

Good to Great in God's Eyes

Introductory Session

Greatness Defined

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to our study entitled “Good to Great in God's Eyes.” For the next ten weeks, we will look at what it means to go from Good to Great in God's Eyes.

The book is written by Chip Ingram, President of Walk through the Bible Ministries. He wrote the book out of a struggle to define greatness in God's kingdom.

So, through the next 10 weeks, we will examine ways to become great in our Christian walk. The sessions will focus on the following areas –

1. Think great thoughts
2. Read great books
3. Pursue great people
4. Dream great dreams
5. Pray great prayers
6. Take great risks
7. Make great sacrifices
8. Enjoy great moments
9. Empower great people
10. Develop great habits

At the end of our time together, you will be equipped with the information necessary to begin developing a strategy to move from good to great in your walk with the Lord.

So, let's define greatness as God sees it and then embark on a study to help us to move from Good to Great in God's Eyes.

- We don't ASCEND to greatness, but descend into greatness.
- To be great in this world is to put importance on oneself; to be great in God's Kingdom is to serve the needs of man.
- The world sees greatness in those who exercise power and authority but God sees greatness in those who serve.
- When Hitler was looking for a chauffeur he selected the shortest man he could find and kept him as his driver for the rest of his life. This man was so short that he needed special blocks under the driver's seat just to see over the steering wheel. Hitler used other people to make himself look bigger than he really was.
- The problem is not with seeking greatness. It's good to seek for greatness. Jesus did not reprimand the disciples for the desire to be great. God wants us to aspire to greatness!
- The problem is not with the desire, but with our understanding of greatness.
- The world has twisted the true meaning of greatness – we define it as having authority, status, power, money...
- Jesus says greatness has nothing to do with these
 - Greatness isn't having a million people look up to you
 - Greatness isn't having your face printed on the Fortune magazine
 - Greatness isn't having money or prestige or worldly success
- D. L. Moody describes it best:
“The measure of a man is not how many servants he has, but how many men he serves.”

Let's look at three truths about greatness from Luke 22:24-30 –

I. The Pathway to Greatness (24-26)

²⁴ *A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.* ²⁵ *And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.* ²⁶ *But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.*

- Man wants to be "Benefactors" - that's how the Lord describes the "kings of the Gentiles and those who exercise authority".
Like James and John, who wished to sit beside Jesus when He sits on His throne.
- What they're really asking for is power, influence and position. And they were not the only ones guilty of this.
- The only difference - they voiced out their intentions. The other 10 confirmed their same thoughts when they showed their anger.
- Look at Jesus' life. Christians and non-Christians alike acknowledge the greatness of Jesus - as a teacher, a great prophet, a great man.
- Jesus had never written a book, or led an army. He never held public office and never earned a degree. He was not rich. He was not powerful the way the world views power. He died the death of a common criminal.
- Yet He was the greatest man who ever lived, because the welfare of others came before His own welfare.
He left in this world the most lasting and pervasive influence ever.
- As a Teacher and Lord, He could have lived above His disciples and demanded blind allegiance.
- Yet He served them – even in the midst of their misunderstanding, selfishness and weakness.

- What motivated Him was His great love for mankind.
- If you want to be great in God's eyes, the first step is to understand the importance of serving,elp them.

II. The Person of Greatness (27)

²⁷ *For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.*

-True greatness is demonstrated in the way Jesus lived His life. He sets the standard.

- After washing His disciples' feet, Jesus said this to them (John 13:12-15):

13 "You call me `Teacher' and `Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

-- Example from the life of the great evangelist D.L. Moody
It seems that a "large group of European pastors came to one of D. L. Moody's Northfield Bible Conferences in Massachusetts in the late 1800s. Following the European custom of the time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But of course this was America and there were no hall servants.

Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his brothers. He mentioned the need to some ministerial students who were there, but met with only silence or pious excuses. Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room, the world's famous evangelist began to clean and polish the shoes. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend in the midst of the work revealed the secret.

Perhaps the episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and that was the basis of his true greatness.

[Gary Inrig. *A Call to Excellence*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985), p. 98]

III. The Prize of Greatness (28-30)

²⁸"You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- Although reward is not the main motivation why we serve - I believe we serve Him out of love - yet Jesus tells His disciples here they can expect great rewards.
- Our service is first to please God by taking care of the needs of those around us.
- Jesus tells us that even a seemingly insignificant action like giving a cup of water to someone, if done for Jesus' sake, will be rewarded.
- God will tell us, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Doesn't that put all the little things you do in a different light?
- John C Miller in his book *The Question Behind the Question* tells the following story:

- It was a beautiful day in downtown Minneapolis when John Miller stopped into a Rock Bottom restaurant for a quick lunch. The place was jammed. He didn't have much time, so he was happy to grab the one stool they had available at the bar. A few minutes after he sat down, a young man carrying a tray full of

dirty dishes hurried past on his way to the kitchen. Noticing John out of the corner of his eye, he stopped, came back and said, "Sir, have you been helped?"

"No, I haven't," John replied, but all I really want is a salad and a couple of rolls."

"I can get you that, Sir, what would you like to drink?"

"I'll have a Diet Coke, please." "Oh, I'm sorry, Sir, we sell Pepsi, Would that be all right?"

"Ah, no thanks," John said with a smile. "I'll just have water with lemon, please."

"Great, I'll be back." He disappeared.

Moments later he came back with the salad, rolls and water, John thanked him and he was quickly gone again, leaving John to enjoy his meal, a satisfied customer.

Suddenly, there was some activity off to John's left and then over his right shoulder stretched the "long arm of service," delivering a bottle of cold Diet Coke!

"Wow!" John said, "Thank you!"

"You're welcome," he said with a smile as he hurried off again.

John's first thought was, "Hire this man!" Talk about going the extra mile! He was clearly not your average employee. The more John thought about the extraordinary thing he had just done, the more he wanted to talk to him. So as soon as he could get his attention, John waved him over.

"Excuse me, I thought you didn't sell Coke," John asked.

"That's right, Sir, we don't"

"Well, where did this come from?"

"The grocery store around the corner, Sir." John was taken aback, and asked, "Who paid for it?"

"I did, Sir, just a dollar."

"Come on, you've been awfully busy, How did you have time to go get it?"

Smiling, he said, "I didn't, Sir, I sent my manager!"

24-26 Within minutes they were bickering over who of them would end up the greatest. But Jesus intervened: "Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It's not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant.

27-30 "Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You'd rather eat and be served, right? But I've taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you've stuck with me through thick and thin. Now I confer on you the royal authority my Father conferred on me so you can eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and be strengthened as you take up responsibilities among the congregations of God's people.

Greatness. Looks different than the world's idea. Doesn't it?

As I have given us an introduction, I want to lay some ground work for the remaining 10 weeks together.

Here are some important steps we need to make in order to make the best and most productive it can be.

1. Go ahead and make the commitment to be here each week. I know it is early and I promise you that we will have rain and even colder weather, but go ahead and determine to be here each week.

2. Find a group of guys to experience this with today. In a moment I am going to give you the opportunity to form small groups. Once your groups of 4 to 6 people are formed, I need you to fill out the small group registration form that you received this morning.

3. Make sure you purchase your book today so you can begin the reading. You will want to read chapter 1 – Think Great Thoughts this week and we will look at it in more detail next Thursday and discuss it in our small groups.

4. Our schedule –

Breakfast and fellowship

Teaching time

Small group time