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GREATNESS



Understanding the Power of Persevering



N. DUNCAN WILLIAMS

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The Price of Greatness

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About the book

Behind every great victory or major achievement, someone has paid a price. Greatness has many admirers and fans, but few ever produce physical, emotional and spiritual currency to obtain their own personal greatness. Archbishop Duncan-Williams challenges everyone to get off sidelines of mediocrity and failure and enter the arena of greatness in their fields of influence. He defines greatness and the process of training, studying, praying and persevering to reach it.

Introduction

TRUE GREATNESS

The lust for power, money and sex has dominated our world since time immemorial. This lust has often generated unhealthy competition amongst friends, families and co-laborers of Christ. People sacrifice one another in any form in order to attain what they desire.

It is commonly believed that anyone who possesses more power and money is great. Jesus, however, said that a man's life does not consist of the abundance of things he possesses (Luke 12: 15). John the Baptist possessed no earthly goods and yet Jesus described him as the greatest man of his day (Matt. 11:11).

Our value as Christians have changed so much that sometimes we get confused about how we set our priorities right. When I received the call into ministry decades ago, greatness was not the issue at stake. Obedience and faithfulness to one's call was what mattered most. Fame, financial prosperity and influence come with greatness, but we must realize that handling these successfully is more difficult than obtaining them.

Greatness comes from God. He told Abraham that He would make his name great. God confers greatness on people through His own sovereign act. Two people may possess the same wealth and exert the same authority and yet one would be greater than the other.

The disciples of Jesus once asked Him of the greatest person in the Kingdom of God. Jesus answered the question in a most fascinating manner. He called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them. He then stated that unless one is converted and becomes a little child, one

cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 18: 1). Jesus, in other words, was describing greatness as follows:

1. God must establish the great man. Jesus set the child in the midst of the people. Don't seek to establish yourself in your own strength and wisdom.

2. Jesus associated greatness with conversion. A change of heart, change of life, change of motives and a change of attitude is the beginning of greatness.

3. Thirdly, Jesus spoke about greatness within the context of the Kingdom of God. Greatness can only be attained through Kingdom Principles and it must be dedicated to the promotion of God's Kingdom.

There is a way to know if your greatness comes from God. Greatness, which comes from God, gives the glory of the greatness back to Him. That kind of greatness submits to God and also channels all its benefits into the kingdom of God. The greatness of the world is, however, squandered in the pleasures of this world. This book seeks to lead you along the paths of true greatness. You will discover how to receive greatness and give glory to God with it.

Chapter One

THE PURPOSE OF GREATNESS

The purpose of greatness is to give others a raise. Do not ever use your greatness to suppress other people. A man can be so busy chasing after greatness that he has no time to help anyone else. It is very easy to be addicted to greatness. The fear of losing it keeps people bound to things they must do in order to remain great.

When one assumes a status of greatness, one must continually seek people to mentor. The opposite is often the case; we seek whom we can control with our greatness.

David, after being persecuted by Saul for years, finally ascended unto the throne as king of Israel. It was natural for Him to have harassed the family of Saul, who was dead. However, he began to seek a member of Saul's family, whom he could bless. The Bible states *“and the king said, is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell in his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shall eat bread at my table continually.”* (1 Samuel 9: 3, 6 – 7)

David sought someone he could bless. Most people would have sought to eliminate every family member of Saul for fear that those family members might undermine their leadership.

True greatness never feels insecure. Greatness must be used as a tool to enhance the development of other people; it must not be used as a lethal weapon to destroy others. David was kind to Mephibosheth. He restored his father's land to him and extended to him a hand of fellowship.

In order for greatness to be a blessing to people, it must seek others. The weak and needy must not come knocking on our doors for help; we must seek them and raise them up. Greatness must be transparent enough and approachable enough for others to benefit from it. David shared his table with Mephibosheth. Sometimes our success is shrouded in mystery so much that instead of encouraging others it rather discourages them.

Most successful people would readily show you their strengths but not their weakness. You never see their moments of fear and anxiety. This makes it impossible for you to accomplish much because you quickly condemn yourself and give up when moments of fear come in.

You do not know that great people experience exactly what you experience. The difference is that they have learnt to move on in spite of their fears. Elijah, the great 'fire prophet', had his moment of fear. James shows us that '*Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*' (James 5:7) You must not tell your followers all your failures and weaknesses all the time but it is also wrong to hide everything from them. There are many uncomfortable things you are likely to go through when you want to help others with your greatness. Some of the people really don't want to be helped. They make no personal effort to rise. They are content with crumbs from under the table.

There may be others who have bad attitudes and character traits that will wage war against every input you make in them. Elisha could not help

Gehazi. Gehazi preferred being a thief to being a chief. He preferred being a liar to being a leader.

The great man may also come across people who are not satisfied with anything else than what the great man has. They will use every foul means to attract recognition, a measure of grace to break through and even a dimension of your spiritual gifts.

In spite of these problems, a great man must make himself accessible to everyone. John the Baptist stood the risk of losing his followers and yet he introduced Jesus as being greater than himself. He said Jesus 'must increase, but I must decrease.'

This position of John the Baptist did not hinder him from being great. Jesus Christ later asserted that John the Baptist was greater than all the men born in his time.

Chapter Two

MENTORS / POINT OF REFERENCE

We know that God is the source of all true greatness. It is very interesting to hear people say that they received Christ all by themselves; others also say they received the Holy Ghost baptism all by themselves – no one laid hands on them. There is yet another group of people who insist that they have no mentors in the ministry. Nobody trained them. The Holy Ghost trained them.

People say these things to add to the power of their testimonies. I don't dispute that such direct encounters between God and men do exist. Nevertheless, such experiences are not superior to instances where God used men to raise and to reach others.

Peter was invited by his brother Andrew to meet Jesus, yet he (Peter) became the leader of the apostles. Elijah raised Elisha and yet the latter had the double portion of Elijah's anointing. Solomon enlightens us that *'iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.'* (Proverbs 27: 17).

Every great man must have a human point of reference (mentor). When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus for the water which satisfied, Jesus asked her to go and bring her husband. Jesus wanted a point of reference: *'Jesus said unto her, Go call thy husband and come hither'* (John 4: 16).

There are spiritual heights you cannot attain unless you have a mentor. Lone rangers don't thrive too well spiritually. The mentor could be the one who led us to Christ, someone who laid hands on us to receive the Holy Spirit baptism, someone who taught us in Sunday School and someone

who introduced us into the ministry and trained us. God will not directly do all these things in the life of a person without the use of a human instrument.

One cannot be mentored properly by reading a book, watching a videotape, or listening to an audiotape. There has to be a physical contact and intimacy.

I have never failed to keep my humble beginnings in proper perspective. Beloved, I owe it all to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who makes all the difference in my life. I have never forgotten the circumstances through which I lost my three fingers and my close shave with death. I have never forgotten how God used an Indian woman by the name of Mrs. Rajj to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to me. I have never forgotten how God used the Acquah sisters, at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital to invite me to the Church of Pentecost where I graciously received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Beloved, I have never forgotten how I used to walk several kilometers every day to church and back. There are several points of references in my life, and each time I think about them, I am reminded of how faithful God is.

None of us knows what the future holds, but we can call upon God for his direction into the future. We all have plans and purposes that we desire to attain. To attain greatness, we have to experience more or less what the great men of old like Moses, Joseph, Isaac, David, Daniel, Job, Peter and Paul experienced. We have to be tried and tested. One has to go through the wilderness experience and succeed to have points of reference.

Remember, if others have made it, so can you. God will not directly do all these things without the use of a human instrument.

Through men like Archbishop Benson Idahosa of blessed memory, I obtained scholarship to attend Bible School in Benin City, Nigeria. Through Archbishop Benson Idahosa, my life in ministry was streamlined. Through him, God opened great doors of ministry to me worldwide. Today, by the grace of God, I have ministered and am still ministering to countless numbers of people across the continents of the world, bearing the good news to them that Jesus saves.

Paul, the apostle, had a spectacular encounter with Jesus in his conversion to the Lord. This notwithstanding, Jesus did not lay hands on him to receive the Holy Ghost. Jesus used Ananias to do this. Again the Holy Spirit used Barnabas to introduce Paul to the believers in Jerusalem. It is worth noting that John the Baptist was the point of reference of Jesus. No matter how great one is, one cannot introduce himself to the world. This is the proper way to do it: *“and Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”* (Matt. 2: 15)

To have a mentor is not only proper but it is also righteous. It is proper because that is the only way by which one can really prosper. It is righteous because it is the only way by which we can remain successful.

Having a point of reference is an incentive to ministry. It is easier to build upon the hard-earned reputation, integrity and testimony of a distinguished minister or ministry than to struggle on our own to make an impression. A positive word of testimony from some distinguished ministers can open doors for us easily. What a minister may struggle to attain in ten years could be attained in just one year if he knows to use his point of reference appropriately.

The point of reference is also important because it defines a certain code of ethics within which to operate. The apostle Paul drew the attention of the Philippian believers to the need to follow the pattern set by the point of reference. He said *'those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.'* (Philippians 4:9) This means that having a point of reference is more than carrying a membership or ordination certificate around. If a man hangs loosely and carelessly around a great minister or ministry and learns nothing, he has no point of reference. Those who are privileged by God to be a point of reference must also be careful about what they pass on to the people they mentor, in terms of teaching and conduct. To be a point of reference is no easy matter. The judgment of God on the point of reference is greater than that of the students: *'my brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.'* (James 3:1)

Mentors don't only teach people what to do; they also teach people how to live. It is easy to go astray when one has no point of reference. If people know your roots, they will readily see where and when you are going astray because they have a yardstick with which to measure you. If people cannot trace where you come from, they cannot predict where you are going either. This explains why people who suddenly appear successful vanish in the same manner.

Mentors protect us from attacks because they will always stand with us. There are several forces of destruction which our contemporaries many not be able to stand through with us. Therefore, our friends are not likely to be passionately committed to our interests. Our mentors are a testimony of what God has been able to do in our lives.

Jesus was born in a manger, a place so undignified for the Son of God, yet this did not change who He was or what He came to the world to do.

Joseph became a slave, a jailbird and a servant in the palace, and yet he did not allow the trials he faced to jeopardize his faith in God who had delivered him and set him where he was. David rose from being a shepherd boy in the bush tending his father's sheep to become the king of Israel.

It is also irresponsible to neglect souls placed in your care, you must understand that God expects you to be a mentor to help mould their lives into what it should be. It is an opportunity God gives, an act of His grace and you must receive it with gratitude. John said of Jesus "*and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.*" (1 John 1:16)

We must be careful not to betray or show ingratitude to our mentors. I remember an incident, years ago, when I fell out with Archbishop Benson Idahosa of blessed memory, a man whom I owe so much to, in ministry. For a couple of years, I felt I could do it all by myself. Doors of opportunity were opening for me. I could perceive that the future was bright. I could make it without the help of the Archbishop. What even kept me going in this direction was the fact that some colleagues, at the time, were of the opinion that we did not need to have anything to do with this great man of God.

We were self-made. The truth was that my colleagues did not understand him, neither did they know him intimately, nor did they want to be associated with him. The opinion at that time was that an association with this mad of God meant that one was going to receive an impartation as well as his weaknesses. Their opinion was projected to me, and in order to be in the good books of men, I bought it.

I was wrong. If this opinion was true, then, the great men of God in the scriptures would have imparted to the recipients of their mantles, both their strengths and weaknesses. What was imparted was the gift of God, which passed through a human instrument, not the weaknesses of men. Moses laid hands on Joshua in Deuteronomy 34:9 and the spirit of wisdom came upon him to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Moses saw the Promised Land, but did not enter it; had his weakness been transferred to Joshua by association and the laying on of hands, it would have been a different story all together. In fact, Joshua, may not have also entered the promised land! The full account of Joshua's exploits and how the Lord used him, can be read in the book of Joshua. Joshua's point of reference was Moses. Elijah the Tishbite was Elisha's, son of Shaphat's, mentor. He inherited a double portion of Elija's anointing but not his weakness. Timothy's point of reference was Paul the apostle. Who is your point of reference? Who are you? Who begat you? Are you self made and thus have no point of reference? Be careful! You cannot be a mentor if you don't have a mentor.

As I mentioned earlier, at the time, I received blessings from many quarters. That not withstanding, I went through the most difficult time as a minister of the Word of God. By the time I realized how unwise I had been, a lot of things had gone wrong for me. I, humbly, patched up things with the Archbishop and in no time I had this revelation that one must never undermine or be ungrateful to his or her point of reference.

It is biblical for us also to bless our mentors through prayer, ministry and even material gifts. Those who sow spiritual things in our lives deserves to reap material gifts from us (Romans 15:27). If you can understand this, the blessings you will walk in will be unimaginable. For Timothy, Paul's

blessing was ‘may God, our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord show you kindness and mercy and give you great peace of heart and mind’. May this also, be your portion as you seek to honour your mentor.

Chapter Three

THE TEST OF GREATNESS

The world assesses a man's greatness by the wealth he possesses and the power he wields. Earthly goods may accompany greatness but they do not by themselves prove greatness. The test for greatness is not in how much wealth and power one possesses but in how much temptations and trials he can endure.

Our Lord Jesus is the perfect example of greatness. His greatness is plainly attributed to His power of endurance. We are supposed to follow His example. Achievements will be subjected to severe tests and if one has no endurance, all that he has built will crumble: *“wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”*. (Hebrews 12: 1-2)

We can only conclude that someone is great when he finishes his course successfully. Finishing a course, however, requires great endurance. Jesus, through the Son of God, learnt obedience through the many things He suffered. ***We cannot escape the need for endurance.*** Moses, the great leader, endured several incidences of hardship. An example was Moses who *“by faith forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”* (Heb. 11: 27)

The ultimate end of a great man is to see Jesus at the resurrection of the dead. To gain the whole world and lose one's souls is vanity. Jesus talked

about two men who built houses. One built his house upon a rock and the other built his house upon the sand. Both builders finished building. They both appeared great. Both projects appeared successful until the moment of test came. The Bible says that ‘the rain descended, and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon houses’. The houses were subjected to severe test.

The house, which was built upon the rock, did not collapse because it was built upon the rock. The other house fell because it was built upon the sand. Let us analyze the situation briefly. The one who built upon the rock was likely to have made slower progress. He had to work harder. He had to spend a lot of money breaking the rock at various points in order to make way for the foundation. Someone who intends to build upon a rock also requires the professional assistance of engineers and architects. There are no shortcuts in life.

Achievements are always subject to tests. Unforeseen circumstances often come, again and again, when we have worked within the space of many years. If we do not build according to biblically sound principles, our works will collapse. It is wrong to attain greatness at the expense of another person. There are many ambitious people in who will sacrifice their friends and brethren in the Lord in order to gain an advantage. It is not wise to claim greatness when one has not been tested. You will soon realize that it is not easy to sustain, maintain and retain greatness, as it is, just to acquire things. “*..And the king of Israel answered and said ‘Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off’.* (1 Kings 7:11). The harness means the armour. One who is about to go to war must not boast as if he has been to the battlefield and won a war. Human authorities may mount resistance against a great man.

There may be disappointing circumstances. The devil will frustrate people who are achieving. What would you do about accusation, blackmail, jealousy and rejection especially from people you consider close to you? People will criticize what the great man does, out of jealousy and, at the same time seek to do the same things.

Opposition will necessarily come against a great man because many people are resistant to changes in their lives. Great people are devoted to charting new paths and establishing fresh ways of thinking. They will not compromise even when they are confronted. I have endured many things by prayer. Greatness does not come to just anybody. Only people who are prepared to go the full distance can attain greatness.

Abraham Lincoln, the great US Republican statesman, the 16th president of the United States of America, whose fame rests on the success in saving the Union in the Civil War and on his emancipation of slaves, was not ashamed of his humble beginnings; neither did he let his identity stifle his desire to succeed in life. He went through the mill to pay the price to become one of history's greatest men.

At age twenty two, he set up a business, but it failed. When he was twenty three, he ran for legislature and lost. Two years after failing to set up a business, he tried again to set up another business and it also failed. He did not let these become stumbling blocks to his desire to succeed. At age twenty five, two years after being defeated in his run for legislature, he tried again and this time was elected. At twenty six, when he began to come into the limelight, he lost his sweetheart with whom he was going to share his success in the legislature. He had a nervous breakdown by the age of twenty-seven.

When he was thirty four years old, he ran for congress and lost. Three years later, he tried again and succeeded. After serving for two years, he sought for re-election but was unsuccessful. At age forty six, he set his eyes on the senate and in his bid to get elected, he was defeated. He was not deterred. The following year, he run for a higher office, the office of the vice- president and was also defeated. At fifty one, he run for the presidency and was elected to become the greatest president of the United States of America. What am I talking about? I am trying to get you to understand, that to attain greatness in life, you will be tested. If you try and fail, that is not the end of the world. You never know what you can do till you try; if at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again!

Chapter Four

BUILDING LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

Building of relationships is one of the last things most people who seek greatness consider important. We are often too busy trying to be first, trying to be the best and trying to overtake everybody, to develop relationship with others. This should not be the case.

Greatness is good only if it promotes the kingdom of God. God told Abraham that He would make his (Abraham's) name great. Abraham became great for a good cause. He was blessed and in him all the families of the earth were blessed. The warning is *'and seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not for, behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places wither thou goest.'* (Jer. 45:5). Attainment of greatness does not exclude one from the challenges of life. Sometimes, we are suddenly surrounded by crisis situations. If all we do is surround ourselves with great things, we will find out that there is no one to stand with us in times of difficulty.

Jesus elaborated on the need for relationships in His story of the unjust steward. *"And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail; they may receive you into everlasting habitation"* (Luke 16: 8 – 9). Note that Jesus did not commend that unjust steward; it was his master or lord who commended him. The unjust steward had called his master's debtors and reduced their indebtedness in order to gain favour with them afterwards. This unjust steward held a position of great responsibility. He could foresee the evil

day ahead of him. He, therefore, made friends with his master's debtors. He knew that his authority (success) was temporary so he made an arrangement to be received into 'everlasting habitations'. The great lesson here is that it will cost us everything to make friends. It will cost us time. We will have to sacrifice personal interests. We may have to spend our money on others. Yet, we must be careful not to be so greedy for money that we lose all our relationships. The dishonest manager knew that when money is gone and a job is lost the only thing left is our relationships with other people. Jonathan had a healthy relationship with David. When Jonathan died, David showed kindness to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. Your friends will share your fears with you.

In the time of your peace and prosperity, invest in relationships; else in the time of war, no one will come to your aid. Most people want to keep to themselves. They feel so powerful that they want to live on an island all by themselves. Sampson walked alone and got himself in trouble. Sometimes, we think it is the weak that need relationships. Most 'great' folks therefore wait for the 'weak' to seek establishing relationships with them. That kind of relationship does not work. Relationship eliminates pride and feeling of superiority. Mephibosheth ate from David's table. The great person, knowing the value of relationship, must do everything in his power to develop relationships with people God gives to him.

There is a tendency for great people to form a clique and seek to crush the weak. This is not relationship, but conspiracy. We must not relate based on what we possess. If two people relate because they both have good homes, good cars, large congregations, successful businesses and great academic qualifications, it is not good enough. If one of them loses what he has, the relationship would be gone. Since relationships are the key to lasting

greatness, relationship with others will be severely tested. In view of this, we must resolve to make relationships what will last. We will have to leave the comfort of our own success to relate to others. The logic here is that if you face crisis, your ministry suffers with you. It cannot lift you up. However, if you relate to others, when you are hit, they will be there to lift you up.

Anytime you find a brother going down, it is not an opportunity for you to boast of how strong you are. God allowed you to stand tall at that moment so that you can lift the falling brother up.

Chapter Five

CONCERNING YOUR RIGHTS

A great man is entitled to respect, honor and material provision. Under certain conditions one may use all of his rights without jeopardizing his future. There are however, times when one cannot insist on such rights. If one does, one's system will explode or collapse.

Nehemiah is a typical example of a great man who refused to demand all his rights. The account was given that *'Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God'*. (Nehemiah 5: 14 – 15)

This portion of scripture must cause the average twentieth century great man to bow his head in shame. For twelve years, Nehemiah did not live on the right allowances and provisions of a governor. He was so burdened by the deplorable state of the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down and burnt, that he could not satisfy any lust for food, power and money.

A great man must be so passionate about his environment and the people around him that he intentionally trims down his rights. Nehemiah did this for twelve years. When a young man goes about claiming all of his rights in the ministry even before his work is established, he is heading for danger. To insist on unrealistic wages, a big house and a good car, when your ministry or business is young, is dangerous. We have defined

greatness so wrongly that many people have placed their focus on the wrong things and at the wrong times. They would, therefore, squeeze everybody and manipulate situations in order to get what they want.

Nehemiah decided to be different. You can choose to be different in this generation. Place others above achievements. Use achievements to bless others instead of manipulating others just to attain achievements.

Nehemiah did not only check himself, he also checked his brethren who were co-workers with him. You cannot claim to be great if you are straight and the people around you are all crooked. There is nothing wrong with enjoying your rights when prevailing conditions in your business or family are good. But to claim these things at the wrong time is not appropriate.

Jesus Christ, though equal with God, did not claim equality with the Father, if He had done so, He could have submitted Himself to come in the flesh, bear our sins and die on the cross. There are certain sacrifices we cannot make if we insist on all our rights. *‘Don’t get offended when people refuse to honour you. How will you react if your wife, children or subordinates at work refused to honour you? Haman reacted wrongly when Mordecai refused to honour him. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai’.* (Esther 3: 5 – 6)

Haman was angry because he was not respected. Later, he hanged himself. If all you do is focus on your rights, you will soon stop focusing on pleasing God. Anyone who truly wants to be great must know this – greatness and greed don’t match up. Sometimes you see a man who finds a

new job and spends all his time trying to figure out what's in the job for him. It is not wrong to know one's wages, but it is wrong to place wages above one's fulfillment in the job.

Young people go into the ministry and their ambition is to become great at once. They want big love offerings; they want all the benefits of senior ministers. Such people soon find out that a good name is better than wealth and power. *A GOOD NAME is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold, as Proverbs 22:1* says. We must learn to be sensitive to the plight of others in our quest to accomplish great things. Don't neglect others on your way up and don't hurt others in order to rise to the top.

Chapter Six

HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR IS DUE

While great people must not compel everyone else to honour them, it is both natural and spiritual for us to honour people upon whom God has bestowed greatness. To acknowledge the greatness of a man who God has made great is to surrender to the sovereignty of God. Sometimes, we look at the background of someone and refuse to acknowledge his or her status. At times, we also allow our personal misgivings about the great person to hinder us from accepting him or her. *“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”*. (Rom. 13: 7-8)

If we refuse to honour the great ones amongst us, we are doing injustice to God’s system. Fathers deserve honour. Our bosses, spiritual leaders, husbands, mothers, and leaders in secular authority deserve honour. Anyone who has refused to honour someone God has raised is actually in debt. We ought to owe no man anything but to love one another. The principal key to honour is love. Love covers a multitude of wrongs.

Love is patient. It does not hurry to be exalted, so it gives honour to deserving fellows while it waits its turn. Impatience causes everyone to desire to be on top of the world at the same time.

Love is kind. Love is not callous. It will not manipulate others for selfish gain. True greatness is attained without using human beings, callously, as objects of achievements.

Love does not envy. In most societies where people are striving for greatness, it is common for jealousy and strife to breed. We can be great

without destroying others. Ambitious people often have the tendency to destroy successful people and end up doing the same things they criticized. It is not wise to criticize what you don't understand. You cannot understand a situation or the implications of a position unless you've been there.

Love is not boastful. Don't be loud about anything. "*Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain*" (Proverbs 25: 14). When a man begins to draw the attention of people to something he does not really possess, he causes pain to the people. When we are just beginning to break through, our words must be few. Otherwise, people will build their lives around us only to realize that we don't have what it takes to sustain our progress.

Love is not proud. True greatness is devoid of pride. Pride refuses correction. Greatness seeks every opportunity to be corrected. When Prophet Nathan rebuked King David, he readily repented. Other kings resisted correction and were destroyed.

Love does not put others down. A great man must necessarily be a gentleman. Watch the way you talk to your wife and subordinates. Respect pedestrians and other road users whose vehicles may not be as "posh" as yours.

Love does not seek her own interests to the detriment of others. It is not easily provoked and does not conceive evil things about others. Greatness is founded upon principles of righteousness. Love does not rejoice in acts of unrighteousness. Greatness bears every form of maltreatment until God releases the greatness to manifest itself. If one cannot bear insults and cheating, one cannot be great. People are going to use and refuse to appreciate you. You must be able to bear it. If you want to be great, you

will have to learn to trust people. A suspicious and over-cautious person cannot be great. Greatness always hopes to shine one day; for that matter it endures all things.

Love never fails. David was great. He loved Saul to the end. Saul was envious of him but he remained loyal to him. Saul sought to kill him but he lamented when Saul died. He did not rejoice over the death of Saul.

You many have good reasons to refuse to honour others but always remember you will reap what you sow. We honour others by giving them their due respect. We also honour our leaders by giving them our substance. The Bible enjoins us to honour our father and mother and if honouring the Lord with our substance is correct, then we ought to give to our parents.

Other ways by which we can honour the great people in our midst is to obey and accept their corrections. They have walked in our paths before and it is worth listening to them. We also honour the great by contributing to make them even greater. Add to the great man. Do not withhold from him. To his that has more is added. When the Queen of Sheba saw the greatness of Solomon, she added wealth to him: *'and she said to the king, It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom: Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and*

precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon'. (2 Chronicles 9: 5- 9)

The Queen of Sheba witnessed the greatness of Solomon. She added unto Solomon's greatness by giving him gold, spices and precious stones. She did not say he had more than enough. Sometimes we limit our miracles and blessings by withholding things from great people. There is a time to give to the needy out of compassion, and there is a time to appreciate those who have affected your life in any way. Greatness comes from God and when we honour that particular greatness, we are acknowledging an act of God. One secret to receiving is sowing on a fertile ground. Sow in a blessed land.

Chapter Seven

UNLIMITED GREATNESS

Greatness is a gift of God and since God cannot be limited, we cannot limit greatness. Greatness cannot be limited to a certain geographical region. God rules in the affairs of men everywhere and He is capable of raising a great person anywhere.

Also time cannot limit greatness. God raised great men in times of old and He is still raising them in our day. It is strange when people attribute the degree of Isaac's greatness in the Bible to only God's actions, and at the same time, attribute the greatness of any modern day person to occult powers. People still confess that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. We give the devil undue glory when we attribute the greatness of God's people to Him. Time and space do not limit greatness. Again greatness from God transcends all our imagination: "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us*". (Eph. 3: 20) God has deposited in us a potential for mind-blowing feats. This power lies within us and waits to be released. Your mind cannot imagine what you are capable of becoming, unless God opens your eyes to see. I have heard people say the sky is your limit, but I have to tell you that God is the limit, and since He is beyond comprehension, your greatness is limitless. God asked Abraham to count the stars of heaven, but he could not, because they were uncountable. Then God said his seed would be as countless as the stars. David said "*Yea, they turned back and tempted God and **limited** the Holy One of Israel.*" (Psalm 78: 41). To limit God is to turn Him back or hinder Him. God is a Spirit. The wind blows where it wants and we cannot tell where it is going.

Jealousy and unbelief may make us feel that what we have is of God but not what another person has.

The Bible says, if the Lord is our Shepherd, our cups will run over. It says that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. We cannot hinder God, except by unbelief. Circumstances, demons and people cannot stop your progress. Isaac increased. The famine in the land and the opposition of the people there could not stop him: *“Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him”*. (Genesis 26” 12-14)

Greatness is progressive. It just keeps coming once you hit the road. The only thing that will take you backwards is when you miss out on God. Isaac waxed great; he went forward and grew until he was very great. The Philistines envied him but that did not stop him. They blocked the wells, which his father had dug, and he went ahead and opened them again.

Greatness defies opposition. Your greatness exposes the laziness, weakness and incompetence of someone next door. He has always lived his life of mediocrity with the excuse that conditions are not favourable. Here you are, dismantling his hypothesis. He will naturally rise against you.

It is God’s will for you to keep rising, but it is the wish of men to bring you down. Men may detract you if you spend all your time fighting them. Isaac did not concentrate on his detractors. He just went ahead and dug up the wells again. Go ahead and do likewise.

Isaac’s growth in greatness is a caution to those of us who see just a little success and believe that we have arrived. ***God makes us great so that we***

will win the entire world to Jesus. Until this goal is achieved we must not stop aspiring to greatness.

Chapter Eight

THE CHALLENGES OF GREATNESS

Greatness attracts people to itself and that is where the greatest challenge is. Greatness attracts all kinds of people. Suddenly, you become a threat to your enemies and they want to attack you. It also draws admiration from your friends and they want to benefit from your greatness. Jesus illustrated this situation in a parable: *'another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: ³²Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof'.*

(Matthew 13: 31- 32)

Greatness may be comparable to a mustard seed. The birds of the air will be attracted to it. Some will find shade; others will attack the leaves and the fruits of the tree. The motives for settling on the tree are mixed!

Every great man must be wary of this. Some of the birds came along to lodge on the mustard tree could have been birds which attempted to destroy the seed before it matured. Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers. After many trials he became like a father to Pharaoh, the lord of Pharaoh's house and the ruler of the land of Egypt. His brothers came to Egypt and offered to be his servants and asked for his forgiveness. Joseph readily forgave them and assured them that God sent him ahead of them to preserve them. Great men must learn to forgive and reach out to people who persecute them but later come back in repentance.

Greatness also attracts us to people who would come to test us. Many people don't really believe that one can be genuinely great in these times.

Greatness is, conveniently, either attributed to demonic powers or dubious means. Others cannot believe that the great man is as great as the world portrays him to be. These people will therefore come around to test the great man in various ways. They will attempt, entice, lure him and feign need to see if he has what it takes to handle these. The Queen of Sheba tested Solomon with hard questions.

Once we are great we must believe God for wisdom to handle life's 'Queen of Sheba'. We must trust God to deal with Satan as Christ did with him when he was tempted in the wilderness. God's people are, on a daily basis, confronted with pressure to perform. A standard is set and people expect you to meet it all the time. A truly great person knows his season. Jesus refused to submit to pressure. He refused to turn stone into bread. When He was confronted at the wedding to do something about a shortage of wine, He said His hour had not yet come. He later turned water into wine just at the right time. If you do not resist being pushed you will soon be overwhelmed by negative pressure.

Greatness will also bring into your life, people who just want to use you to achieve their goals. They will use all kinds of flattering words on you just to lure you to give them credibility and recognition. Some of them will come around to steal some ideas from you only to develop them later and enter into competition with you. A great person cannot live like a hermit. She or he must learn to relate to people, be as harmless as a dove, but at the same time, as wise as a serpent.

Like a swarm of flies, many people will be attracted to you and others will hate and feel bitter about you. They will do everything in their power to destroy you. They will misrepresent you and set you up. The great person must be able to advance without concentrating on his detractors. If you want to play their game and speak their language, you will soon be like

them. They are the failures because they talk about unimportant things and focus on the wrong things.

One other challenge of a great man is that he will, by maturity, breed and reproduce other great people. Greatness begets greatness. Some of the great people he begets will acknowledge him and honour him. Others will deny him his due honour.

The challenges, fears, uncertainties and inconvenience of greatness can be, simply, amazing.

Consider those people whose greatness was born out of genuine need. Everybody looks up to the great man for one form of assistance or the other. If he fails to help, he is either considered to be weak, selfish or indifferent. A great person will have to be at peace with God and with his conscience in this matter. Always remember that you cannot do everything for everybody all of the time. Do what God enables you to do at any given time and stop at that. Be frank and don't make promises you cannot fulfill.

Chapter Nine

PRESERVING GREATNESS

It is our duty to preserve greatness. Greatness is a rare virtue in a generation which under-utilizes the grace of God. Few people are able to utilize the seed of grace to produce greatness. Indeed, many are called but few are chosen. We are stewards of the gifts and talents of God. Great people are gifts from God to brighten this dark world where mediocrity is the accepted norm. Great people must be cautious not to destroy themselves through personal negligence. Those who are supposed to be beneficiaries of greatness must not be moved by ignorance and jealousy to kill it.

David's men saw his potential to become great and sought to preserve it. In a war against the Philistines, David nearly lost his life. When it was time to fight against the mischievous Absalom, David's men restrained him from going to battle. *"But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city"*. (2 Samuel 18: 3)

We preserve greatness by restraining it from endangering itself. Don't insist that the great man must engage in every activity in the community. There are times we must exclude some people from certain things just so that they can live longer and be a blessing to us. Privileges given to the great people amongst us must be seen as benefiting everyone, ultimately. Sometimes, these great people have gone through the toils and hazards of life often that they are now virtually weak. We demonstrate our maturity when we don't insist that they must be like us in all things.

It is interesting to see David's people equate him to ten thousand of them. They saw his worth and it explains why David's was so influential in their lives. Unless you have a person's value, he cannot be a blessing to you. It is amazing how the body of Christ 'kills' great people, then turn around to ask God to bless them with great men; *"For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath"*. (Matt 4: 25)

This implies that if anyone uses his or her talents well, God promises that more will be added to them until he has much. But anyone who has little and does not use it properly even the little he has will be taken away from him.

The imperfections of a great person must not be used to destroy him. Our attitudes towards others must not be always negative. **Sometimes we do not destroy directly through negative pronouncements or thoughts but through neglect.** We tend to believe that we need these great people and we seldom believe they need us too. As we take interest in great people and make an input into their lives, we preserve them in a direct way.

Chapter Ten

EBENEZER

It is God who gives greatness and we must give Him the glory, no matter the state in which we find ourselves. There is, however, no harm in reminding us about something we are already familiar with.

The word ‘Ebenezer’ appeared in the Bible when Israel defeated the Philistines in a battle: *‘And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us’*. (1 Samuel 7: 11- 12)

God gave Israel victory in the battle and Samuel clearly attributed all the glory to God by naming the place Ebenezer – thus far has God brought us. This must be the confession of every great man. ***The ultimate glory of our greatness must be to God.*** Nothing done in the power of the flesh glorifies God. Most great people can easily trace their beginnings to a humble point in certain senses. Some begin life with a poor level of intelligence; others with a horrible financial status, and others begin their walk with God from a background of gross spiritual darkness.

I clearly remember from where the Lord took me. It is good for a man to constantly remember where he came from. It helps one to remain humble and also allow for total dependence on God. The blessings of God in my life are no secret. I can confidently say that I am a living testimony of the faithfulness of God. Paul’s admonition was *‘for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the*

world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Cor. 26 – 29)

To forget where one has come from is a very unfortunate condition. Many people who do this are soon overtaken by pride; and God rejects them. In order to reach our point of greatness with a conscience that can give glory to God, we must be mindful about how we attain our goals. ***We must not attain our status through fraud, making room for our conscience to condemn us.*** Bribery and the use of gifts and money to sway judgment in our favour is also evil.

We live in a time when non-Christians are gradually infiltrating the church. They know that money and material things are needed to build God's Kingdom. They, therefore, come giving out money to the church, but not their hearts to God. People who could be made great must turn down such gifts and support from evil men who have no genuine hearts, but seek to manipulate the power of God in the church. Even gifts, that would appear to have been for a good reason, were rejected, by Abraham, when he refused the gifts of the king of Sodom: *“and the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.”* (Genesis 14: 21-23)

From the above, it was obvious that Abraham had prayed to God for victory in the battle and his motive for delivering the people of Sodom

was pure. If you don't pray about your life, you will become a prey to your adversaries. The Bible says that Abraham was rich in cattle, in silver and in gold (Gen. 13:2). Contrary to most people who are supposed to be great, however, Abraham did not go grabbing from just anybody. God was actively involved in how he got to the top.

When our conscience is clear about the source of our greatness, then and only then can we say, 'Ebenezer.' When we acknowledge God in our greatness, He keeps us there. We acknowledge Him when we maintain our fellowship with Him through prayer and meditation in our daily walk.

It is common for people to abandon God and resort to human wisdom once greatness is attained. The funny thing about such people is that, before God placed them where they are today, they were diligent in their quest to serve God. With a little success blowing their way, they become so busy chasing after money and business connections that it stifles their desire to serve God.

Greatness comes from God and is meant to glorify God and promote His Kingdom. Determine to seek God and not things for yourself. Material possessions and the celebrity the world bestows on people will all pass away. Love never fails. In everything, therefore, our love for God and humanity must supersede every other thing.

My prayer for you is that God's grace will so increase and be effective in your life, that you will avail yourself to pay the necessary price, as you depend on the finished work of Jesus' cross, to get to the degree of greatness apportioned to you, by the Lord, in Jesus' name.

About the Author

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