PERFECTION

SPEECH FOR

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Is there anything more perfect than spending a beautiful Saturday afternoon with your husband… or wife… or significant other? And while strolling in the crisp sunlight having just enjoyed brunch or lunch consisting of exactly what you wanted to eat, sharing time with your favorite person, wishing the moment could be never ending and frozen in time… **AHHHHHH**….. And then you go…. **SHOPPING**!!! To some, this describes **perfection**… Heaven on earth…some of you may agree and some may think you’d rather be anyplace **BUT**…. Well, the daydream got me thinking…. **What is perfection**?

We spend our lives searching for an ideal that doesn’t exist. We carry pictures in our minds of what the perfect day or the perfect partner or the perfect job or home or children look like, but they don’t necessarily match the real thing… to others. When we look for a mate we think we have to go by Hollywood’s “Laws of Attraction.” We don’t consider when we look at and swoon over those mega stars that behind the scenes are dozens of people… wranglers, fluffers, makeup people, hair people, wardrobe stylists, lighting experts… the list goes on… that are there just to create that moment of **perfection** that gets us almost every time and almost convinces us that perfection is attainable in reality. Our online dating profiles sound like we’re Greek gods and goddesses…come on… admit it… you’ve used more than a few filters touching up those selfies…. right? (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) … and I mean also… have you **REALLY** looked at some people’s Facebook pictures??? And after all of the effort you put in to make sure **YOURS** are **GORGEOUS**??? (**Wait for the laugh**). Kobe Bryant has said he “chases perfection.” Vladimir Horowitz stated, “Perfection is imperfection.” Others have said, “…Perfection is constant transformation.” It seems like we all seek perfection but we fall in love with imperfect creatures… and whether it’s our pets or our loved ones, there’s something inside us that holds impossible ideals. If we’re smart, we acknowledge and appreciate what is **REAL**. Here’s the question… Does **TRUE** perfection lie in **IMPERFECTION**?

Mr. Contest Chair and to all of you Toastmasters, I am going to attempt further explain and give even more perfect illustrations of what I am attempting to express. On one of those crisp, enviable, delightful Saturdays, just as we finished brunch, my wife said, “Honey, Let’s go shopping!!” …Wait… it gets better. She wanted to go shopping for **wooden sticks**. Okay… not my idea of a “perfect” shopping spree, but I was willing to roll with it. My wife is an accomplished artist who deals with nature and I will do whatever I can to support her passion. She needed some elements for an assemblage she was making and found a piece of wood that, to her, was **perfect**. I looked at it and was massively unimpressed. “Why this one?” I asked. “There are others straighter, smoother, more normal,” to which my open minded visionary of a wife simply said, “I love it because it’s **real**. Where you see flaws I see beauty because it’s **natural and authentic**.” Her words gave me pause and apparently that pause was long enough to make my credit card appear. (**Wait for the laugh**). I signed the bill, looked at my wife, and said, “I hope the two of you will be very happy.” And then I thought… If **THAT’s** how she chooses wood, what does that say about **ME**? (**Wait for the laugh**).

One constant thought keeps going through my head. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Perfection is very subjective. And then I thought of my friends John and Lori… well, actually I thought of Sam, their dog. What’s more perfect than a happy family… a mother, a father, two wonderful children, and a precious pet. Well… four out of five isn’t too bad… you see, Sam is **DEFINITELY NOT** **PERFECT**. First of all he has only three legs. He’s scrawny with a pushed in face, dangly ears, his teeth aren’t much to commend, and his fur? Let’s just say it doesn’t seem **FUR REAL**…. (**Wait for the laugh**). My friends adopted him from a shelter and they are besotted with this creature. When I asked why they picked him, the response was immediate…”Because of his character and grit. His imperfections are what makes him special.” Even though this dog has had his share of hardship and suffering, he’s our trooper. He’s learned to manage his challenges, is able to romp and play like a weekend puppy and the kids absolutely love him… not because he’s the perfect dog but because he’s their wonderful, affectionate, imperfect yet perfect playmate. I thought that was amazing. Sam was loved for his uniqueness- he was his own special kind of dog.

When will we stop being so obsessed with superficial perfection? I heard a story about a young couple. Let’s call them Mario and Tanya. Mario was a little bit of an adventurer…. okay… maybe a daredevil…. until one day when he was climbing **THAT** tree…. and fell out of it and broke his back. He is now confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Fortunately Tanya saw behind his looks and way beyond his circumstances. She loved his soul and stayed with him. They married and live a full and happy life and every day they express their gratitude for their blessings. Mario speaks to me of the challenges he faces even to get dressed and get to work, but he knows how blessed he is and it has nothing to do with superficial perfection.

When we’re young and naïve, once we are lucky enough to find our life partner, we do our best to be perfect for them…. at least until right after the wedding day… but that is **NOT** where the joy of life resides. John Legend sings of “Perfect Imperfections,” and I think back to my wife’s piece of wood. I asked her how her project is progressing and she was thrilled. “Wonderfully!” she said. And then she told me that the twists and knots and flaws in the wood transformed the ordinary construction into a unique and expressive work of art. And then she reconfirmed my suspicions and said, “I love you because you are my perfectly imperfect!” Thank you all!