

My first car was a real sweetheart. I can still remember bringing her home from the used car lot and her sitting there in my driveway for the first time. Red and a creamy white. A '55 Chevy 2 door V-8 with genuine leatherette interior.

I was in high school at the time and my Uncle Tony had helped me pick it out. It was listed for \$1,100 dollars but he was able to talk the salesman into selling it to me for \$1,050. I had asked Uncle Tony to help me because he was a real gear head and loved cars too. We had had long talks at his house about what the 300 in Chrysler 300 really meant. And friendly arguments about "low" rear ends and "high" rear ends and gear ratios.

I had asked my Uncle Tony to help me pick up my car rather than my father because according to Dad cars were primarily to get people from point A to point B. And why wash them on weekends because they were only going to get dirty during the week. He was one of the first people to ever own a Dodge van – but he did it for the wrong reasons: not because vans could be cool but as a music director they could transport his whole bunch of band instruments at one time.

So I brought the Chevy home and on the first weekend noticed that it had a scratch on the red paint of its right front fender. No problem. Let's make it right. Get out the rubbing compound and give it a little rub. Better! A little more and better yet. One more rub and LOOK about 90% improved. Let's make it perfect. More rubbing compound. Gradually a dark grey smudge began to appear where I was rubbing. More rubbing, more grey smudge. I suddenly realized I had rubbed right through the paint down to the primer on the fender. Horrors!

About that time my father came out of the side door of the house and glanced over to what I was doing. He could have been hurtful, but he wasn't. Instead he said "Charles, always remember this: never try to be perfect because nothing on earth is perfect. If you try to be perfect you'll go crazy. Don't aim for perfection; aim for improvement."

I don't think he realized at the time that he was paraphrasing Voltaire who said "The perfect is the enemy of the good." Or, in other words, extremism is not good.

Actually, as a car guy this makes sense to me. Go too slow and you'll be late. Go too fast and get a ticket – or worse. Again a car example: very low engine RPM's = low horsepower; higher RPM's = maximum horsepower; make extremely high RPMs and do you get even higher horsepower? No. You get LOWER horsepower. In the middle lies virtue.

Neither extreme is good. As St. Thomas said, "In medio stat virtus": In the middle lies virtue. Virtue lies between a deficiency and an excess. Moderation can actually be viewed as a virtue that lies between two vices, one extreme and the other.

And it makes sense in health. Too little sleep or too much sleep does not let us function optimally. It's not good to have not enough food and it's not good to eat too much food. No exercise is not good and over-exercise is not good. Too low a blood sugar: no good. Too high a blood sugar: no good. In the middle lies virtue.

Think Goldilocks. She enters the house of the three bears. She is very discerning. One chair is too high and one chair is too low and one chair is just right – she sits in that one. One porridge is too hot, one is too cold, but the third is just right and she eats it. One bed is too hard, one is too soft and the other is just right and she sleeps in that one. The three bears come home and obviously get very upset with Goldilocks. However, Goldilocks is able to escape from three angry, threatening bears-- presumably because she adhered to the principle of "In Medio Stat Virtus."

In fact, that's what we should call it instead of The Virtue of Moderation. We should call it "The Goldilocks Principle" – that principle of virtue by which we run our lives. If anyone asks exactly what is meant by The Goldilocks Principle, we should say "Too much rubbing and you'll get primer."