

If Something is Worth Doing . . .

It is very frustrating to work hard to make something right (sometimes even achieving what we feel is, if not flawless, close to perfect) only to find, a short time later, someone has “moved the cheese” – all our efforts seem to no avail as what we accomplished is obviously not satisfactory or satisfying, much less right or perfect!

We have been told: “If something is worth doing, it is worth doing right.” Nike doesn’t even say “right” is important, rather “Just Do It!” Who/what is (either) correct? “If something is worth doing” . . . why try “right” if it seems so short-lived and short-sighted?

A good and important example is marriage. Most marriages begin in the bliss of apparent near perfection – “soul-mates” miraculously finding one another to live happily ever after. The next step is (duh!) realizing any marriage requires effort to make it work. Yet many spouses are further quickly frustrated because they try (maybe a number of times) to get their marriage “right” (after being shocked that something happened to make their “perfect” marriage far less than ideal)! They try to restore and rekindle the perfect marriage only to find their mate is not satisfied (or only pleased for a short while).

“Nothing I do pleases you! You need to decide what you want and I will do it, but you keep changing what you want – nothing I do satisfies you very long! It’s you, not me! You keep moving the target! Make up your mind!”

If something is worth doing (a marriage obviously is!) it is worth doing . . . NIKE doesn’t have the answer and “right” doesn’t seem to work, so what will and does? The answer is that if something is worth doing, just doing it or even doing it **right** is seldom best, rather the focus should be on doing it **better** and **better** and **better**!

Right doesn’t work because it fails to recognize the reality of change; in the face of change, a perfect marriage is unsustainable, and therefore a frustrating goal. **Right** is willing to do some work, get to a place and rest. “**Better**” is more realistic in understanding if something is important, and worth doing, it is worth doing **better** and **better**. No, your spouse is never going to be satisfied with your thinking you have everything **right** and then going on autopilot – if a marriage is worth it, it is worth working to make it **better** and **better**!

In all “worth doing” areas of our lives how can we “squeeze” more/**better** from our limited time and money? Boredom sets in with the “same old, same old.” On the other hand, it is exciting to see how we can improve in the face of life’s many trials of aging, the devil, distracting marketing voices . . . Because of outside forces nothing remains the same – we must work to keep things average or good – why not seek **better**? No, it isn’t satisfying to make an effort to only accomplish average, it is frustrating to work hard to make things good – while counterintuitive, **better** is typically easier than **right** (and certainly more satisfying, long-term, than average). There are simply too many destructive forces, both external and internal, to think we can get something **right** and it will stay that way.

Seeking **better** (while focused on the “something worth doing”) is a greater motivator while attempting (and even for a short while achieving) **right** is discouraging since **right** is typically oriented on the “how” rather than the “what.” We should expect, rather than being surprised, that we must “tweak” our efforts to stay on target. Yes, it is annoying and discouraging to think we have something **right** only to find that the target has moved again! Seeking **better**, on the other hand, focuses on the unchanging value of the “something worth doing;” realistically expecting change reduces the frustration and discouragement of change.

Better, is not adding more and more responsibilities and obligations to our lives (as we too often do, being buried with myriad duties and tasks). Marketers understand if they can get a person to “subscribe” to something they probably have them hooked for life. It is easy to start something new; it is hard to stop it! A current example is telephones.

It is not uncommon, today, for a household to have a “land” line phone (at \$40 or more a month), cell phone(s) (\$75+ per month) and high-speed internet access (\$50 a month).

If we thought about it, and what we were trying to accomplish, we might make significant improvements (**bettters**). And what are the elements of doing things **better** rather than or trying to do them **right**?

Simplify/focus – There are only a handful of responsibilities that are vital – we need to look for ways to be **better** in each of them while eliminating the less important tasks that are dragging these efforts down! What are we doing that is less important than the potential to get **better** in one of the key areas of life? Maybe, years ago, someone might have had time to watch soap operas (why I don’t know), but once they are married or have children this should be curtailed to focus on what is more vital. Hunting, fishing, sports? Husbands you are now married, maybe later (in 20 years or so) you can come back to them, but for now spouses and children are first and foremost responsibilities requiring a lot of time!

By adapting (putting aside what in the past was fine, but is now standing in the way of doing what needs to be done **better**) and staying in “season” we simplify so we can focus on what is more important – the vital needs require more time and attention to make them **better**. Is a marriage worth it? Are children worth it? Is your health worth the time and effort to exercise? Are you satisfied with your spiritual “state” or would you like to be **better**? All these require time, thought and effort only accomplished as we rob OK, fine, good and **right** to “pay” **better**.

“Well, maybe,” many think, “I will just sleep less – this is the only way to do everything I want to do.” The result is that the quality of everything slips – most Americans are sleep deprived for the sole reason they don’t want to simply and focus – instead it is “do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there” being their mentality.

The *Bible* is profound in identifying so many human inclinations and weaknesses that continue, year by year, throughout history. This tendency towards “do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there” is our tendency to bury ourselves with more and more good and **right**. This **right, however**, gets to a point where it overwhelms any possibility of being **better**.

For it is:

Do and do, do and do,
rule on rule, rule on rule;
a little here, a little there. Isa 28:10

Simply and focus!

Have the attitude of seeking to actually be **better** (as opposed to just doing better and certainly rather than just striving to look better) – this is manifested by an mind-set of “How much can I do . . .” rather than “How much do I have to do . . .” You have seen them (and sadly too often have been), the one who tries to get by with the least

effort – just doing it. Want a **better** marriage? Ask yourself how much can you do for your spouse rather than how little to just get by – or, worse yet, thinking about how much your spouse ought to be doing for you!

Physically **better**? How much time can you devote to exercise and what less important wastes of time you can stop or reduce (TV?) to give more time to this vital effort?

And yes, sometimes we need to think about making tasks **more efficient and less costly**. Back to our phone example: almost everyone in the “old days” (10 years ago!) thought a cell phone (especially for women) was a security blessing. How, since then, were we fooled into thinking cell phones are essential for everyone – who could live without one? So, without thinking about it we have been suckered into paying for what is too often a greater irritation than blessing (we use caller ID to filter out those call we just don’t feel like taking now)! Get back to the objective – get a cell phone for emergencies and save a good bit of money in the process – consider cutting the land-line phone cord, using an internet phone services (less than \$100 a year) that doesn’t even require a computer – only high-speed internet access!

“Just Do It?” Not me; I’ve done too much of this already! Do it **right**? This is an improvement, but usually still very frustrating long-term; with a little thinking and tweaking being and doing **better** and **better** is the easier and superior objective!

Yes, it is a paradox, but nonetheless true and valid: The most satisfying position to be in is not being content with where we are on the vital issues of life – rather peace comes from and through seeking better and better!