

A Holy Do Over

- Good evening, brothers. We are abundantly blessed. In our culture, most hours of most days go really well for most people. But then there are those times when things don't go well and we mess something up. Nobody likes failure, so it is in our nature to occasionally want a "do over" when we have botched up something.
- There is a long list of NFL and college place kickers this season who would like a "do over" of their missed field goals. Some of you who will be shooting next week at the Knights on Target event may be wishing you could have a "do over" on the rounds you pull off the bulls eye. But unfortunately there is no "do over" in these situations. Competition allows no room for a "do over."
- In some friendly, not so competitive games, there seems to be room for a "do over." When I play pool with my high school buddies, someone occasionally miscues on the break. We often will allow a retry on the break just for the sake of restoring someone's dignity. But that doesn't erase the slightly embarrassing event of the miscue.
- One of my favorite pastimes is archery, which I typically do by myself in my back yard. When I am out of practice, I will sometimes let loose an arrow that misses the target completely. You would think that with no one else observing, there would be no objection to a "do over."
- But God is there and only He can be master of time. So even in this situation, I don't get a "do over." We can't change the events of the past. All we can do is try again. We can do better next time.
- There is another category of desired "do overs" that we would all like to be able to take advantage of. I had an experience of this earlier in the week. I will share a couple of insights highlighted to me because of it.
- On Sunday evening Nancy emptied and cleaned the freezer because it was not sealing well which was causing a buildup of frost. While the freezer was empty, I suggested to her that I could take a look at the ice maker that had stopped working a couple of months ago.
- I wanted to fix it so she wouldn't need to be inconvenienced any longer with relying only on the smaller ice maker that was still functioning. She was glad to take a break from cleaning and went to watch her Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday Night Football. She was hopeful that I could fix the ice maker.
- I jumped into this repair task with some eagerness, but with no real preparation. I felt confident that I could at least diagnose the problem and maybe restore its function if there wasn't a critical problem requiring new parts to be ordered.
- My confidence was high because I had had several recent successes with other home repairs for friends that I helped. But I was over confident, and my lack of preparation soon led to the situation that had me wishing I could have a "do over."

- The working conditions were painfully difficult and frustrating. We have a refrigerator with a pull out freezer drawer on the bottom, so I had to kneel on the tile floor balled up in the little space behind the freezer door to work on it.
- I didn't unplug the refrigerator because there was still food in the upper box. So the freezer was still running and it was cold and wet. It took me longer than I thought it would to find all the hidden screws for removing the panel to unplug the ice maker and then unbolt it from the wall of the freezer.
- By the time I removed it, my knees were aching, my back and neck were stiff, my fingers were numb, and my shirt was wet from the melted ice. Needless to say, I was a little grumpy by the time I carried the ice maker to the counter to finish disassembling it for inspection. I took it completely apart and cleaned all of the parts.
- I could not find any obvious mechanical or electrical problems. There was nothing broken, worn, disconnected, burnt, or missing. All I could do was put it back together and reinstall it, hoping that all it needed was cleaning and thawing of the ice jamb.
- Putting it back in the freezer was much harder than taking it out. I folded myself back into a ball, squeezing into the tight work space. I could not focus my eyes on all the screw holes even with my reading glasses on, so I had to put several of the tiny screws in by feel.
- Of course I dropped half of them several times before getting them installed because they were so small and my dexterity was limited. My impatience and frustration were ramping up. I soon began muttering several expletives to aid in the process of installing these little screws.
- There were a few I could not get started, so I pushed my head farther into the freezer to align my unfocused eyes on the screw holes. I gouged my forehead on a metal protrusion taking off a couple layers of skin.
- It was then that my frustration erupted into outright rage and I began yelling at the refrigerator and cursing every engineer who ever had some part in designing this outrageous system.
- Of course none of my venting helped me overcome my aching back, blurred eyesight, numb fingers, and the uncooperative little screws; so I stopped to rest. In that brief moment of rest, I had time to realize how stupidly I was behaving.
- This repair effort was no longer an act of kindness to benefit Nancy, but was now a source of anguish for her as she listened to my foul rant. I was immediately sorry for being so stupid. I apologized to God for the negative way I had brought him into this task. I regrouped and remained focused on the task until it was done.
- In the end, the ice maker still did not function. I went to bed feeling low, mainly because of the way I had behaved. Even if I could not have fixed the ice maker, my attempt to do so

would have been appreciated by Nancy if I had maintained my composure and not turned it into a cussing fest. I wished that I could have a “do over.”

- The next morning I was still bothered by the way I had lost my temper. During my morning prayer, I reflected on this and compared it to the other recent positive experiences I had had with home repairs.
- The first insight that came to me was my motivation for doing the task. My real motivation was more for my own ego than for Nancy’s sake. I wanted the reward of being her hero coming to the rescue more than making her life a little easier.
- When I considered those other home repairs that came easily and with success, I was motivated by a desire to share the gifts of my knowledge and skills with people who could not do these things for themselves. I was willing to share of myself rather than use the opportunity to gain praise.
- I gained another useful insight as I compared my successful efforts with my failure. I recently completed a repair project that required me to replace and refinish large sections of drywall. I am not that skilled at finishing drywall.
- People who master that are quite exacting and efficient in their efforts. I am not, but I realized I can eventually get to an acceptable outcome. Where the masters get it done with honed skills and efficiency, I get it done through patience, persistence, and prayer.
- Of course knowledge of what to do is crucial. I completed a construction carpentry program a couple of years ago. I learned that the key to a good outcome with drywall is to ensure there is good foundational infrastructure to hang it on.
- The wall studs and ceiling rafters have to be aligned neatly, plumb, level, and square to ensure a proper framework on which to hang the drywall. If the joints align evenly, it is so much easier to finish the surface without any obvious flaws.
- If the framework is not installed well before the drywall is hung, there is no “do over.” There will be flaws that can only be hidden by a master artisan in the drywall trade. For the rest of us, we can only take our best shot at minimizing the imperfections and hope for a reasonably acceptable outcome.
- Good preparation is necessary for success. Something I didn’t do before jumping into the ice maker repair effort.
- As I prayed and contemplated about the need for preparation in all that we undertake, I understood in a new sense that this is the essence of Advent. Advent is a season of anticipation of Christ’s coming into this world. It is a time of preparing a place for him in our heart.
- Advent is also the start of an annual cycle of preparation for transitioning into Heaven...becoming more holy. Throughout our life time of preparation for Heaven, we will gain foundational knowledge of God. Our motivation for love will be made plumb, level, and

true. We will become neatly aligned with God's will. We will be successful in coming to know God in a very personal way.

- But along the way, we will also miss the mark sometimes. We won't get a "do over." But if we face our weaknesses with patience, persistence, and prayer, we will grow from our mistakes and failures. When we reach out to Jesus in our heart to try again, we will do better next time.
- This is cooperation with God's mercy. This is the only possible "do over" as He makes all things new, even us. When filled completely with God's grace, each one of us will be a "do over" of mankind's original fall from grace. Each one of us will be adopted into God's divinity for an eternal life with him.
- So brothers, enjoy this Advent season and welcome the master into your heart.

Peace Be With You,

Marc Barrett