



# Family Values

## Virtue Realities

### Perfection

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*Bruce Strade, Chief Officer of Organizational Delight, Lutheran Community Services Northwest*

One car manufacturer's motto is: "We pursue perfection, so you can pursue living." The implication is that the more perfect the car, the less the hassle for the owner, who in turn can count on getting wherever he or she wants to go. Yet the company does not claim perfection. It is something it strives for but never fully reaches.

In some respects the Christian motto might be a variation on this theme. "We pursue perfection as part of living." Some people might take exception to this saying and quickly point out, "Nobody's perfect! So, why bother?" They would question whether perfection should even be considered a virtue. They are reminded of expectations that a parent, boss or spouse may have of them with the result that whatever they do it is never good enough. They would ask: "Is God also another authority figure who makes impossible demands?"

When God created the world and everything in it, he looked at the result and said, "That's good enough!" All he asked of those created in His image was not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But that was not good enough. They chose to eat, just as any of us would under similar circumstances, and suddenly they were not good enough. Now they felt inferior to their maker, not worthy of God's favor. The idyllic paradise was gone. They were doomed to living in an imperfect world in which no one could claim to be good enough.

Yet God, whose "way is perfect" (2 Sam. 22:31) was not satisfied with that result. He continued to reach out. . . . to care. . . . to rescue. . . . to restore. . . . to pursue. . . . to reconnect. . . . to covenant with. . . . to become one of us. . . . to bridge the gap that we had created. "And the Word became Flesh and lived among us." (John 1:14) Jesus lived his life in perfect obedience to the Father who sent him. "Though he was in the form of God, . . . he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:6,8) "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14) Christ is both the high priest and the sacrifice. He is the "Son who has been made perfect forever." The wrong has been righted forever. God's plan is complete. "It is finished." (John 19:30) Through Christ we become good enough.

Because of what God has accomplished in Christ, we can now be open to the challenge: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) This is a process made possible through Christ that leads to maturity and completion. Paul spells this out when he says: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2) Like Paul we can appreciate God's assurance: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9) Although we will never reach it in this world, through the Spirit we strive for perfection. All this is possible because through Christ "God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12) Our final goal is perfection – made possible because we are good enough.

The following are ways to practice perfection:

1. **Own your imperfections.** Recognize that you, like all humankind, have "missed the mark." Confess your limitations.
2. **Ask God to turn your weaknesses into strengths.** When we are honest about our shortcomings, they then become opportunities to connect with others.
3. **Remain focused on your goal.** The process started here in this world is completed in eternity. Stay the course.
4. **See others as good enough.** Do not expect from others, anything that you would not demand of yourself.

**Affirmation: I am good enough!**

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Portland Office  
605 S.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Portland, OR 97214  
503-231-7480 • [www.lcsnw.org](http://www.lcsnw.org)