

Ascending to Greatness

Someone once said, “*God does not want us to do extraordinary things... He wants us to do ordinary things extraordinary well.*” When we start doing everyday things in an exceptional way everyone will sit up and take notice. For many people, a lack of integrity and mediocrity is the norm. They want to do as little as possible, in a haphazard way, and still get the results they desire. But God did not create us to be average or mediocre – He created us with **greatness** in mind.

God has called you to be a cut above; He’s called you to stand out in a crowd; to display trustworthiness, integrity and excellence. The word “*great*” is associated with God over 140 times in the Bible. **Psalm 150:2** says, “***Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His exceeding greatness.***” Surely this exceptional characteristic must also be personified in His children?

We need to cultivate integrity and excellence as a way of life. This means going beyond the normal call of duty, stretching our perceived limits and holding ourselves responsible for becoming the best (and giving our best). It means maintaining the highest standards, paying attention to every little detail and being willing to go the extra mile to get the job done. After all, as Christians we are always on display, whether we realise it or not. The eye is a better observer and much sharper than the ear. So stop “preaching” and start doing! Most people read Christians better than Christians read themselves!

Far too few of us are making any impact on society. I’m convinced that in today’s competitive world we need more people who will aspire to attain some measure of greatness, and not merely people who desire to be successful. In the larger picture, success is a weak relative of greatness because generally human success desires to make a lot of money in order to stop working. But, greatness sets out to change, or at the very least, improve the world in which it lives. The question we should all ask ourselves is this, “*Am I seeking success for success sake, or do I genuinely want to make an impact for God?*”

When confronted with such a daunting challenge, it’s probably a lot easier to make excuses and align yourself to mediocrity. But God does not bless mediocrity, He only blesses excellence. Greatness is evidenced by excellence but preceded by integrity. **Greatness** (which is always preceded by integrity) involves a large degree of sacrifice. What’s more, pursuing greatness will upset every tidy plan you’ve ever made, and may even put you at risk. Therefore, greatness is not for the fainthearted.

Genuine greatness will always choose to rise above the mediocrity that surrounds it and strive for excellence at any cost. Greatness requires resolve (true grit), and it has staying power. It means going the extra mile for what is right. It means keeping your word even when it hurts. If you want to live the abundant life that Jesus secured for you, start aiming for excellence and integrity. Start aiming to share in the Lord’s greatness!

Seek to be prominent in your assigned or nominated area of expertise. Why shouldn’t you become world renown for what you do? See yourself being influential and well-thought-of. This may not necessarily be raw ambition, for it may be the true spark of God within you. According to God’s Word, we are His own *peculiar people*, and the most significant mark of this peculiarity could be our inherent greatness!

But where are the great Christian leaders? Where are God’s present day heroes? Where can we find that new breed of illustrious champions for Christ? In **John 15:8** Jesus stated, “***By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...***” The Greek word for “much” could also be translated “great.” Therefore, God is glorified when we produce greatness! I firmly believe that God is raising a **peculiar** group of believers who

know and understand their greatness in Christ Jesus. And furthermore, these unique people will have the boldness and courage to walk in the integrity and excellence that glorifies the Father.

The truth is, we can all answer the call to greatness! Greatness is already present in each of us (in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ). God never moves with the masses or public opinion, He moves according to His Word and through obedient vessels. In **Isaiah 6:8**, the Word of God challenges us directly and individually by saying... **“Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”** Are you a man or woman of God, or are you God’s man or woman?

When you make a quality decision to be God’s man or woman, then you effectively rise above mediocrity and take on the challenge to be “great.” You move away from the shallow end, where the crowds are gathered, and swim out into the deep – where the risks are greater; but where God’s blessings and rewards are abundant.

Here are **seven** things you can do in order to rise above mediocrity and ascend into greatness – making an impact for God:

[1] **Know your destiny and know who you really are in Christ!** In **Judges 6** we find Gideon hiding in the winepress for fear of the enemy. However, an angel called him to greatness right there and then... **“The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour!”** Gideon heard, for the first time, who he really was. In the midst of his insecurities, he was given an *identity bypass operation*. And that’s exactly what many of you need! No one, except God, actually knows who you really are, or what potential you really have. So why not ask Him to show you? Why not look into His word and discover your inherent characteristics (your true nature)? Why not act as if you have the Christ in you?

When Josiah became king, according to **2 Kings 22**, he was only eight years old. Right up until his mid-twenties he wrestled with his identity. He had an identity crisis and lacked the soil in which to cultivate greatness. This man had the worst family tree you can ever imagine.

His grandfather, Manassah, was the most renowned mass murderer of God’s prophets, and his father, Ammon, was a moral sewer rat.

Josiah became king because of an assassination, and therefore, there was no one to mentor him. Yet he became the most powerful and zealous religious reformer in Jewish history. In fact, he did more to remove witchcraft, idols, and cultural sin (in the shortest span of time) than any other king in the Bible. How could this be?

The answer lies in a mysterious prophecy given 355 years before Josiah was born. But it all came together when the desecrated temple in Jerusalem was being renovated. An old book was found and it was delivered to the king. There, contained in this ancient document was his true identity. Josiah read it and the effect was astonishing. It instantly solved his personality crisis, and he discovered his greatness!

Immediately, Josiah tore his clothes, roared like a lion, and went into a frenzy of righteousness [**2 Kings 22**]. This instant vision of greatness drove him to cleanse an entire nation. Once Josiah had clearly seen his destiny and had understood who he really was, he rose to true greatness! Remember, God is the only one who genuinely knows who you are, as He is the chief architect of each individual’s destiny.

[2] Chart a bold and original course! So many of you are too predictable – it's almost embarrassing because most of the time the devil works effortlessly and unhindered in your lives. In order to take back some ground and gain a decisive advantage, you ought to hit the enemy with a whole new direction. And who cares if you never did it this way before! Expect God to tell you to do something totally new (something "fresh," that's right for today). And then, strategize for (and expect) total victory - nothing less! If you are going to get away from that well-worn path and venture out onto the highway of greatness, you must cultivate brave new ideas.

Christians should be the people in society that are least threatened by new ideas, by experimentation and by taking risks. So, write down your vision clearly; crown each sentence with scripture; and making sure that it has the aroma of the extraordinary. If your vision is possible with you then it's probably not of God. God operates in the realm of the impossible, where you must live by faith and not by sight.

[3] Do more – on a broader scale – and not less! The narrower you become, the less you will be able to accomplish. The truth is, more often than not, those who open their hearts to do more actually accomplish more in every area. Jesus said, *whatever measure you use it will be measured to you (Mark 4:24)*. So it's up to you to expand and enlarge your heart. Christianity is a freeing experience that should make us open and receptive to more of God's world, and in so doing, enjoy more of the supernatural. After all, *greatness* reflects the fullness of a glorious life in Christ Jesus.

[4] Choose not to mingle with mediocrity! What you accept or tolerate in your life will influence your destiny. **Proverbs 12:26** says, "***A righteous man should choose his friends carefully.***" You should purpose to hang around with positive inspirational people, and your inner circle should be made up of friends who challenge you to greatness. They should be optimistic people with real integrity who strive for excellence. Pessimists will wear you down, and emotional parasites will eat up your time and deplete your dreams.

[5] Develop tenacity! The difference between winning or losing is simply giving up! All the talent, opportunity and money in the world cannot compete with righteous persistence in the creation of greatness. Always go the extra mile and make the extra effort (when it counts). In you "right now" is the creative power of the Almighty God. When you tap into this power you will always find that little bit extra – that little bit of the super-natural!

[6] Guard your dream! Today's society is designed to enhance and serve the half-hearted, the slothful and the greedy. So don't let the world system threaten your passion, growth and courage. Remember, Jesus said that He has overcome the world! Study your dream closely; polish your vision regularly; and never take your eyes off the eternal prize. And remember to weed out tendencies within and without which may erode your pursuit of excellence. Your greatness is securely contained in your dream and your dream is surrounded by greatness (great ideas and great pursuits).

[7] Never ripen! Always remain enthusiastic, passionate, interested and teachable. Don't just go through the motions in life, be keen to learn and experience more and more. The more experience you gain the quicker your character will grow. Character flourishes in the tests and trials of life, because that's where it was cultivated. Mediocrity looks for the quickest way to retirement, but greatness never does! Great soldiers can't retire or draw back while there is still new territory to occupy. As long as we have breath, the kingdom can always be extended on this earth!

It is about time that Christians, who claim to have such a keen interest in life after death, begin to show some interest in life before death. So remind yourself to; stay involved, stay hungry, and stay excited!

William Shakespeare said, "**Greatness knows itself.**" (Henry 1V, Part 1 -1597). Therefore, to all you GREAT people, I simply say, "**GO!**"