

A scenic view of a beach with waves, a white cross, and birds in the sky. The background shows a blue ocean with white-capped waves breaking onto a sandy beach. In the foreground, there are various coastal plants, including tall grasses and low-lying shrubs. A large white cross is superimposed on the left side of the image. The sky is light blue with a few birds flying.

Senior Bible Study Ministry

<https://www.seniorbiblestudies.org/>

GREATNESS

Matthew 18 (NIV)

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

A photograph of two men with beards and dark hair, wearing blue shirts, in a library setting. They are facing each other in profile, appearing to be in conversation. The man on the left is looking towards the man on the right, who has his hand raised as if speaking. The background is a blurred bookshelf filled with books. A white speech bubble with a drop shadow is centered over the image, containing the text 'What is Greatness?'.

What is Greatness?

What is Greatness?

- The disciples assumed greatness meant status & power
 - James & John desired seats of honor
 - The rich young ruler's misunderstanding of greatness (Matthew 19:16-22)
 - The Pharisees' focused on status & legalism (Luke 18:9-14)
- These views are consistent with societal views on success both then & now

What is Greatness?

- The world values power, wealth & recognition
- Earthly achievements are fleeting
- Jesus calls us to reassess & realign our assumptions
- He challenges their & our understanding of greatness
- This is the upside-down nature of the Kingdom of Heaven
- Jesus redirected their focus from status to childlikeness

What is Greatness?

- Children are innocent, dependent & trusting
- These traits are valued in the Kingdom, where it is important to embrace a childlike spirit
- Greatness comes
 - From being "the least" in the Kingdom
 - Through servanthood
- Jesus is our example of humility & service

What is Greatness?

- We need a heart transformation to align with Jesus
- To move towards a Kingdom-focused mindset, we are encouraged to reflect on our personal views of greatness
 - How do societal pressures influence our assumptions?
 - What do I value most?
- Jesus calls us to reject worldly definitions of greatness & encourages us to embrace Kingdom values



BECOMING
GREAT

Becoming Great

- To be great in His Kingdom, we must "change and become like children"
- This transformation is a necessary step to entering the Kingdom
- Just like the disciples, we need to shift from worldly to Kingdom thinking
- This is a heart transformation, a spiritual conversion – It is being “born again” (John 3:3)

Becoming Great

*3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
(John 3:3 NIV)*

- Being born again is a
 - New perspective on life & greatness
 - Lifelong journey
- This transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit

Becoming Great

- Humility is a sign of our conversion
- We depend on God as children depend on their parents
- We surrender our personal ambitions to God's will
- There is joy in living in alignment with God's Kingdom

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3 NIV)

Becoming Great

- The Bible gives us many examples of this changed life
 - Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19)
 - Terrorist to evangelists
 - Matthew's transformation after encountering Jesus (Luke 19:1-10) – Wealthy tax collector to generous follower of Jesus
 - The change in Peter's understanding of Jesus' mission (John 21:15-19) – Jesus-denier to Church leader

Becoming Great

- This transformation is a process
 - Faith
 - Repentance
 - Continuous growth & renewal

2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2 NIV)

Becoming Great

- There are many obstacles to true conversion
 - Pride
 - Temptation to conform to the world
 - Fear of losing status or comfort
 - Half-hearted commitment
- We can overcome these obstacles through faith & surrender

Humility



Humility

- Biblical humility is more than lip service to God & others
- It should exude from the wells of our spirits for the world to see

“16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NIV)

Humility

- Jesus is the example of ultimate humility

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8 NIV)

Humility

- Jesus washing the disciples' feet is a lesson in humility (John 13:1-17)
- The parable of the Pharisee & the tax collector demonstrates to the truth of humility (Luke 18:9-14)
- We are called to serve others without seeking worldly recognition

*5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
(Matthew 5:5 NIV)*

Humility

- We are living humbly when we
 - Put others' needs before our own
 - Acknowledge our dependence on God in all things
 - Are teachable & open to correction
 - Serve others without seeking recognition
 - Overcome pride & selfishness in interactions with others
 - Remember the importance of forgiveness & grace

Humility

- The Rewards of Humility
 - God promised to exalt the humble (James 4:10)
 - Peace & contentment from living humbly
 - Deeper connection with God through humility
 - Joy in serving others & seeing them flourish
 - The eternal reward of humility in the Kingdom of Heaven

Humility

- The challenges in cultivating humility
 - The constant battle against pride
 - The temptation to seek recognition & approval
 - Cultural values that oppose humility
- We must rely on God's strength to cultivate humility

Main Point

True greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is not measured by status, power, or recognition, but by adopting a childlike humility, undergoing a spiritual transformation, and aligning one's life with the values of the Kingdom.

Questions

- How do societal views on success and greatness compare to Jesus' teaching?
- How has your pursuit of greatness been alignment with or different from the greatness Jesus describes?
- How can practicing humility in your daily life lead to a deeper relationship with God and others?
- How does understanding greatness from Jesus' perspective change the way you view your life and your goals?

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