

LEARNING ABOUT GREATNESS

- have you ever stopped to think about what makes a person great?
- who do we look to as our role models and patterns for success?
- to give you some idea, I found this list of "BEST ADVICE GIVEN BY ROLE MODELS"

- Never give in to critics
- Always be proud of who you are
- Be yourself and love yourself
- There will never be a shortcut to success
- Fight for your dreams
- Be loyal and honest
- Readers are leaders
- Set goals and follow them
- You are a product of what you think of yourself
- Facing obstacles makes you stronger
- Believe in yourself
- Always save for tomorrow
- Education is the best legacy
- We are built to learn
- Never give up on your dreams

- it seems like we are aiming for the wrong target
- let's take a fresh look at what Jesus said about greatness

1. (1-5) BECOMING LIKE A CHILD

- what seemed like a legitimate question was really the result of an argument that the disciples were having
- both Mark and Luke tell us that as the group was on their way back to the city of Capernaum, they were arguing about which one of them was the greatest

- remember the events of the previous chapter - the mount of transfiguration, the inability of the disciples to cast out the demon from the boy, Peter miraculously catching a fish with money in its mouth
- go back even earlier to the confession by Peter at Caesarea Philippi

- Jesus called a little child, and the amazing thing was that the child came
 - there must have been something attractive and gentle about Jesus that the child was not afraid to come to Him
 - how do children respond to us - are we open and inviting, or are the little ones afraid to be around us?

- what is Jesus saying when He tells His disciples to change their attitude (that's what the word "converted" implies) and become like a little child?

- think of the attitudes of a young child
 - To be the smallest.
 - To be the least important.
 - To be the simplest.
- even the old Testament mentioned this - [Psalm 131](#)
- become like a child in humility

- Put yourself in this situation. The disciples are standing around in a group arguing over who is the greatest. When a child is put into the mix and the question is asked, “who is the greatest?” who is the least likely person in the group to be called the “greatest”? - the child!

- Gayle Erwin does a great job in describing these characteristics in his book, "The Jesus Style"

- Jesus loved the children, and said if we receive a little child in His Name, it is the same as receiving Him!

- Rich Fuller said it well, "I think that a church's true test of spirituality should not be in whether every one speaks in tongues, or whether or not people raise their hands during the music, but in how they treat the children in the church. I get a little upset on Sundays after the services when I see kids getting ignored by adults or when adults seem to get upset at the presence of kids playing with each other. I think if we took this verse seriously, we would never have trouble filling positions in the Children's Ministry."

- Warren Wiersbe = "The way we treat children (including those who are “children in the faith”) indicates how much humility we practice. Do we receive them (v. [5](#)) or despise them (v. [10](#))? Do we imitate them (vv. [3-4](#)) or cause them to stumble by our bad example (vv. [6-9](#))? It was a sheep, not a lamb, that went astray (vv. [10-14](#))!"

2. [\(6-9\)](#) **THE DANGER OF OFFENDING**

- Jesus is still holding the child, and talks to us about the danger of offending a child

- in fact, He said it would be better to drown in the sea than to offend a child

- what does it mean to "offend?"

- to throw off course, to put a stumbling block in the way, to entice to sin, to cause someone to distrust and desert someone that they should trust and obey
- what does that say about the problem of child abuse
- look at what has happened to our country since we have taken prayer out of our schools

- Jesus pronounces a woe on those who cause the offenses

- we live in a fallen world, and offenses are going to come, but woe to that person who causes someone else to stumble in their faith
- Jon Courson - "'Problems in this world are inevitable. But if people are being derailed in their faith because of your cynicism and unbelief, woe unto you."

- this is not about self-mutilation, but rather taking drastic measures to deal with it

- if we are involved in anything that even hints at sin, especially if it is affecting someone else's walk with the Lord, then deal with it, even if it is hard

3. [\(10-14\)](#) LOVING THE LITTLE ONES

- this is where we get the idea of guardian angels
- Jesus came to save that which was lost - even though this is in the context of greatness and a little child, I think it applies to anyone who with humility acknowledges that their life is in a mess
 - have you made your choice to come to Jesus for salvation
 - don't be one of the "religious righteous" who is blind to their real need
 - remember what Jesus said to the people in Laodicea who thought they were right with God - [Revelation 3.15-17](#).
- Jesus then illustrates what He is talking about by telling them about the lost sheep
 - seeking that one who has gone astray
 - if you have wandered away from the Lord, know that He loves you unconditionally, and is desiring that you would come back to Him
 - what does this say to us about someone who is away from God
 - Jesus is interested in you as an individual
 - remember what he said to the individuals in the church that was lukewarm - [Revelation 3.20](#)
- what is the desire of the Father = that none should perish ([2 Peter 3.9](#))

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