



## Wakeland Band: Leadership Wired

### Excellence

According to Webster's dictionary, *excellence* is defined as being "the finest among its kind." In this instance, Webster defines the word as it is used as a noun. The root word, *excel*, however is a verb, which means, "to surpass."

Vance Havner once commented, "It is not enough to stare up the steps-we must step up the stairs." We have to first make the move. Performance at the highest level should always be the goal of a Wakeland Band team member. Mediocrity, therefore, is never an option. According to author Charles Swindoll, "everyone I know who models a high level of excellence has won the battle of the mind and taken the right thoughts captive." He continues, "these individuals have chosen to fill the role of an active pen flowing with ink rather than a passive blotter that only sits and soaks up what others do."

Ladies and gentlemen, mediocrity must be confronted regularly. The confrontation, however, does not start on the field or in a practice room...it starts in the mind. There is an ancient proverb that says, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is." Success, therefore, is a mindset that can and *must* be cultivated.

The question, then, becomes how do we go about cultivating excellent thought patterns? I suggest five specific action steps that can get us going in the right direction.

1. *Put in the right kind of "deposits"*-our minds are like a bank. We have to start by placing positive thoughts of excellence in before we start making withdrawals during the tough times that will inevitably come. Develop the habit of consuming a regular diet of attitude based reading material during the week. Remember-garbage in, garbage out. The opposite is also true-excellence in, excellence out. It all starts in the mind!
2. *Surround yourself with people that display a "can do" attitudes*-peer pressure works both ways. We all have a choice in the type of people that we allow ourselves to be surrounded by. Choose wisely. While we are called to be a positive influence on others, that does not mean that we can survive without being supported ourselves. Learn to cultivate friendships that support your excellent lifestyle. Who are the people you know that display a true sense of *excellence* in everything that they do? Who do you know that displays *excellent* integrity regularly? Make them part of your inner circle...and QUICK!

3. *Become a goal-oriented person*- simply stated, WRITE IT DOWN! Goals must be both measurable and attainable. Take time to evaluate what things are important to you and paint the target before getting started in any endeavor. Make sure you know the what *and* why of your activity. Make sure it is worthwhile. Then, get out there and start doing it!
4. *Solicit others to help hold you accountable*-make sure your support network is aware of your goals and is committed to helping you achieve them. Find a regular time to meet with your network to review and discuss the goals you have set, making sure that your well defined value system is guiding your journey. Regular progress comes from regular evaluation. Make a weekly evaluation period with your inner circle a priority.
5. *Be open about the journey*-allow others within your sphere of influence to be a part of your experience. In doing so, you create an opportunity to pay it forward and influence others. Leadership is influence. Allow yourself to be a positive influence on others.

The great philosopher Socrates in his most famous of movies *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* commented that we should learn to "be *excellent* to each other." Now, the last time I checked, Socrates was not being offered an Academy Award for his performance in this cult classic, but he does make an interesting point about *excellence*.

Maybe what he really meant was that *excellence* is more of an action than anything. Too many times we think that *excellence* is a result of something that just happens...it is either good or it is not. *Excellence*, however, is a choice that is made each and every day, moment-by-moment with every decision we make. *Excellence* is worth whatever it costs. Pay the price! Start today!