path there.

I rising tide, does



indeed, lift all boats!