



AIMING FOR TRUE GREATNESS  
*Tony Williams*

What does it mean to raise kids for success?

- Good Citizens?
- Financially independent?
- Help them land a fulfilling job?
- Get married and raise a family?
- Protect them from trouble and keep them out of harm's way?

How do we even determine what success is? Who gets to make that decision?  
Our culture certainly has one set of answers

But how do you define success for your kids with all the competing versions of the good life that are battling for their attention?

When chasing the goals of the world it is so easy to get off course.

Desmond TuTu was once told: A journey of a 1000 miles begins with the first step. He said "No, it begins with the first step in the right direction"

Most parents focus on aiming their children in a future focused on success.

Speaking with parents:

- You're going to invest decades of time
- You're going to spend a ton of money
- You're going to lose months, if not years of sleep
- You're going to cry ponds of tears

What do you hope happens?

- Hope they get a good job
- Hope they marry someone attractive
- Hope they have influence and someone knows who they are.

This is the common answer for those who embrace the "Success Lie".

**We measure success by 4 standards: Wealth, beauty, power and fame.**

It's so easy to take very legitimate parts of a child's life and overprioritize them.

There is nothing wrong with this, but we over prioritize them because we bought into the "Success Lie".

A lot of parents over prioritize education. Education is important, it's just not sovereign or all in all. Many times, it's about education because of the old saying: "Just follow the money". There's nothing wrong with doing well, unless that's what we are over emphasizing.

Over emphasizing education, looks, beauty and sports subject our kids to the ongoing toxic poison of ongoing comparison.

We can sabotage our children's future when we make success the goal of their future rather than an outcome of living a truly great life.

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV) **Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life<sup>[a]</sup>—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.**

If we aim our children at wealth, beauty, power and fame; we set them up for an adulthood that is self-absorbed, unnecessarily complicated and a life where they can't be satisfied.

To raise successful kids, you don't need God's help. You can have kids that want nothing to do with God and they can be successful by the world's definition and standards.

Based on our motives, we may deter our kids from relationships and vocations God has picked out for them because those plans don't fit the standard of the world.

It's not a good idea to aim you kids at that because when you do, you are aiming low.

God's Word encourages us to aim our children at a future of True Greatness.

TRUE GREATNESS: A passionate love for Jesus Christ that shows itself in an unquenchable love and concern for others.

Greatness is about us and our kids, but True Greatness is how God can live through us and how our lives can bring glory to God ultimately making an eternal difference.

Romans 12: 1,2 (ESV) **I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Raising kids to have True Greatness sets them up to have extraordinary adult lives.

The good thing about True Greatness is that all those other things that the world says are important fall into place with the right balance.

Learning to have a life of True Greatness sends our children into the world focused upwards toward God and outward towards others.

Colossians 3:2 (ESV) **Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.**

The future of True Greatness is easier to achieve when we build **FOUR wonderful qualities** into our children's hearts.

When we look at these FOUR tangible things as the measuring stick to True Greatness, it changes everything. It eclipses the world's plan.

4 Wonderful qualities of TRUE GREATNESS: They do so much more for your kids than anything you can do for them.

### 1. A Humble Heart

- A reverence for God and respect for others.

Philippians 2:3,4 (ESV) **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

If you really want to know how to get your heart around Grace, it starts with Humility.

James 4:6 (ESV) **But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**

We want to build humility into our kid's heart. They are not born humble, none of us are but we want to build that into them.

### 2. A Grateful Heart

- An appreciation for what they have been given and who has given it to them.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV) **Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

Even when tough things are happening, and we know God is with us, we know we are never alone.

When we develop that sense of gratefulness in our heart it changes everything.

### 3. A Generous Heart

- Taking great delight in sharing with others what God has entrusted you.

Luke 6:38 (ESV) **Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.**

This is not about financial wealth. He's talking about a generous heart, a generous attitude that when we treat other people like that, it pours back over us.

#### **4. A Servant's Heart**

- A willingness to take action in order to help someone else.

When God has a hold of our heart, we are not "center stage", He is.

When He is center stage, we look through eyes that He looks through. We are totally focused on the needs of others. We are sensitive to others. It's not that we feel sorry for them or pity them, we empathize with them and we put some muscle and sweat behind it.

This changes everything, and God wants us to build these wonderful qualities into our kid's hearts.

You are saying, how do I do this? How do we take these kids who seem to be arrogant, ungrateful, selfish and lazy?

**How do we do this? Actually, it's easy.** It's not hard to build the qualities of humility, gratefulness, generosity and a servant spirit into your kids especially if you do the first thing on my list and I think you know it is:

##### **1. Be examples of True Greatness to your kids.**

They need to see a father who has a humble heart, a grateful heart, a generous heart and a servant's heart.

Living this out, not every once in a while, but this becomes the way we live life.

It's second nature to us and that happens when Jesus is center stage in our life.

When we take it upon ourselves to do that journey with Him and walk with Him and we hand Him our heart.

##### **2. True Greatness becomes the expectation in your home rather than the exception.**

What Pam and I said was, this is all that is going to work with these kids; if they are humble, grateful, generous and have a servant's heart all goes well.

If they fall short of that, if they are arrogant, if they are selfish or they don't want to help or if they are ungrateful or feel entitled, that will always be costly for them.

We wanted them to know that this house is hard wired this way. Not that there's anything good about us, but what a wonderful thing it is about Jesus and what he did for us by buying us on the cross.

### 3. Provide opportunities for your children to experience the lifestyle of True Greatness.

When we have Jesus as the center stage in our lives, when Grace defines our family, it should be better for all the people around us.

Everyone benefits around us, not because we are better but because Jesus' heart is seen in this family.

- At school, it should be better for the teacher and the other's in class because your child has these wonderful qualities
- At work, it's better for everyone. You are so focused on God that other's lives are benefitted.

That's what True Greatness is about. You focus so much on 'God that you are sensitive outward. You are raising the value of others around you.

### 4. Valuing and praising our children's efforts at True Greatness.

Why should we applaud our kids when they are doing what they are supposed to be doing anyway?

I don't want to be a name-dropper but Jesus looks forward to welcoming us and with those nail scarred hands applauding us and saying "Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant".

Aiming children to True Greatness in the environment of a Grace filled home automatically brings the best out of them.

Here is a laundry list of the benefits for your kids experiencing True Greatness:

- It will curb sibling rivalry
- It will empower kids to focus better in school
- It will incline them to have better friends
- It prepares them to deal with difficult people
- It gives children more respect for leadership and authority, especially yours
- It helps kids respond more positively toward correction, especially yours
- It sets them up to be greater assets in the future.

Neal Postman said: "Children are a gift to a time we will not see."

Aiming our kids to True Greatness prepares them to answer the 3 biggest questions they will ever face in life:

#### 1. What is my MISSION in life going to be?

What am I going to do with what God has given me to work with?

Colossians 3:17 (ESV) **And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

We are setting them up to be marketable in society. The marketplace is hungry for people who are humble, grateful, generous and servant hearted.

They would much rather have that than the intellectual prowess and skill set.

A commitment to True Greatness frees children up to pursue God's plan for their life rather than the world's.

It's easier to make a living when they are making it with God's perspective.

True Greatness makes them a better steward of their money.

If the Lord leads them to a vocation that isn't financially rewarding they can live an extraordinary life and enjoy contentment regardless of their financial position.

Illustration: parents doing the drug: Wealth, beauty, power and fame and their son as an intern found that God was leading him to be a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. There was a great immediate implosion.

Real significance is not wrapped up in status, money and influence.

## **2. Who is my MATE going to be?**

Good news! Truly Great kids tend to fall in love with Truly Great kids.

It is said that when you are married you are either doubled or halved on your wedding day. Truly Great kids are quadrupled.

Think of the benefits of humility, gratefulness, generosity and a servant's heart would bring to a marriage.

This is a wonderful wedding gift to build them up this way.

## **3. Who is my MASTER going to be?**

On Bob Dylan's album, Slow Train there is a song and the first verse and chorus goes like this...

You may be an ambassador to England or France  
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance  
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world  
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes  
Indeed you're gonna have to serve somebody  
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord  
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

C.S. Lewis put it this way: "If you aim at heaven, you'll get earth thrown in, but you aim at earth and you'll get neither."

When our children take God to be Master of their lives the other two questions of mission and mate will be answered well.

**Listen Men...** We have a chance to let God own our life and when He does we can take this role of Dad and take kids with all kinds of issues and help them win a life of TRUE GREATNESS.

Table time discussion:

1. How can we avoid the success trap?
2. What is the toxic poison of comparison?
3. What is the nuance between greatness and success?
4. Should we raise our kids in a bubble? Should we raise "Safe Kids". God has called us to raise strong kids, not safe kids.

