

SESSION  
**9**

THE CONVERSATION STARTER  
**“Cheese Doodles”**



PRAISEWORTHY VIRTUES

Launch your study with this  
**CONVERSATION STARTER**

[Watch the video](#) or read it below.



READ

Before the study, take a moment to read Phil. 1:9-11; 2 Cor. 8:7; Daniel 5:12-14



BONUS RESOURCE

Feel free to listen to **Weekly episode #162, “Stay Salty,”** before your study, as an example of a conversation led by this study guide.

[biblegeeks.fm/162](https://biblegeeks.fm/162)



**H**ow are you doing with your resolutions? New Year's resolution #fails have become a familiar joke every January — only 9-12% of us hang on to them as we close the year<sup>1</sup>. Most have a half-baked "resolve" unworthy of calling "resolution," but that doesn't diminish the value of goals, even if we never achieve all our aspirations. Sure, we could veggie our life away with cheese doodles on the couch, but God created us to strive for growth. So as we shift our focus from God's gifts to virtues, let's pursue Christlike excellence.



THE BIG IDEA

Though we're not perfect, we glorify God by stretching daily to be better and do better.

Perfectionists lose their way, craving acceptance and chasing peace through flawlessness. But through Christ, we receive God's favor despite our faults (Eph. 2:4-10). We'll never reach God's perfection. But he *"called us to his own glory and excellence"* (2 Peter 1:3; 2:10) to imitate him (Matt. 5:48).

So *"press on ... straining forward"* (Phil. 3:12-14), growing *"to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13). Hone your character, sharpen yourself (Eccl. 10:10). Make your life the masterwork you never tire of crafting in Christ's image (2 Cor. 3:18). Aspire to a *"life ... worthy of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:27).

Love is *"the more excellent way"* (1 Cor. 12:31ff), so may it *"abound more and more ... so that you may approve what is excellent"* (Phil. 1:9-10). And when you find *"any excellence ... think on these things"* (Phil. 4:8), noticing and appreciating it.

Sometimes "Whatever!" means we don't care. But Scripture says, *"whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Cor. 10:31)! If we long to hear "well done" from Christ who *"has done all things well"* (Mark 7:37), we'll try to *"excel in everything ... in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness"* (2 Cor. 8:7).



THE BIG QUESTION

Where do you need to strive for greater excellence?



# Excellence

PUSH FORWARD TO BE MORE CHRISTLIKE

## INTRODUCTION

---



Launch the study with a **CONVERSATION STARTER** on the Big Idea.

Read, listen, or watch “Cheese Doodles” – [biblegeeks.fm/daily-267](https://biblegeeks.fm/daily-267) ▶▶▶



**ICE BREAKER** — Get everyone engaged and talking.

What New Year's Resolution have you actually succeeded at?

## ACT I

---



**JESUS SAID: Matthew 5:14-16**

What's the main point of this passage?

How does this idea relate to pursuing excellence?

What insights and applications do you take from these words of Christ? What do we need to get from these words that – if understood and applied – has the power to bless and strengthen us?

Is there anything else here you find helpful or interesting? Anything you've never noticed before – or have always loved about these words?

# Excellence

PUSH FORWARD TO BE MORE CHRISTLIKE

## ACT II



### HEAVY WORDS: Excellence

**arete** (ar eh TAY) – This Greek word – often translated “excellence” – has a wide range of meaning, but it often has to do with achievement and mastery. It can describe anything excellent at accomplishing its purpose, doing what it’s supposed to do, from land that grows well to an excellent tool or animal, but mostly it describes the excellent human.

From a moral standpoint, it’s about virtue. It refers to someone of “uncommon character worthy of praise” (BDAG). But, it could also describe the manifestation of divine glory and power, and it could describe praise. Put all of this together and you start to see why the New Testament puts this word in a list of virtues (2 Pet. 1:5), but also tells us to proclaim the **arete** of God (1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3).

What strikes you about this word’s original meaning and usage in Scripture?

What do you notice about the words use when describing God’s attributes (1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3)?

How can we grow in virtue/excellence (2 Pet. 1:5)?

How should excellence affect our thoughts (Phil. 4:8)?

# Excellence

PUSH FORWARD TO BE MORE CHRISTLIKE

## ACT III

---



**REACH OUT** — Connect with each other with this question.

What are some areas that you're committed to growing in this year?

## WRAP UP

---



**THE CHALLENGE** — Ready to put it into practice?

Share a short term goal with a friend and ask them to check in with you soon.



**REQUEST** — Go to God in a closing prayer.

“As we trust in you Lord, our God, lead us to excel in good works for others to your glory and honor.” (cf. Titus 3:8).



**NEXT SESSION** — Kindness

Prepare by reading Luke 6:35; 1 John 3:16-18; Eph. 4:32