

*Embracing*  
**IMPERFECT**

**365 DEVOTIONS  
FOR LIVING  
AUTHENTICALLY**

**LINDSAY FRANKLIN**

 **ZONDERVAN®**

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*Embracing Imperfect*

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# IMPERFECT

I see you. I see the never-ending cycle of striving, straining, achieving. The gut punch of realization when success doesn't bring the fulfillment you thought it would. The inevitable burn-out, the dips into depression, the wondering what's the point of it all, anyway. Why try so hard when it's never enough?

Worse, I see the moments those lofty goals aren't met. The crushing truth that, try as you might, you can't always win. Not every grade is going to be an A+. Not every dream can be realized, no matter how hard you focus. And, if that's true, why bother working so diligently, stressing so expertly, cradling your anxiety like a beloved pet, using it to drive your Very Good Work?

Not only do I see all of that, I feel it. I see you because I am like you, intimately familiar with this vicious cycle. If most or all of the above sounds relatable—if you understand the highs and lows I've described, the hamster wheel of performance and unmet standards—you, my friend, may be a perfectionist.

Our achievement-based culture sometimes talks about perfectionism like it's a good thing. A synonym for "diligence" or "excellent effort" or "attention to detail." But the reality of true perfectionism is darker, more insidious, and has far-reaching implications for our mental health, our relationships with others, and our spiritual walks. And something I'm sure of: the Lord wants to free you from the prison of perfectionism.

Over the next 365 days, we're going to look at the truth behind perfectionism, how to identify the unhealthy patterns in our lives, what the Bible says about our identity and purpose, and so much more. My hope is you will walk away from this devotional feeling the freedom Christ offers to us, secure in your identity as a child of God, so you can move into recovery from perfectionism.

Let's get started.

# THE DRIVE TO BE PERFECT



Day

1

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

**MATTHEW 11:28**

To start at the beginning, we should first define perfectionism, this insidious beast we’re going to combat over the next 365 days. After all, we have to name the dragon before we can properly battle it.

Perfectionism is the drive to appear, to feel, to *be* perfect. It sounds so simple when phrased that way, but let it sink in for a moment. Perfectionism is the desire for flawlessness in the way others perceive us, the way we feel inside, and the way we actually *are*. That’s an insanely tall order. That’s an *impossible* order.

And what’s the result of this burning drive we will never satisfy? “Weary and burdened” is putting it lightly. But don’t lose hope, friend. Jesus’s words in this verse tell us he’s here for those who feel overloaded, overwhelmed, burned-out. That’s you. That’s all of us. There’s hope and there’s rest on the horizon!

**REFLECTION** Do you sense an overwhelming drive for perfection in your life? How do you feel when you think about it? Take a few moments to journal your thoughts. This is your starting point, and you’ll want to refer back to it in the coming weeks, months, and years to see how far you’ve come.

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# ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING



Day

2

Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

**ECCLESIASTES 11:6**

It's important to distinguish *perfectionism* from *high-achieving*, which is working hard in order to be more successful at something. While perfectionists often do achieve at a high level, there are important differences in the way each group thinks, and we're going to spend some time looking at that.

Perfectionists have a thinking pattern called "all-or-nothing thinking." Psychologists classify this as a "cognitive distortion" because it causes perfectionists to view their world in a way that isn't necessarily accurate, let alone healthy. For a perfectionist, unless their (lofty) goal of everything going just right is completely met, they view their effort as a failure. There is no such thing as "good enough." There is all, or there is nothing. Succeed or fail.

It's easy to see why this is a harmful way to think. It's easy to see why we become overwhelmed and despairing. Most people fall victim to all-or-nothing thinking at some point, but when it becomes habitual, it's a difficult pattern to break.

**REFLECTION** Where are you suffering from all-or-nothing thinking? Is it your schoolwork? A sport or hobby? Your relationships? Write out some specifics you can refer to later as we unravel this negative thought pattern.

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# A GOOD JOB IS GOOD ENOUGH



Day

3

From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward.

**PROVERBS 12:14**

Similar to perfectionists, high achievers shoot for the stars. They set lofty goals for themselves. They push past their comfort zones and really go for it. They aren't afraid to imagine winning first place, getting a 4.0 GPA, or nabbing a starring role in the school play.

But high achievers don't consider themselves failures if they fall short of their goals. Second place is a worthy achievement. A 3.7 GPA is excellent. A supporting role is a win. For a high achiever with a healthy mindset, effort matters. A good job is good enough. *Did I try my best? Then I already won, no matter the outcome*, the healthy high achiever thinks.

Does this mindset sound relatable or completely foreign? If it's relatable, you may be well on your way to rejecting perfectionism and embracing a high-achiever mindset instead. If it's foreign to you, stay tuned. There's hope for all of us!

**REFLECTION** Can you remember a time where you fell short of meeting a huge goal? How did you feel afterward? Did the disappointment fade quickly, or does it still sting to think about it?

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# SUPPORTING ACCOMPLISHMENT

Day

5

I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.

**NEHEMIAH 2:18**

High achievers may also be gifted with a positive version of their critical nature. We call that “attention to detail,” and it’s a great asset. But high achievers also focus on supporting accomplishments—both their own and the accomplishments of others.

The Bible tells us not to be prideful, but saying, “I used God’s gifts to give this my best effort, and I’m proud of the result” is not the kind of pride the Bible warns us against. It’s okay to like what you produce. And it’s even better to lift up those around you, taking pleasure in their hard work and joy. This kind of positivity nurtures your relationships and feeds your soul in the process!

**REFLECTION** What recent accomplishment do you feel proud of? How about someone else’s win that brings you joy? Maybe your best friend, sibling, or parent recently hit a big goal. After writing down these wins, take a moment to celebrate with that person!

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# PUSHED BY FEAR



Day

6

There is no fear in love.

**1 JOHN 4:18**

Imagine swimming through a deep lake, far from shore, with frigid water enveloping you and the current pulling at your limbs as you try to paddle for land. Now throw in some piranhas nipping your heels, and you've got some strong imagery for what it feels like to be a perfectionist pursuing their goals.

We perfectionists are pushed by fear, always attempting to outrun the feeling we might fail, the worry we won't measure up. Slipping under the surface always feels like it's a breath away, and we battle against that powerful current as if our lives depend on it.

We'll dive much deeper into this idea—and what the Bible has to say about this type of fear—but for now, hear the apostle John's words today: there is no fear in love, friend, and God is love (1 John 4:16). Reject the fear that's chasing you!

**REFLECTION** Do you ever feel like fear is the "motor" driving you toward your goals? Take a moment to imagine yourself reaching the shore of the lake described above—stepping onto the sand and safely climbing into the arms of your Savior. How do you feel now?

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# PULLED TOWARD GOALS



Day

7

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

## PHILIPPIANS 2:13

High achievers have big goals. They work hard to reach them. But instead of being pushed by fear, trying to outrun the sense they might fail, they are pulled toward their big goals. They're ignited by an inner drive, a fire burning within, and they move with purpose toward the finish line.

It's easy to see that a high-achiever mindset sounds healthier and more appealing than a perfectionist mindset. But here's something else to consider: Does being pushed by fear sound like what the Bible describes when it talks about the work we do for God? Or does being pulled toward our goals seem more in line with the peace and purpose Scripture describes for followers of Jesus?

If you feel like you've been "pushed by fear" in the past, don't worry! The Lord gives us the opportunity and gift to grow through him, and recognizing something we'd like to change to be more like Jesus is an excellent first step.

**REFLECTION** Do you resonate more with the idea of being pushed by fear or being pulled toward your goals? What's your biggest goal right now? Take a few minutes to think about what's motivating your work toward that goal.

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# UNREASONABLE GOALS



Day

8

I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied.

## PHILIPPIANS 4:18

Big goals are a good thing. Shooting for the stars is great. But what happens when a perfectionist sets a goal that's nearly impossible to reach? As people prone to all-or-nothing thinking, anything short of reaching the big goal can be interpreted as a total failure. Even when we know logically this isn't true, sometimes our emotions still crash around us as though it were fact.

Even worse, sometimes a near-unattainable goal is met, and the perfectionist still rejects their success. "Yes, I won first place, but the judges were probably biased. The competition must not have been very good this year. Maybe it was a mistake." Or perhaps, "Yes, I got all As this semester, but my percentages could have been higher. I got a B on my math final. Did I really deserve an A in that class?" Some will simply move on to the next impossible task on their list. Others get caught in a loop of rejecting and doubting their past successes.

Does any of that feel familiar? If so, you may have unattainable goals and a problem with rejecting your own success.

**REFLECTION** Think about one of your biggest wins in life. Have you ever doubted its legitimacy? Reject those doubts right now and reframe, telling yourself, "The Lord gifted me with the ability to achieve this goal, and I'm so grateful!" How do you feel about the accomplishment now?

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# THE FUN OF STRETCHING



Day

9

Now may the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will.

## HEBREWS 13:20-21

For a high achiever, shooting for the stars isn't emotionally risky. Because if they "fail" and instead land in the stratosphere, they think, *Wow, I'm in the stratosphere, and that's amazing!*

For the high achiever, stretching is fun. Pushing the boundaries of what could be possible is an adventure, and if the high goal is met, great! Let's stretch even further to redefine our limits!

Does that kind of positivity about your work seem like a distant, far-off mindset? If so, that's okay. For now, rest in the knowledge that the God who equips the faithful high achiever to have peace, positivity, and gratitude about their successes wants to equip you in the same way.

**REFLECTION** Can you think of a time when you fell just short of your big goal? Maybe you didn't win the top prize, but you were a finalist. Take a few minutes to think about landing in the stratosphere—and how awesome that is.

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# FOCUSED ON RESULTS



# Day 10

What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

**1 CORINTHIANS 2:12**

Perfectionists focus only on results, and honestly, who can blame them? The world focuses on results too. In a business context, sometimes the only thing that matters is “the bottom line” (whether or not something is financially profitable—and exactly how much money it rakes in). The biggest rewards are reserved for those who get the best results.

But we don’t have to embrace this mindset, friend. A life of following Jesus isn’t about a single outcome or a one-time event. It’s a lifelong journey with many seasons, phases, and eras along the way, and there’s lots of growth to be had in each. Let go of a results-only mindset and embrace the journey!

**REFLECTION** Think for a few moments about the major milestone of graduating high school. That end result (a diploma) is pretty cool, but what about the journey getting there? Write down some important things you have learned (or expect to learn) along the way.

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# ENJOYING THE PROCESS



Day

11

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

## PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Maybe you've already guessed that high achievers aren't focused only on their results. They also care about the process of getting there. The process is the part with laughter, learning, and all those glorious side quests. The process is the part where we build relationships, grow our skills, and mature into followers of Christ who look ever more like him.

Not only should we notice the process, we are even allowed to *enjoy* it. I know, crazy! But think about it. It's great to have an end result like a flawless performance in the fall play. That's awesome. But consider the value—the *fun*—of the weeks of rehearsals leading up to it. The friends made along the way. The backstage silliness, the inside jokes, the progression from how the show looked at the first rehearsal to how it looked by the end. Even if the final result wasn't flawless, the journey to get there was still worthwhile.

**REFLECTION** Do you find yourself fixated on results? Think about your last completed project. No matter the end result—positive or negative—write down at least three valuable things you took away from the process of working on that project.

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# CRUSHED BY UNMET GOALS



Day

12

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall.

**ISAIAH 40:30**

“Youths grow tired and weary.” Does that sound relatable? Think about the last time you didn’t meet your goal, the last time you felt like you failed. Were you absolutely crushed by it? Flattened? Disappointed beyond description?

It’s a common feeling for perfectionists, and it’s no wonder. When everything short of perfection is perceived as a failure, how is it possible not to be crushed at every stumble, weary before you’ve even begun? Even healthy high achievers can get burned out when they take on too much at once or experience big disappointments. They can begin to feel beat up by their circumstances.

Friend, this is such a heavy burden to bear. And, truly, you don’t have to. In the coming months, we’re going to look at many biblically based reasons why you don’t have to carry such a heavy load—and practical tips for training ourselves to think in a better, healthier way.

**REFLECTION** Take a minute to visualize the heavy weight you’ve been carrying on your shoulders. Now picture Jesus telling you you’re free of it. Set it down at his feet and describe how much lighter and freer you are.

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# BOUNCING BACK



Day

13

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and  
not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

**ISAIAH 40:31**

Just to be clear, you can be a recovering perfectionist and still hope in the Lord. In fact, if you're reading this book, I suspect that's exactly who you are—someone who struggles with perfectionism, loves Jesus, and wants to learn a better way.

One part of this “better way” we're hoping to learn is a skill high achievers have: bouncing back after failure. They feel disappointed too, of course. That's a normal human response when we're let down in some way. But high achievers quickly put that failure and disappointment into its proper place, refuse to let it define their self-worth, and move on to the next project or goal.

If that sounds like a distant, unachievable ideal, I have good news! Keeping your hope in the Lord central—relying on his strength, believing in his love for you, recognizing who you are as a child of God—will help you put disappointments in their proper place.

**REFLECTION** Consider your last big disappointment. Can you describe your emotions afterward? Were they heavy, crushing, dark, smothering? Looking back, do you think your emotions were oversized compared to the event?

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# FEAR OF FAILURE



Day

14

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.  
“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

**ECCLESIASTES 1:2**

Perfectionists have a very serious conundrum. Like all humans (except Jesus when he was on earth), they are imperfect. Yet they’re constantly striving toward perfection, berating themselves when they fall short of that impossible standard. It’s not too hard to see how this mental loop—the drive to be perfect, the inability to achieve it, the perception of total failure—leads to all kinds of heartache for those of us who struggle with perfectionism.

We might even begin to feel like everything we do is meaningless, every effort futile. That no work is worth doing, no goal is worth pursuing, no dream is worth chasing. We might become so afraid of making a mistake that we do nothing.

Friend, if you’re in that place, allow me a moment to hug you through the pages. Then hear this truth: You are loved, created on purpose, and your future is filled with good works to pursue. Don’t give up, and don’t allow fear to freeze you!

**REFLECTION** Can you think of something you wanted to do recently but didn’t because you were afraid to fail? If that opportunity is still open to you, prayerfully consider pursuing it now. If not, what’s another leap you might take instead?

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# HEALTHY RISK



Day

15

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.  
“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

**ECCLESIASTES 12:8**

Did you notice how this verse in Ecclesiastes says the exact same thing as the verse in the previous devotion? That’s because today we’re going to think about the idea that “everything is meaningless” in a slightly different, more positive way, similar to how a high achiever might.

When we recognize our tasks, projects, and goals are usually not life-or-death situations, that they shouldn’t make or break our existence or completely shatter our sense of self, it gives us the freedom to take healthy risks in life. It gives us the space to say, “Hey, why not?” when faced with an exciting challenge.

The only thing that truly matters in an eternal, life-or-death sense is our relationship with God. And God’s love for you is already secure. When our reverence for him is the center of our lives, we have the freedom to explore this world he’s made and take some (healthy) risks—win or lose, succeed or fail. The outcome is, in one very real sense, meaningless. So, why not?

**REFLECTION** Take a few moments to write how you feel about this new way of looking at your goals—and the future risks you might take. Is it exciting? Strange?

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# PROCRASTINATION



Day **16**

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.

**EPHESIANS 5:15-16**

Some people might assume perfectionists are people who tick all the boxes on their to-do lists as quickly as possible, burning through their assignments in an effort to snag that deeply desired 100 percent, that perfect score, that A+.

But it's actually very common for perfectionists to struggle with procrastination. Often it's fear of failure that holds us back, making us too worried about our performance to even begin. Other times, impostor syndrome crashes down on us, convincing us we aren't really up to the tasks set before us, no matter how well we may have performed in the past.

Some of us even hide our procrastinating tendencies because others perceive us as high achievers who have it all together, and we don't want to shatter the illusion we have everything under control, even when we're desperately behind.

**REFLECTION** Are you a procrastinator? If so, think about some of the difficulties procrastination has caused in the past, like extra stress, missed deadlines, or work that was rushed or sloppy.

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# DIVING IN



Day

17

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

**HEBREWS 12:11**

If the previous devotion left you feeling a little down about your procrastination habits, don't worry. There's good news today. High achievers tend to dive right in to their work, and we can learn to do that too.

When we take some pressure off the ultimate outcome, that can make it easier to leap into our tasks with all our hearts—and reframe the procrastination-inducing ideas that hold us back. Rather than thinking, *If I don't do this perfectly, it's a complete waste of time*, try, *This is an opportunity to practice the discipline of "just starting."*

Instead of looking twenty steps down the road toward the finished product and panicking about that result, we are instead choosing to focus on the first, most important step—just starting.

**REFLECTION** How do you feel about the idea of “just starting”? Write out some positive statements about taking the first step on a big project (for example, “Completing step one is all I need to focus on today”; “Getting started is a big win”).

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# DEFENSIVENESS



# Day 18

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit,  
for anger resides in the lap of fools.

**ECCLESIASTES 7:9**

It's probably clear by now that people who struggle with perfectionism have a lot of internal angst, doubts about their self-worth, and maybe even questions about how God could possibly love them. It would be easy to think perfectionists are curled-up balls of self-consciousness, too timid to snap back at anyone for any reason.

While that can be true for some of us, it's actually common for perfectionists to feel and act defensively when confronted with their mistakes. While there may be a lot of turmoil churning on the inside, perfectionists feel pressure to maintain a facade of flawlessness, and that makes it difficult for us to admit mistakes to others—and sometimes, even to ourselves. We become highly sensitive to criticism, often responding in less-than-godly ways.

There's a lot of biblical wisdom to lean on when it comes to controlling our anger (or defensiveness) and being honest about mistakes, and we will look at many specific ways to do this in the coming months. But today's verse is a great place to start!

**REFLECTION** The last time someone confronted you with a mistake or you were presented with evidence of a less-than-stellar performance, how did you react? If it wasn't great, how could you have responded better?

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# THE VALUE OF CRITICISM



Day

19

**Wounds from a friend can be trusted,  
but an enemy multiplies kisses.**

**PROVERBS 27:6**

Let's be honest: no one loves to be criticized. Criticism can be hard to hear, especially for people who are used to performing well, whether they're high achievers or perfectionists.

But high achievers are often able to quickly place criticism where it belongs. This "proper place" will vary, depending on the circumstances of the critique, but when it's coming from a close friend, a trusted mentor, or a beloved parent, we can be pretty sure those words were meant to help, not harm.

Since it's such a big, difficult concept, there's a whole section on how to handle criticism well later in this book. For now, let this wisdom from Proverbs sink in: hard truth from a friend can be trusted, but empty flattery can hurt you in the long run.

**REFLECTION** Can you think of a time when a trusted person gave you some criticism that was really hard to take? How did you respond? Would you do anything differently now, if it were to happen again?

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# LOW SELF-ESTEEM



Day

20

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

## EPHESIANS 1:4

The idea of self-esteem can be tricky for followers of Christ. We're not supposed to regard ourselves the same way the world does, and avoid becoming prideful, selfish, or arrogant. We're not supposed to put ourselves above God or put our own desires before the needs of others. So why is it bad to have low self-esteem?

When I use the term *low self-esteem* in this book, I'm referring to the deep fear people (perfectionists especially) have about their value as human beings. They fixate on their failings and shortcomings and struggle to believe they were loved by God before the creation of the world, chosen to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Embracing the truth that God loves you—that he created you on purpose and chose you, specifically—is healthy self-esteem. It's esteeming God's stated truths about you above the dark struggles that want to convince you of the opposite.

**REFLECTION** Consider for a moment the depth of love for you described in Ephesians 1:4. What is your initial emotional response? Does it fill you with awe? Joy? Or does it make you squirm a little?

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# HIGH SELF-WORTH



Day

21

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

## EPHESIANS 1:7

Godly self-worth acknowledges that we are precious to the Lord. Full stop. It's not about our achievements; it doesn't take into account our successes or failures. It does not depend upon our abilities or even our personalities. We have inherent value because God says we do. Jesus died on the cross to prove how much we matter to him.

Spiritually healthy self-esteem says, "I am a child of God. I live for him. My life matters—God says so." Perfectionists, who are naturally performance-focused, may struggle to really understand and embrace this. We might say it with our mouths but wonder inside how it can be.

Truly, it is a puzzle. It's amazing that God would die for *anyone*, let alone a lot of sinful humans. But that's the beauty and mystery of grace, the unmerited favor we didn't earn but is lavishly poured out on us anyway.

**REFLECTION** When was the last time you contemplated God's grace toward you? Think about it for a few moments, then journal about your emotional response to those meditations.

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# WHAT DRIVES YOUR DRIVE?



Day

22

I live in disgrace all day long, and my face is covered with shame.

**PSALM 44:15**

As we've outlined some characteristics of perfectionism, has it felt like looking into a mirror? If so, you might be wondering where your perfectionism came from. There are many possible answers to that question, and we're going to work through a few.

Perfectionists are driven to perform well . . . but have you ever asked yourself what drives your drive? If the underlying emotions prompting you to succeed are fear, shame, low self-esteem, or guilt, you're probably living in a perfectionist prison. These negative emotions may net good results sometimes, but they're definitely harmful to a person's heart and to their relationship with Jesus.

The Lord wants us to live in freedom, not in the shackles of disgrace and distress (Gal. 5:1). No matter what prompted these negative drivers to appear in your life, let's prayerfully work on breaking those chains.

**REFLECTION** Take a few moments to journal through the emotions beneath your drive to succeed. For each negative emotion, write out at least one biblical truth to combat it. Example: shame—There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

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# HIGH-EXPECTATIONS ENVIRONMENTS



Day

23

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

## PROVERBS 22:6

For some of us, the desire to be perfect is an inborn personality trait, perhaps worsened by some unhelpful thought patterns we've accidentally nurtured over the years. For others, something external prompted this drive within us.

Growing up in a high-expectations environment can be one of these outside factors. Some perfectionists struggle with their parents' or caregivers' heavy expectations. Others might have been in a very competitive learning environment, part of an elite sports group, or immersed in a world where talent is closely judged. Sometimes in these you-vs.-them groups, performance is prized, rather than growth, effort, or participation.

An environment that tells us "mistakes will not be tolerated" can be difficult to withstand. If you've felt the heavy blanket of a high-expectation environment wrapped around your shoulders, you can start removing that weight today. It'll take some time to leave it completely behind, but remember Jesus offers us acceptance just as we are.

**REFLECTION** Has a high-expectation environment factored into your inner drive? If so, take some time to imagine shedding that weight—but also take a few minutes to find grace for those who may have inadvertently stirred up these thought patterns for you.

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# EXPECTATIONS FROM WITHIN



Day

24

We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

**JAMES 3:2**

Not all perfectionists have external factors shaping them. Many of us grew up in homes where mistakes were okay and our performance was repeatedly encouraged, our efforts supported, our failures and shortcomings forgiven.

Still, the drive to appear perfect, to *be* perfect, exists inside us. Why? That's a difficult question to answer, except to say each person is created with their particular personality, and every personality type has a predisposition toward certain struggles. Someone who is carefree and outgoing might struggle with impulse control. Those who are careful and meticulous are likelier to be perfectionists.

If you relate to the idea of perfectionism being mostly inborn, just remember this: God created your personality on purpose. You can hold on to the good, wonderful traits and gifts he gave you while rejecting those unhealthy elements that seek to push you farther from his love for you.

**REFLECTION** Write out the top ten things you like about yourself, but focus on your personality and your heart, not your performance (so "I have a mathematical brain" rather than "I get good grades in math," or "I care deeply for other people," not "I do a lot of community service").

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# SHAMING EXPERIENCES



Day

25

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

## GENESIS 3:21

Sometimes our personalities are such that we're vulnerable to the struggle of perfectionism, but we don't fully embrace it until a triggering event occurs.

Experiences where we felt shame—whether because someone humiliated us or we felt embarrassed all on our own—can definitely contribute to perfectionism. Shame is an intense emotion, and a deeply negative one. It's not the same as godly conviction when we've done something wrong and we're moved to repent. It's more like the sudden feeling of nakedness Adam experienced in the garden after he'd sinned for the first time.

Keep in mind what God did for Adam and Eve. Their shame was caused by something they *had* done wrong, but God still clothed them and covered up their nakedness. Even in our dark moments, we are worthy of care and love.

**REFLECTION** If you've had a lot of shaming experiences in the past, don't worry, you don't have to list them! But take some time to think through them and write about your feelings. If you're still struggling with the hurt, ask God to meet you there.

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