

Do Something Great With Your Life

Session 1: The Possibility of Greatness

Edited Transcript

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... We believe each man, and this is good for our group too, we believe each man brings something to the table and helps each other become sharper by sharing experiences and knowledge, so I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, and rousing, Man In The Mirror welcome to Iron Sharpens Iron. One, two, three. Hoorah! Welcome, guys. We're glad to have you with us.

I think instead of doing two hoorahs, it kind of takes away from the first one, I think we'll just give a shout out without the hoorah from now on to the Man In The Mirror area director. Today, that will go to Clark Miller, who is a regional director and an area director for the Mid Atlantic region. He's in the Dayton, Ohio area. Clark says, "I started discipling youth, then as a pastor turned my attention to church leaders knowing that as I discipled leaders, they would disciple their families and other men. I see discipling men as the foundation for the next revival," and so we want to give Clark a shout out. Would you join me in just doing that with a hand clap?

Maybe we should start doing hoorahs again. All right, let's do it. One, two, three. Hoorah! Welcome. Clark, we are glad that you're out there reaching men and discipling leaders. All right, so we're going to start a new series this morning called **Do Something Great With Your Life**. One of my favorite quotes, one that is taped to my bible, which I'm sure I have repeated it here 20 times over the years, is from Hudson Taylor, and he says, "Many Christians estimate difficulties in light of their own resources, and thus attempt little, and often fail, at the little they do attempt. All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on his power and presence being with them."

Who doesn't want to do something great with their life? All of us, it's just part of our design that we want to make a difference, we want to leave the world a better place. We want to feel like we're part of something that's going somewhere. So, since this is a bible study, let's see what the scriptures, let's see what Jesus has to say about doing something great with your life.

For that, we're going to begin at John chapter 14, verse 12. By the way, I am so excited. I mentioned here last year I was going to get a new bible. I've been using the bible that my wife and children gave to me as a gift in the month that we started this bible study 33 years ago. Well, how many of you are driving a 33-year-old car? It's analog baby, it's analog. So, if you went out and bought a new car today, they're smart. They have blind spot little blinkers, they have lane-assist warnings, they're fantastic. So, I have the equivalent of the new smart car.

I bought a new bible, and I am so excited. It's called the NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible. Look at the size of that sucker. Look how big that bible is! I was so impressed I decided I was going to weigh it, so I weighed myself, and then I weighed myself with the bible. Guess how much this bible weighs. Four pounds! I have a four-pound bible. Oh, my goodness. Anyway, I'm so excited about this bible. The problem is, is that you get this new smart car and then you have to take a five-hour seminar to learn

how to use it, right? So, I'm still kind of getting used to how this thing works. You'll have to forgive me if I make a few hiccups here.

John chapter 14, verse 12. So, the scene here is that Jesus has washed the disciples feet, they've participated together as a community in the last supper, and then Jesus in chapters 14, 15, 16, and 17 is talking about all these beautiful things. He says in verse 12, he says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father." Let's read that again. "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father."

Is there anybody in the room who understands that? It's one of the mysterious texts in the bible. Well, it does have an explanation and I'm going to explain that to you because God wants you to do something great with your life. That's what this text says. For you to do something great with your life is part of the plan. For you to do something great with your life is part of the plan. Read it again. "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me," that's faith. The same word that translates "faith". "I tell you, whoever has faith in me will do the works I have been doing." Now, who is Jesus talking to?

He's not talking to you. He's talking to us. It's an "us." It's a plural. Some of your versions might say, "He" but it's plural. It's the plural, okay? "Very truly I tell you," those of us who believe in him will do the works he has been doing. Well, this could not possibly mean that you are going to raise Lazarus from the dead, that you are going to walk on water, that you are going to feed 5000, and many other things, right? We'll come back to that in a moment. But he not only says that, he says, "And they will do even greater things than these, even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS: "YOU WILL DO GREATER THINGS"

So, our first rubric here today, first of all the title of the talk today is The Possibility of Greatness, and the place to start is the teachings of Jesus, you will do greater things. This text needs to be understood in the context of the arc in the life and ministry, and teachings, of Jesus. So Jesus task, when he came to earth, was not to complete but to inaugurate the kingdom of God.

So, his role is inauguration. It was never part of Jesus's plan that he would complete total global conquest by the time he was crucified and resurrected. Rather, it was his plan from the beginning that he would gather a group of us and he would build into our lives his teachings. He would correct us where we were wrong, he would exhort us, he would believe in us, like a loving father he would always want the best for us, he would always think the best of us, and when the flesh bubbled up he would rebuke it, he would correct it, but always did that in the context of a loving parent, never as somebody wanting to crush you because you didn't understand what I said. He would not be a hater on Facebook, okay?

Now, when we think about doing great works, even greater things, one thing to understand about this is that the works that Jesus did telling a paralyzed man to pick up your mat and walk, that healing, Jesus does not consider that the greater of his ministry. He considers that a secondary thing. In fact, when ... And that particular illustration, Matthew chapter nine, Jesus says to that man, "Your sins are forgiven," because that's his ministry. Then, there was grumbling and so forth, and he said to the people, he said,

"Well, just so you know that I have the power to do this, take up your mat and walk," and the guy was healed and got up and walked, but that was the lesser, or the secondary thing.

The works were never the end. The works, Jesus said in his own words that he did these works to give authentication to his ministry. The real ministry is, "Your sins are forgiven. You will live for me with ever." The arc of the ministry of Jesus began and continues today, and the arc of the product of his ministry was not a healing that might last 10 or 20 years until the person died anyway. The arc of his ministry was eternal life, eternal life. So when Jesus says you're going to do greater things, what he's talking about are greater things. The things that he commissioned us to do, the disciples to do, was to go and make disciples to build his kingdom.

Now, we will do ... There are people doing, out of us, there are works like Jesus was doing happening here, there, and around the world. Miraculous works are happening. We don't hear as much about them. Some of you do because you travel abroad and so forth, but we've had miracles, we've had actual miracles take place here in this group. I remember one day, our former administrator, Jim [Siebert], brought me the test results for his cancer test. He had cancer. Let me tell you, buddy, he just had cancer. Then, we all prayed. A few months later, he went back, and he brought me the other test. No cancer, just like that.

So there are these things begin done, but again, understand that they're signs. They're signs to the real work of Jesus. They're not really the work, so that's important to understand. We have, number one, to understand that it's plural. It's not that you are going to do greater work. It's that we are going to do greater works. Together, we're going to do greater works. Then, Matthew chapter 11, verse 11, Jesus says, "Among all the people who have been born of a woman, none is greater than John the Baptist." Now, why did he say that?

Well, John the Baptist, of all the prophets, he's the one that actually saw Jesus. All the others saw a vision of Jesus. He actually saw Jesus. He got to be the consummation, he did the consummation of all the work of all the prophets of all time. John was the greatest human of all ... But Jesus went on to say, "But even the least person in the kingdom of God is greater than John." So, what Jesus is doing is saying humanity, we have humanity, and we have greatness there, but even the least person in the kingdom of God is greater than John.

So, greatness, this is a different teaching on greatness that you would get if you went to a ... Well, I don't mean to ... This is not a disparaging comment, but if you went to a Tony Robbins seminar and learned about greatness, it would be a different seminar. If you went to the Pharisee's seminar on how to be great, you would get a different teaching. This is a bible study, a Christian bible study, and so the teaching we get here is the teaching of Jesus about what it means to be great. Jesus says, ""Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing," as a group, it's a 'we', "And they will do even greater things than these," even the least person in the kingdom of God is greater than the greatest human that ever lived, John the Baptist, "Because I am going to the Father."

The final piece here is "Because I am going to the Father." Why do we do greater things? We do greater things because Jesus went to the Father and Jesus said, "Unless I go to the Father, the Spirit will not come, but when I go to the Father, I will send you the Holy Spirit." So, we are able to do greater things because he has gone to the Father, and we have the Holy Spirit. Later in that chapter, John 14:26, one of my favorite verses, "But the advocate," or the counselor, "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you."

So, we have the Holy Spirit teaching us all things and reminding us everything Jesus said anyway. We have the power of God, so when Hudson Taylor says that all God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on his power and presence being with them, it's because they reckoned on the power of the Holy Spirit. They reckoned on the Father sending Jesus. I just knocked something out here. I seem to do that from time to time. All right, so now the question becomes, do you believe this? Do you believe that whoever believes in Jesus will do the works that he has been doing, and even greater things, because he has gone to the Father? Do you believe that?

Now, the reason there's not much sense in going a lot further, because if you don't believe that, nothing else I say or you read will make much difference, because belief determines what? Behavior. Belief determines behavior. We say that all the time. Belief determines behavior, so if we don't believe this, then we have no possibility of entering into the greatness, the possibility of greatness, that's the topic of the day, we have no possibility of entering into the greatness that Jesus has for us if we are not believing in the possibility as presented in the scriptures.

Now, I'm going to give you some grace because Jesus gave the disciples some grace. So, the arc of the ministry of Jesus's work with the disciples over three and a half years, the short arc, was that he took men, and there were women traveling with him too, the 12 were all men, Jesus took, and this is who he's addressing in this particular passage, Jesus took a group of men in whom he saw potential, but who needed to be trained and brought into a different way, a different mindset, they needed to be brought into the mindset of greatness. That's going to be the second thing we talk about.

When Jesus was in the upper room, you know that he washed their feet and he said, "I have set an example for you to follow." This was at the end of his ministry. This was right before he did this text that we are looking at. You back up a little bit into kind of like the middle of the ministry, and then there's another scene there where the mother of the sons of Zebedee comes to Jesus with a request. We'll talk about that. Then, you go all the way back into the early part of the ministry in Galilee, and you see this story in Mark chapter nine where there's this demon possessed boy. He's throwing himself on the ground and convulsing, and the father said, "Jesus, can you do something?"

The disciples couldn't heal him, so Jesus is recruiting these disciples to do the works that he's been doing, and even greater things, but early on they could not do what Jesus was doing. The father said, he said to the father, he said something about faith and the father says, "Well, I believe. Help. Help me with my unbelief. I believe. Help. Help me with my unbelief." Then, Jesus healed him, and then later, the disciples, they said, "Why couldn't we do that?" He said, "This kind only comes out with prayer and fasting." Then, you know the next thing the disciples did? They had just tried to do the works of Jesus, and they had failed. You know what the next thing they did was? They argued about who was the greatest among them. They argued about the greatest among them.

Let's turn to Mark chapter nine, and give me a minute with my new bible because I used to just open it and it would almost fall to the right place. Mark chapter nine verse 33, so after this little incident, they come to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road? What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way, they had argued about who was the greatest. These are the guys that couldn't do the work, but they still wanted to know who was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the 12 and said, "Anyone who wants to be the first, anyone who wants to be the first must be the very last and the servant of all." So then, in the second story that I mentioned, and

by the way that's in Matthew chapter 20 if you want to turn there, Matthew chapter 20, and this is the story of the mother of the sons of Zebedee coming to Jesus and asking that her two sons might be able to sit, one at the right hand of Jesus and one at the left hand. So hey, they want the first spots, right? In verse 26, yeah and verse 24 would be a good place to start, so when the 10 heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

Jesus called them together and said, "You know the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them, and the high officials exercise authority over them. This is not the Pharisee seminar. I'm the Jesus seminar." So, he provides the correction, "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great must also be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave. Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." So now you have a second example of the disciples being corrected, and Jesus telling them the Jesus way of greatness. Then, the third example in Acts ... Let's see, it would be John chapter 13, verse 15, Jesus does this washing of the feet and he says, "I have given you an example for you to follow."

Then they celebrate the breaking of the bread and the wine, and then, once again, the disciples, an argument breaks out about who is the greatest. That is found in Luke chapter 22, Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22, and let's look at verse four. 24, verse 24. So, a dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Don't you love these guys? I mean, it's great. Jesus said the kings of the Gentiles lorded over them, like he did before in verse 26, "But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one that serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

How do we boil all this down if we want to know the pathway to greatness? Well, here's the Big Idea for today, and it's pretty simple. I wanted it to be simple. I had more profound ways of saying this. Actually, I did not have more profound ... This is the most profound way to talk about the possibility of greatness. Are you ready? The way up is down. **The Big Idea today, the way up is down.** That's what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying, "Follow my example." So, do you believe this, that this is in fact the path to greatness? Do you believe it, and do you believe that doing greater things is possible? Again, because belief determines behavior.

Hey, so one day I was looking ... I live not too far from here, and one day I was looking at two buildings along I-4, and I just had this image pop into my mind of what would happen if I was standing on the top of one of those buildings and it was engulfed in fire, and the flames were licking the outside of the building, and they were getting higher and higher and higher and higher and higher on the building, and I was on the top of the building? But there was another building over there, and it was about 15 feet away. The gap between the two buildings was about 15 feet.

Well, I don't think I've ever been able to jump 15 feet, but I think on that particular day, I would be willing to at least give it a try. I would believe at least in the possibility, I would at least believe in the possibility of making the leap. But the two buildings that I was looking at that day, on that particular day, they were 100 yards apart. So if I was standing at the top of a building that was on fire and I saw another building 100 yards away, I would not have belief that would influence my behavior any particular way. But for us, this text should not be, hopefully, that far away from where your belief system already is.

I hope that you can see yourself, "Oh, I'm already there," number one, or, "Oh, all I need to do is step from where I am to there," or "It's just a little hop," or "Maybe I just can jump," or "Maybe I need to get

a running start, but I can get there from here," and that to achieve this greatness that Jesus is talking about is to go down. It's to follow his example.

THE MINDSET OF GREATNESS IN ACTION

Now, the mindset of greatness in action, I'm just going to read these off. I spent my time on this. You're going to do greater things, this is the mindset. You being "us", we are going to do, we will do greater things. Whoever wants to be great among us must be the servant of the others. We're going to follow the example of Jesus because he is the one, he is one who is among us as one who serves.

So that's it. Again, the way up is down, and then finally I just want us to cover this.

THE FIRST STEP TO EVERY GREAT OUTCOME IS TO IMAGINE ITS POSSIBILITY

The first step to every great outcome is to imagine its possibility. I said some things about this in the blurb that I sent out. How many of you get the blurb in the email on Thursdays? How many of you see that? Most of you do. The first step to every great outcome is to imagine its possibility, so just imagine what kind of great outcome would make you feel like you were doing something great for God. For example, imagine what it would look like in this community if no child went to school hungry, no inmate didn't know about the love of Jesus, no homeless person had to sleep in the cold, and no man was without a job by which he could provide for his family.

Did you know that right here in our community ... There may be other places. I'm thinking in my mind right now of Bithlo because one of our table leaders is involved in doing some ministry at Bithlo. There is an entire community here in our city where almost no one has electricity. They live without electricity, and within two miles of this community are some of the most beautiful homes in Central Florida. The first step to every great outcome is to imagine its possibilities. It's just imagine some great possibility.

We have in our midst a man who in the 1980s was part of a crime family. They were the crime family that owned the cocaine distribution business in Central Florida, and he was one of the drug kingpins in this. This man literally made millions of dollars every year. He told me that there were weeks where in just a single week he would make a half a million dollars in the cocaine trade, and everything that came along with that, women, lots of women, fast cars. He and his girlfriend had his and hers 442s, that 1970 muscle car. He had a fleet of a dozen cars that would constantly traffic between here and Miami to pick up cocaine to bring it up here, and then they would cut it.

The newspaper article when the ring got busted said that I think they would cut the cocaine, and they would be able to get \$300,000.00 for a pound of cocaine by the time they cut it all up. It was a money machine, but this man who is here this morning got caught up using his own product and became a hardcore cocaine addict. Even though ... He went from spending \$1200 a day on limousines in big bar bills, and women on both arms, into a hardcore addiction to cocaine and lost everything, and woke up in a daze one morning under the 408 wondering what had happened to his life. He spent the next little while being homeless. Then, God intervened in his life, and then God intervened in his life.

Today, he is the Chairman of the Board and the Director of Foundation For Life Ministries, which is a 20-bed residential care facility for people suffering with addictions to drug and alcohol. He also is out of the Foundations For Life building, has launched now a food ministry, and so this week, this man right here in

the yellow shirt, Jim Long, former drug kingpin of our city, was delivering 3000 pounds of food and happened to run into one of his old drug buddies. He said, "Jimmy Long, how is this possible, going from one of the biggest drug traffickers of the 1980s to now one of the biggest food traffickers in our city?" It's because Jesus has said it doesn't make any difference where you've been or what you've done, God wants to use ordinary men to do extraordinary things. The way we take advantage of that is by going down. The way up is the way down. It's to be the servant of all. Let's pray.

Our dearest Father, thank you for your scriptures. Thank you that while the meanings often look opaque or translucent that you had a message for us, and we can access that message. And when we believe it, it can transform us. I pray, Lord, that as we each consider the prospect, the possibility of greatness, of doing something great with our lives, and many of us already are, that you would remind us of this simple admonition to follow your example, that you did not come to be served but to serve and that the way up is down. We ask this is your name, Jesus, Amen.