

## Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit

### Mediocrity

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#### Life Questions:

What in your life are you doing that doesn't really require your full effort? Are you choosing to use your full effort or are you content to just slide on by? Are you short-changing your spouse, your children, your employer or your God because you can and nobody seems the wiser?

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Imagine having a group of friends over for a meal. It is a special occasion, you have spent weeks planning the menu, days preparing the layout and hours cooking and cleaning in preparation. You have poured your heart into the meal even going so far as to even purchase new plates and napkins to adorn the evening. Everything goes according to plan, you have the food ready, the house is immaculate and the guests are on time. In all your years you could not have hoped for everything to fall into place so perfectly. As you sit down to enjoy the meal you are stunned at just how good of a job you have done, even by your own standards the meal is top notch. That is why you notice the first of several comments from your guests. Each one tells you how the meal was very ordinary, how it was very okay, and that you did a good job on the evening. The enthusiasm you felt begins to leave you. You move from excited to feeling numb by the end of the evening.

Or maybe you are right the opposite, you have had a long day and really wish you would never have planned this meal. Tired and irritated by work, you realize you have really overbooked yourself. To your horror you have not got half the things you need and the guests will start arriving within just a few hours. Disgusted, you head to the store and grumpily shove crap into your buggy. You rush home, throw everything together and basically just toss it onto the table with a haphazard approach figuring oh well good enough is good enough. To your amazement, the guests cannot stop complimenting your meal, your home everything about what you have done. They are overly excited to have been a part of your evening and can do nothing but compliment you on your effort and the results. They beg you for recipes, and ask how you could keep such an amazing home. You are truly dumbfounded.

Both events have the same theme: there was an expectation. In each case, you got a response you weren't expecting. In both situations you did the same amount of work, it was the guests that changed the results of the evening. On one side you worked hard and really believed you pulled off an amazing evening while on the other, you didn't care what your guests thought for all you cared they could drive through Wendy's on the way home. The only difference was where you were at the end of the evening from being excited to being frustrated and indifferent to being truly surprised, each evening ended with something of a twist.

That is how our life in Christ can be. There are times when we give so little only to find that the return was exceptional. At the same time there are times when we feel we have given everything only to see nothing. Both of those situations can lead us into a mediocre point in our spiritual life. Because, after all, regardless of what I do; everything is going to even out.

Mediocre is defined as of moderate or low quality, value, ability, or performance. Who is really complimented by being called mediocre? Have you ever needed work done on your house and when you asked someone about a particular carpenter the response was something along the lines of he does an

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okay job. Would you hire him? Is that what you are looking for, just okay? Are you sitting at home thinking I could pay this guy to do an outstanding job or I could throw my money to this character who is going to just do enough for me to tolerate him?

At work, in our social life and even our home life, we can easily slip into a mediocre approach. At one of my jobs, times were bad so the administrator decided to reduce the departmental budget. Over time, there was nothing more than a couple of salaries left in the budget because everything that could be cut was cut. I noticed from that, my performance and effort began to wane. I came in on time, did all the requirements of the job, but because there was no money, there was really nothing I could do but just sit there. Since I knew no additional monies were coming for a while, I had two choices, continue doing nothing and still get paid or leave to find another job. I soon acclimated to the doing nothing and getting paid. Did that for almost six months before in all actuality boredom finally made me look for another job. I had succumbed to mediocrity. My performance was lowered and the things I was capable of, I wasn't doing because it would have been just too hard to try and anyway nothing was going to change. So I was okay, right? What does the bible say about mediocrity?

### 1. Mediocrity is dangerous

#### **Rev 3:15-21**

*15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -- 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

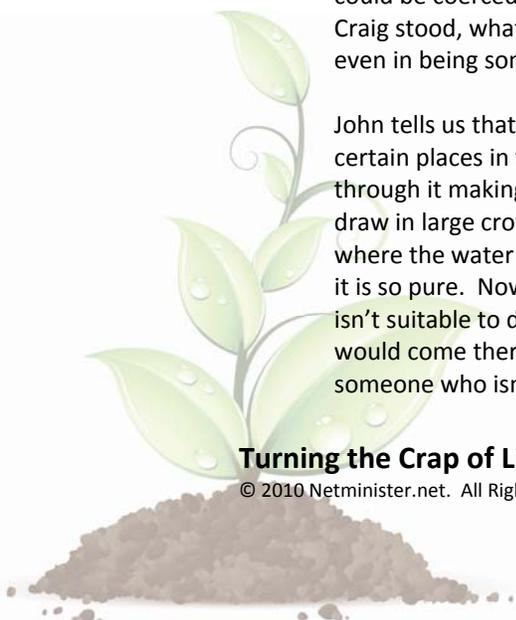
**NKJV**

In High School I there was a group of kids that were the bible thumpers. They had a club that meet before school and read bible stories to one another. Together they formed a cliché that was good in their own eyes. But going out on the weekends, you would regularly see them drinking and fooling around with the opposite sex. Then there was Craig, he made no pretention about being a good guy, he wasn't. He drank, smoked and probably shot up with everything that could be coerced into his body. The difference between these people was that you knew where Craig stood, what you saw was what you got. It wasn't a good thing, but he was a true person even in being someone you probably wouldn't want to be seen with outside of school.

John tells us that when we are not hot or cold, God will spew us from His mouth. If you go to certain places in the US you will find hot springs, places where the water is hot – minerals flow through it making for a unique experience, especially to tired and achy muscles. Such places draw in large crowds of people to experience the springs. To the opposite end, there are places where the water is cold and clear. Where you can literally sip the water from the stream because it is so pure. Now imagine would you ever want to visit a place where the water was warm? It isn't suitable to drink and it isn't any good for relieving painful muscle aches. Not many people would come there to experience mediocre water. So it is with Jesus. He cannot tolerate someone who isn't able to determine what he or she is going to be. You know people like this,

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they aren't ever excited about anything, nor are they ever against anything. They are the perfect fence sitter. They love, and I do mean love, just straddling the fence, which for most people would be a potentially painful experience. But they love it, it is the place they thrive at, as much as they would be considered to thrive. No decision is ever made, just waiting to see how things "pan out."

Jesus says He will spew them from His mouth. That doesn't mean you just go "oh my this doesn't taste right" and kindly chew it up to keep from embarrassing yourself or your host. No, Jesus spews us out, the word meaning He literally throws you up. He regurgitates you. To the literal, He expels you. So maybe that feeling of being alone isn't because you are being tested, perhaps it is because He has expelled you from Himself. Perhaps there is one set of footprints because He has went another way because you couldn't or wouldn't make up your mind and be hot or cold for Him.

## 2. Mediocrity skews our vision of ourselves.

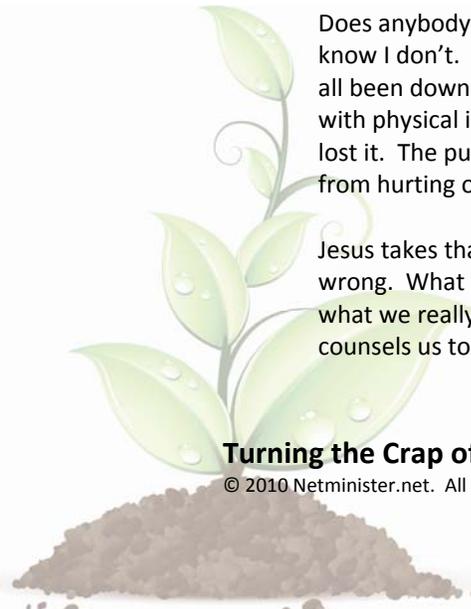
Have you gone to the eye doctor and sat through all the tests meant to determine your level of vision. Usually you get to read the eye chart and you can only pray that you are able to see everything clearly or you might end up with the Hubble glasses. What you may not realize is that the test, and the glasses, are good for you because it quantifies your ability to see and provides a means of correcting it. Many people don't even know they cannot see well until they get new glasses and realize what they have been missing.

Jesus tells us that because we have been working with our own eyes, we see ourselves as something we aren't. Ever been accused of something by someone that is doing exactly what they are accusing you of in the first place? Hello! Not only are we not perfect, we are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Of all the terms, two stand out in particular. The first is naked, because it means that we aren't hiding anything. When a person is naked there is nothing that is kept back – everything is exposed. No place to hide your imperfections, just one unending view of yourself. But the other is pitiful, Jesus calls us pitiful. The King James uses the word poor, but both mean the same thing – a beggar. Literally someone with nothing. That is how we are, a person with nothing in His eyes when we are not willing to be hot or cold. The danger is real and we need to confess when our spiritual life has gone mediocre because it is the starting point for the rest of our life to follow closely.

## 3. Mediocrity requires us to change our actions and accept correction

Does anybody really believe the saying, "this is going to hurt me more then it hurts you."? I know I don't. As a parent I still don't believe it because believe me, punishment hurts. We have all been down that road at one time or another. Either a parent has seen fit to punish you either with physical intervention or the loss of some privilege we didn't realize was a privilege until we lost it. The punishment may not always fit the crime but the punishment is meant to keep us from hurting ourselves or others.

Jesus takes that approach with us. He has already pointed out that our own vision of ourselves is wrong. What we see isn't the true person we are; instead, it is a far cry from what we see being what we really are. In changing our behavior, He tells us that we must (as His word puts it He counsels us to) purchase gold from Him. That gold, the gift of eternal life by asking Him into our



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life is the gold that truly makes us rich, but even more so, living a life for Christ stores up treasures in heaven, not on earth where they are corrupted and destroyed.

That gold is refined. Most gold does not come out of the ground like the old movies show it. There is not a giant chunk of gold that someone finds that is perfectly golden. Instead, like all minerals it must be refined in fire. That heat brings out the gold, the most precious part. This is when we realize that like most things in Christ, there is a cost associated with this gold. Jesus purchased it and offers it freely to us, but that doesn't mean that there will not be trials and tribulations associated with this treasure, certainly not. There are more trials ahead. But because it is His gold, refined, it has perfect value. Do you want that value for your life? Are you really willing to lose your mediocrity to accept the cost of the fire of refining?

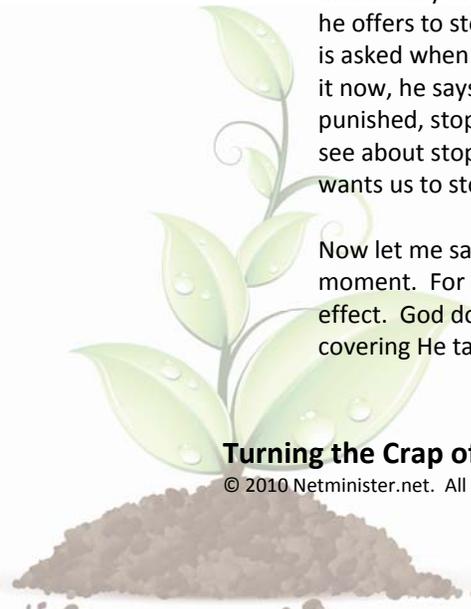
Not only a gold of treasure, but we are offered a garment of white. Not just something to cover ourselves with, but something of great purity. Our life in Christ must be a life of purity. Want to know why you don't feel close to God today? Probably because you have been moving. So often is the case when we use our eyes to view ourselves that we are too easily distracted. Ever had a new puppy? That dog will not listen because there are so many things to see, so many things to taste and touch to explore that listening takes a backseat. Children can be that way. Highly distractible, they see something shiny and off they go on another adventure whether you want them to or not. When we see with God's eyes, we realize we need help. We see ourselves as He sees us and we can accept His gift that covers us. That is grace, the ability to have our sins, that nakedness covered. Wouldn't you want to have the things you have done wrong covered? I know I would.

We are chastened by the Lord because the things we have done must be corrected. Remember He isn't talking to the lost here; He is talking to us – believers, Christians! He calls us to repent and do it fast! Why wouldn't we?

My dad was like a prosecutor growing up, he could have all the evidence he needed for a conviction, but what he wanted was the confession. He would even try that old trick of if you will just admit it your punishment will be less. I knew, and ultimately he know, he was lying. There was going to be the same punishment, regardless. But with Christ, He wants you to know what you have done and to stop doing it and turn away from it. Literally, stop looking at it, stop thinking about it and stop playing with it. Put it away and walk away and the faster you do it that faster the punishment stops!

In the story of Moses and the Pharaoh, there is a time when Moses stands before Pharaoh when he offers to stop the plague there is probably the most curious answer I have ever seen. Pharaoh is asked when he wants Moses to ask God to stop the plague and instead of saying could you do it now, he says ask him tomorrow. What a bizarre statement, who wants to continue being punished, stop it NOW! Here I will leave you alone Moses while you talk to God right now and see about stopping this. But like many of us, we think God works our way, but He doesn't. He wants us to stop our sinful way and because He loves us, He wants us to stop fast.

Now let me say this: there are consequences for our sinful actions that can go beyond just the moment. For instance, having sex outside of marriage that results in a baby has a long-term effect. God doesn't remove that effect, instead He teaches us how to deal with our sin and that covering He talks about is part of it – the Grace to deal with it.



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But not only does He help us deal with our sin, the results of our sin, but when we repent He comes in and dines with us. He stands at the door and knocks and if we will open it, He will come in. Remember this is to people that are already saved and yet here Jesus is, knocking at the door of our heart, because we have pushed Him out, now He needs to be ushered back in. To dine today isn't that important, but in Jesus' time it was a sign of acceptance. The last thing that removing mediocrity does is it returns us into fellowship with our savior. That thing blocking you from your relationship with Christ, once it is identified, removed and the consequences are addressed – by allowing Him to come back in, can be removed and our relationship with Jesus can be restored. Do you need your relationship with Christ restored?

**Final Analysis:** What is going on in your life that needs your full attention and are you willing to let Christ redirect you and destroy your mediocrity? Because guess what? You are guilty and He knows. He is working you back to Him, not because He is mean but because He loves you! He loves you still even when you are lukewarm, tasteless and for the most part useless – He still loves you. WOW. That is an amazing feat. I know for me at least, that is something that amazes me. How could He keep loving me even when I keep going back to being lukewarm. Let go of seeking the path of least resistance and focus on seeking His path for your life – it is pretty easy He laid out the blueprint in the bible. So take it and read it and open the door and let Him back in.



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