

#17 “Do You Want to Be Great?”

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Often times, Christians balk at the thought of becoming great. When we hear things like “be all you can be,” “pursue greatness,” and “live up to your full potential,” we often condemn such thinking as self-centered and worldly. Granted, when the world says things like this, they usually do mean it in such a way. They are telling us to draw our strength from ourselves rather than Christ, they are telling us that life is about us making our mark on the world, and they are assuming that greatness is fame, popularity, wealth, and other false ways of identifying success. We know that the world has it wrong; in fact, they have it totally backward. But is it wrong to aspire to greatness, if we know what true greatness is?

The Scripture teaches that we ought to maximize our stay on earth in light of kingdom priorities (Matthew 6:33). It tells us that we are to want to run in such a way as to win the prize of God and receive the crown of life which is given to those who persevere in faithfulness and steadfastness (1 Corinthians 9:24, Revelation 2:10). God has gifted us all with a special spiritual gift design so that He can empower us to be part of His body advancing the kingdom of God in the hearts of mankind (Ephesians 4:7, Romans 12:6). If God has so gifted us and if He so desires to reward us, it only makes sense that He wants us to be great in His kingdom. Why wouldn't He want us to experience maximum blessing and joy when we get to heaven?

True greatness is living as those who put their values and investments in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy. We are to send on riches for the life to come by denying ourselves in the here and now. We are also to be wise stewards of the gifts and talents that God has given us, not wasting them on selfish things but rather doing what God enables us to do in service for His kingdom.

True greatness is also servanthood. Greatness is not for those who strive to get to the top of the pecking order so that they can rule their earthly kingdom as a means of self-gratification by the indulgence of the privileges of power. Leadership is fine if it is viewed as a stewardship and gift from God. Yet it is not acceptable to “lord it over” others and get some selfish pleasure out of being in authority. Even leaders are to be servants. Matthew 20:25-28 says,

“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,

but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

God may entrust us with positions of authority and responsibility on earth, and we will be held accountable for how we serve in them. But the key is that we view everything that we do as a chance to serve God and to do things His way. True greatness involves losing what the world says we should be holding dear so that we can find out what life is really all about. Christ’s message to the disciples, who had been arguing about who is the greatest, was that their focus was all wrong. Greatness is not how the world views greatness. It is not about how powerful we might become or how much money we might have. It is not about rank and status. Rather, whoever wants to be great in heaven must become a servant now. This means that we must value the needs of others as more important than our own and that we must make kingdom priorities our priorities, doing our part to help fulfill the Great Commission. Our entire life’s purpose and our entire existence is to be viewed as that of a servant, first and foremost of God but, secondly, of our brothers and sisters on the earth. Galatians 6:10 says, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” We have opportunity to do good for others only as long as we are alive and functioning on this earth. God may call us home at any moment. At that point our race run for Christ is over, and our eternity is set. We don’t get any “do-overs” or second chances. We have one chance to live for Christ in this life, and if we want to be great in the coming kingdom, we must not pursue the world’s ideas of greatness but Christ’s as we take on the role of a servant, valuing Christ’s commission over any other.

Do we want to be great in God’s kingdom? If we do, let us live with an eternal perspective, let us send on treasure ahead, let us value others ahead of ourselves, let us seek the kingdom above all things, let us walk by faith, and let us live as servants who value our lives only in light of how God values them. How did Christ value His life? He laid it down so that others might live. If we want to be great in God’s kingdom, we must learn to be the servant of all.