

**BUILDING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE**

(2 Samuel 24:18-24; Philippians 4:8-9)

**Establish a relationship**

- With God (Matt 22:37-38) -- "*Love the God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" -- first and greatest commandment
- With others (Matt 22:39) – "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*"

Think about David, who in 2 Samuel 17, refused to use his authority to claim the threshing floor and paid for it even though it was offered for free → he is a repentant king and the Lord was moved → David built a culture of excellence through his *personal relationship* with God. We must be ready to defer to God's will, and ask God for forgiveness.

**To build a culture of excellence, we begin a relationship with God by:**

1. Loving, trusting, and obeying Him.
  - a. David trusted God's grace even when God asked him to choose his punishment (2 Samuel 24:13 → plague, famine, or military loss – he would rather face God's wrath directly than fall into the hands of mortal man).
2. Ready to admit failures and asking for forgiveness (2 Samuel 24:10)
3. Know that God is a God of grace (2 Samuel 24:11-14)
4. With God on our side, He will:
  - a. Constantly and consistently guarded our hearts against deceitful influences, pride and arrogance.
  - b. Safeguard our mental, emotional, and spiritual life. It is the "innermost part of man". The heart reflects the real person.
    - i. As the mental center, the heart knows, understands, reflects, considers, and remembers.
    - ii. As the emotional center, it is the seat of joy, courage, pain, anxiety, despair, sorrow, and fear.
    - iii. As the spiritual center, God "tries the heart," "sees the heart," "refines the heart," and "searches the heart".

We need God to mould us from the inside, starting from the very core of our hearts.

### **Building Up Christian Communities**

1. Rejoice in the Lord always (Phil 4:4)
2. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil 4:13)
3. Topics of positive exhortations
  - a. Whatever is true – valid, honest, and reliable (1 Thes 2:13)
  - b. Whatever is noble – or “honorable” meaning worthy of respect (c.f. Prov 8:6; 1 Tim 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2)
  - c. Whatever is right – refers to what is just and upright
  - d. Whatever is pure – denotes cleanness and connotes moral purity
  - e. Whatever is lovely – means what is amiable, agreeable, or pleasing
  - f. Whatever is admirable – or “of good repute” refers to what is praiseworthy because it measures up to the highest standards
4. Conditions
  - a. If anything is excellent
  - b. Or praiseworthy
5. First Command
  - a. Think about such things (regarding what is excellent and praiseworthy)
6. The Supplier (Paul)
  - a. Whatever you have learned
  - b. Or received
  - c. Or heard from me
  - d. Or seen in me
7. Second Command
  - a. Put it into practice (“Do As I Say, but also Do As I Do”)

### **Organization of Thoughts in Pairs: The Philippians**

- “Learned and received” many helpful lessons from Paul

- “heard” Paul’s verbal instructions “and seen” his individual examples (e.g. Paul being imprisoned)
- Needed to “put” these things into “practice”, not just think and discuss about them

### **Subsequent**

- Peace in the heart will follow praying, thinking and doing
- They concern us and others in those things which are excellent and praiseworthy
- When we do these things, we will experience God’s presence by enjoying the peace that comes when we walk in fellowship with Him.

Give your best to God. We must be muscular Christians (healthy bodies and healthy faiths), and be the spark that gets the fire going → we must be able to support both believers and unbelievers in a world that erodes morality, by learning and practicing what is excellent and praiseworthy in God’s eyes.

### **For Reflections – Relevant Verses**

- Let your light shine before...(Matt 5:16); Christ purified for himself a people that are his very own (Titus 2:14); For we are God’s handiwork (Eph 2:10)

### **Application Questions**

1. Relate incidents individually or as a group where you have actively participated, in thinking and practice elucidated in Phil 4:8-9
2. Discuss this statement: “If the existence of God makes little or no impact upon the experiences of everyday life, the business of living might as well be conducted without reference to God.” – McGrath, Alister E., *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: A History From The Sixteenth Century To The Twenty-First* (Harper Collins, NY, 2008), p.432