Jan sat at the desk in her room twirling the ball-point pen 'round and 'round between her fingers. She should be studying, she knew, but it was so much easier to just shift her brain into a sort of neutral position and let her thoughts idle on and on in a pleasant, relaxed day-dreaming way. After all, she'd never make it to the top in math, she was sure, and chemistry was positively and absolutely not her forte. This she knew, in spite of the fact that
Mr. Hilliger and Mr. Twila each had told her repeatedly that if she ever began to apply her knowledge seriously she could excel in each of the subjects. But, was such a thing possible? Especially when and if one virtually loathed and despised the subjects!

She got to her feet and hurried to the window that overlooked the playground across the street from her parents' home. Children with bright scarves and warm clothing were rolling and tumbling down snow slides which they had built weeks earlier from the heavy snowfalls that the area received.

For a brief moment Jan longed to be a child again. Then she chided herself; life was a progressive thing; a growing up, moving steadily forward thing. It was not given to one so he could forever remain a child. Nor an adolescent. Life entailed growth, she thought as she left the window and picked up the Bible from the dresser.

She read for some time in Colossians, the third chapter, where she had stopped reading before going to school that morning. Verse 23 seemed to be emblazoned before her eyes; it stood out in bold lettering on the page: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Jan read the verse, then she read it again. And again. "Whatchoeverye do . . ." That would include her schoolwork, would it not? And her helping around the house, too! Even the baby sitting jobs she was responsible for and had taken on.

She felt herself break into a cold sweat. God's Word was alive! It was sharp, too. It had reached her at her weak spot. One of them.

"Do it heartily . . ." She groaned as the arrow of God's truth hit its mark in her heart again. That would mean to put enthusiasm and all of one's energy into the thing being done; to exert tireless effort into anything he does. It meant far more than doing things just well enough to get by on, just barely making a passing grade. God expected her to do her very best. In everything. Everything!

The last phrase was an eye-opener: "As to the Lord, and not unto men." She looked at the verse again then reread the phrase carefully. Prayerfully.
Jan felt hot tears sting her eyes. She loved the Lord with all her heart; yes, she did. But she hadn't put her whole being into doing her schoolwork as to the Lord." Neither had she applied the principle to the work which she helped to do around the house, nor to her baby sitting jobs either. She had been so very mediocre. Her heart smote her.

She had always considered herself as being quite average and very normal; not too smart, but not stupid, either; not overly pretty, but not too homely, and so on. She felt quite comfortable with being usual and average and ordinary. Until reading Colossians 3:23, that is.

No one could say, truthfully, that he enjoyed being the class dunce. And while it was a fact that this she was not, neither could she say that she had excelled in too many school subjects. And why not?

She faced the question squarely and head on. She could have done better, this she had to admit; not only in school but at home and on duty as a baby sitter. She had never really or fully actualized her God-given potential. Nor had she deviated from the norm too far in her studies and her house work. Her average status was so comfortable to live with. But now, according to what she had just read, she must do better; she must "do it heartily," and "as to the Lord, and not unto man."

Her thoughts raced back across the centuries of time to some very out of the ordinary people. What would have happened to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had they been only average or mediocre? Would they have been called the "servants of the most high God"; and would God have delivered them had they not taken their fearless stand for Him and His cause? And Daniel; would the lions not have harmed him had he not put God first and not continued praying, when the decree was issued that none dare pray or make supplication to any God or man save to the king, Darius?

The bright light of the truth which she had just read began to dawn brightly on Jan. She saw the truth: Daniel and the three Hebrew children had given their very best to God. They didn't settle for mushy mediocrity in their belief and trust in God. They dared to be different. They stood out as stalwarts of faith who actualized all their God-given potential and deviated sharply away from the norm, throwing themselves upon the mercies of the God under Whose wings they had come to trust. And this, Jan knew was their salvation in the hour of trial and the face of death.
She felt shaken to the depth of her soul. She had no excuse for her mediocrity. Unless it would be called laziness. And then it would be no excuse, as such; it would be a reason. The reason. And God had no place in His great plan for laziness.

The thought jolted her. She realized with sudden illumination that this was her problem. She was too lazy to devote the necessary time to studying and thus bring her grades up; to dilatory to do a thorough job at dusting the furniture and cleaning the house. Oh, she cleaned, to be sure; this was an order from her mother.

She had been helping around the house for almost as long as she could remember. But her cleaning had been the kind that could be called "the getting-by kind." How often did she clean beneath the beds and in the closets? It had been the hasty kind of cleaning; the vacuuming around, but not beneath, the beds and the dressers; a dusting around the things on the dresser tops instead of a removal of the objects themselves and giving the pretty furniture tops a thorough dusting and polishing and then setting the objects back in place -- after each had been dusted, polished, shined, or whatever.

Jan felt ashamed of herself. She had been functioning like a small child who was still in the training or learning stage instead of doing her work "heartily" and "as to the Lord." She had been guilty of mushy, sickening mediocrity. And all the while the Lord had been trying to get her to see that she need not remain in this state or settle on this plane. There were greater things out there for her to achieve and to accomplish.

"I'm sorry, precious Lord Jesus," she cried aloud. "I'm sure You have been greatly displeased and disappointed with me. I never saw the light of this great truth until just now. Please forgive me for being so mentally sluggish and so . . . so lazy and dilatory. You have given me this beautiful new light so that I might walk in it.

By Thy grace, and with Thy help, I'll do it."

For the first time since her salvation and subsequent entire sanctification, Jan realized that God wanted her very best for Him and His cause, too. When one had a good, close friend or an acquaintance whom he
thought a lot of, it was easy to do only one's best for that friend or acquaintance; mediocrity was not thought about even. No indeed.

"Jesus, my Lord," she cried Heavenward, "I have given Thee only a mushy mediocrity in those things that I have done for Thee. I'm sorry. I could have done a better job helping out in that service at the Nursing Home. I see now that, had I done what I did as to Thee, I could have stayed longer by Mrs. Halliday's bed and read the Bible to her and answered a letter or two, also. Forgive me for being so lazy while I was there. I was too anxious to leave, and get away from that odor. . . ."

She wept before the Lord, and prayed until she knew that she would never be quite the same again in her work or her schooling nor her baby sitting jobs. Whatever she did, from this moment on, she would do it "heartily, as to the Lord. . . ."

She wiped the tears from her face and her eyes then she sat down at the desk and opened her books. She would tackle the once-despised math and chemistry lessons "heartily, as to the Lord." And with His unfailing help, she would master each. She was through with being mediocre when she knew, now, that God had a wider, greater, more expansive plane for her to explore.

Something inside Jan's heart was singing a song of victory. She knew she would never again be the same: She had left the state of mediocrity for the greater and more fulfilled life; working heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto man.