



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives.

In Search of Perfection

Bob's Perspective:

I was recently discussing with someone an issue I was having with a particular project – that over the course of a few years wasn't coming to fruition in the way I thought it should. After a little bit of back-and-forth dialogue, the person said to me, "Have you ever heard the saying, 'don't let perfection become the enemy of good?'" For a moment, I stopped in my tracks and pondered. This person went on to say that if there is some good in what you've already done, even if it's not "perfect" – it's better than nothing at all. They suggested that not putting it out there is depriving others of my perspective, and at the same time, depriving myself of their input, which may in turn help toward perfecting what I'm doing.

I think that was a very interesting observation. My lack of apparent success in this particular project wasn't from procrastination or a lack of effort. Over the course of three years, I have tried various methods, documented my procedures, and analyzed the various outcomes along the way, all of which seemed dissatisfying and disillusioning to say the least. As I spoke to this individual, it was my intent to give up on the project and go our separate ways. (Just to ease your curiosity, this wasn't about Mary or *Sustaining the Journey*.) What I failed to see is that good was still coming forth, but just not the way I expected or wanted.

The upshot of all this is that after our conversation, I decided to give my project a test run among a select group of individuals. It wasn't perfect, but it was a good start. What I didn't expect was that one of them actually offered a solution for my dilemma that I had not considered. I integrated their idea, and bingo! The project has taken on a whole new life. A project that I was going to chuck in the dumpster is now picking up a head of steam. Admittedly, it still has a long way to go but there is certainly light at the end of the tunnel (and it's not a train coming at me either.)

"Don't let perfection become the enemy of good." In this case, I almost allowed perfection to kill a good idea. I'm not espousing a practice of producing junk and calling that acceptable. What I am saying is that sometimes putting something out there that's good, although not perfect, can be the catalyst toward creating something great.

Just food for thought!



Mary's Perspective:

Many of us have perfectionistic tendencies – myself, included. (Say it ain't so!) A friend once told me I'm not a "closer." I take projects through until they are nearly complete, but then I tend to get wrapped up in trying to make it perfect, thus not finishing and moving on. This advice about not letting perfection become the enemy of good might as well have been directed right at me. I suspect that's part of why it resonates with both Bob and me. When you take pride in your work (or your hobby, or your household) it is appropriate to want to put your best foot forward. I am often reminded of the sentiment "done is better than perfect." Heck, I think we've written about that a couple of times!

A little frustrated at all the loose ends in my life right now, I have been pondering this for a while. How can I finish some of the tasks at hand without feeling like I'm not doing my best? Where do I need to put in extra effort, and where can I legitimately say "good enough" is, well, good enough? I once worked with a very successful entrepreneur who modeled the idea "ready, fire, aim" when it came to introducing new technology into his products. He would often launch a product before he was 100% comfortable with how it would perform because he knew they could continue testing and tweaking it in the field, but at least it would be out in the field. He was earning revenue, even if each new launch wasn't completely profitable right away. Sure, sometimes there were dogs that weren't money-makers, but sometimes there were real winners. If he had waited until he got the technology perfect, many of his products would never have shipped, thus capping some of the revenue they did bring in.

My husband and I recently were invited to an interesting dinner. Sparing some of the details, the general idea is that this supper club, rather pricey per person, offers an experience beyond just the food. They have a chef preparing a high-quality multi-course dinner, with the guests eating in the midst of a dinner show. Every few months, the show and menu changes. The entire project is staffed by 20-somethings who have an idea and are running with it.

While we enjoyed that themed dinner, my husband and I both commented that this concept is a kitschy idea that won't last long. Perhaps the supper club offers a Halloween-themed dinner, and a holiday one, and maybe a Valentine's one, but then, do they have enough traction that they develop repeat customers? Will they take in enough money to cover their costs and make it worthwhile? Is this supper club idea viable in the long term?



Not to sound old, but in my generation and earlier, it was not uncommon for someone to work at one company for their entire career. I have friends who have retired from the same company that hired them out of college. My children think this is crazy, because the trend (for lack of a better word) nowadays is to intern at several different companies to show how well-rounded you are. It is common, and perhaps even desirable in their mindset, for a recent college graduate to list six or more different places of employment on their resume.

This all got me to thinking. In my perfectionistic-driven mind, I may have the idea for the supper club, but I would get mired in the details of how to make it a long-term career. I would likely labor over each decision, each script, each theme, each appetizer or dessert, to the point that we would never actually put on one of the dinners because I would still be busy trying to get it right. My perfectionistic vision of a stable pursuit would get in the way of short-term success.

For these young folks putting on the supper club, their approach is more of a “why not?” Maybe they don’t make perfect decisions. Maybe they are still adapting the timing of the evening, or the menu, or the acting, and maybe some of the evening is a great success while other parts leave room for improvement. Regardless, they have gone out there and tried. They score some wins and lick their wounds from some losses, and they ride the wave until it’s not viable anymore. By that point, they probably have the next great idea and are pursuing that. They don’t let the pursuit of perfection stop them from trying a new endeavor, making a little money, having a little fun, and moving on. It really is a difference in mindset.

In addition, we don’t always recognize how our story interacts with another’s destiny. Very often, we are tempted to ask why something in life happens the way it does. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do we have to face some challenge? Why didn’t the outcome result the way we had hoped? It’s easy to forget that our lives are part of a bigger picture, and the events within our lives aren’t always just about us. Sometimes things happen so that we may learn a lesson or a skill. Sometimes things happen (in our minds, to us) so that another may learn or grow from what they experience as a result of what has happened. It’s possible we needed to walk a hard road or stumble along the way because that triggered the chain of events that facilitated growth and blessing for another person.



If we are so focused on getting it perfect before we actually do anything, we risk stopping the chain of events that is necessary for someone else to grow. Don't let perfection become the enemy of good!