



“Who then is the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”

MATTHEW Chapter 18:1-14

> Let's learn three insights on GREATNESS:

- *How Greatness Begins!*
- *How Greatness is Destroyed!*
- *How Greatness Becomes Great!*

> Greatness insight #1 - (v1-5) HOW GREATNESS BEGINS!

(v1-3) The word "converted" means *changed or turned*. The verb means *to change or turn from one habit of life or set of opinions to another*. It sometimes refers to that great change called *the new birth or regeneration*.

- Peter proclaimed to the people in Acts 3:19-20 - *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; David declared in the Old Testament, Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You. (Ps 51:13)*

(v4) Jesus told the secret to greatness, which is, that we *become as little children* - Children are, to a great extent, destitute of ambition, pride, and haughtiness They are characteristically humble and teachable.

- Jesus also taught in Mark 9:35-37 - *And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."*

- A key phrase is "*whoever humbles himself*" - HUMILITY defined is a freedom from arrogance that grows out of the recognition that all we have and are comes from God.

- The Greek philosophers despised humility because its implied inadequacy, lack of dignity, and worthlessness to them. This is not the meaning of humility as defined by the Bible.

- Jesus is the supreme example of humility (Matt 11:29; Mark 10:45; John 13:4-17; Phil 2:5-8), and He is completely adequate and of infinite dignity and worth.

- Biblical humility is not a belittling of oneself (Matt 6:16-18; Rom 12:3), but an exalting or praising of others, especially God and Christ (John 3:30; Phil 2:3).

- A humble person, then, focuses more on God and others than on himself.

- True humility does not produce pride but gratitude. *Since God is both our Creator and Redeemer, our existence and righteousness depend on Him* (John 15:5; Acts 17:28; Eph 2:8-10). (from Nelson's Bible Dictionary)

(v5) Jesus teaches us to value children, receive children as we receive our Lord.

The word "receive" means *to approve, love, or treat with kindness, to aid in the time of need*.

- Let's turn to Deuteronomy Ch. 6 and observe how we are to love God and bless our children.

> We observe five keys to a Godly life and family:

- Key #1 - (v1-3) We are to FEAR THE LORD!

- Key #2 - (v4-5) We are to LOVE THE LORD!

- Key #3 - (v6-9) We are to TEACH THE LORD!

- Key #4 - (v10-19) We are to SERVE THE LORD!

- Key #5 - (v20-25) We are to BLESS THE LORD!

- Listen, learn, and live what Dorothy Law Norte teaches about nurturing children; she understood the concepts of Christianity when she wrote in 1954,

"Children Learn What They Live!"

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.

If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with jealousy, he learns what envy is.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.

If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with recognition, he learns that it is good to have a goal.

If a child lives with sharing, he learns about generosity.

If a child lives with honesty and fairness, he learns what truth and justice are.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself and in those about him.

If a child lives with friendliness, he learns that the world is a nice place in which to live.

If you live with serenity, your child will live with peace of mind.

With what is your child living?

> Greatness insight #2 - (v6-10) HOW GREATNESS IS DESTROYED!

(v6-7) The word *offense* is *skandalon* in Gk. and originally was "the name of the part of a trap to which the bait is attached, hence, the trap or snare itself."

- In the NT *skandalon* is always used metaphorically, and ordinarily of anything that arouses prejudice, or becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way, apostasy.

(From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

- The offenses against children today, physically, emotionally, sexually, intellectually, and spiritually are greater than ever before. From physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, from pornographers, immoral music artists, to the re-education of children through evolution, humanism, atheism, homosexual and transgender indoctrination; our world has truly offended many an innocent and precious child from the God's righteous ways, the truth of life, and His love, grace, mercy, and yes His judgment.

(v8-10) All must adhere to the warning of the Son of God.

- Regarding verses 8 and 9, have you ever heard a person say, “I just couldn’t control myself.”? Jesus states that there are no excuses for offending, abusing, or despising any of these little ones.

- Regarding the “*cut it off*” or “*plucking*”, Barnes, the Bible Commentator writes, “It cannot be supposed that Christ intended this to be taken literally. His design was to teach that the dearest objects, if they cause us to sin, are to be abandoned; that by all sacrifices and self-denials we must overcome the evil propensities of our nature and resist our wanton imaginations.” If we don’t, we will be cast into *hell fire!*

> *Greatness insight #3 - (v11-14) HOW GREATNESS BECOMES GREAT!*

(v11-12) “*goes astray*” in the Gk. is *planeetheé - to roam (from safety, truth, or virtue).*

Too many children have gone astray from safety, truth, and virtue.

In James 5:19-20 we read, “*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*”

For greatness to become great, we as Christians must protect and provide for our children’s spiritual well-being.

- Parents practicing Deuteronomy Ch. 6 as well as our church providing discipleship from the smallest of children, to Elementary, Junior High, and High School, and College.

- We must continue our various programs for spiritual development, such as Children’s Discipleship on Sunday mornings, our AWANA education on Sunday nights, VBS (Vacation Bible School), plus our *Calvary Chapel Pearl Harbor Christian Academy*(Pre-school to Junior High) our motto and goal is “*Committed to God and Academic excellence!*”

- There is a battle for the hearts and minds of our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. We must fight the good fight of faith for their sakes! We must never give up, nor give in, and God forbid quit!

- Have you answered the call to greatness by being a humble disciple and humbly teaching God’s children?

(v13-14) There is great *REJOICING* when a child or an adult gives their heart to Christ! Notice the “*will of our Father*” is to reach out and SAVE the “*little ones!*”

LET’S GO FOR GOD & BE GREAT IN HIS KINGDOM!