GREAT MEN
LIVE TO PLEASE
GOD
AND COMMIT TO
EXCEL
STILL MORE
1 THESSALONIANS 4:1
Great Men Excel Still More

“Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.”

- 1 Thessalonians 4:1

Class Goals

- To study and build the Godly characteristics that help men excel during each stage of life.
- To sharpen one another with Christ-centered friendships and wisdom.
- To spark a greater drive for sharing the gospel and engaging in good deeds.

Weekly Lessons

1. Great Men Learn To Excel
2. Great Men Create Great Habits
3. Great Men Sharpen Each Other
4. Great Men Are Tough & Gentle
5. Great Men Lead By Example
6. Great Men Place God & His Kingdom First
7. Great Men Use Their Talents
8. Great Men Serve With Integrity
9. Great Men Are Grateful
10. Great Men Steward Their Blessings
11. Great Men Address Their Stress
12. Great Men Finish Strong
1. Great Men Learn to Excel

The Call To Excellence
According to the following verses, what are some areas in which God charges us to excel or abound?

Matthew 5:20  
_______________________________________________

Luke 12:15  
_______________________________________________

1 Corinthians 15:58  
_______________________________________________

2 Corinthians 8:2,7  
_______________________________________________

1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:1, 4:10  
_______________________________________________

2 Timothy 1:7  
_______________________________________________

A Life Well Lived & A Job Well Done
Examine Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:15-25 carefully. What did God design men to be and do?

Spiritual Traits:  Personal Qualities:

Areas of Authority:  Relationships:

Productivity:

Great men excel not only in what they do, but in who they are. What can we learn about both the character and accomplishments of great men in Ecclesiastes 9:10, 12:13?

Great Men Excel Like Joshua
Over the course of his life, Joshua grew from a young man learning at Moses’ side, to a bold warrior leading the people, and into a wise sage guiding both his household and nation. Review the first 6 chapters of the book of Joshua. In each chapter, look for one big idea that contributed to Joshua’s development and success.

Chapter 1: We will excel like Joshua when we __________________________________________.

Chapter 2: We will excel like Joshua when we __________________________________________.

Chapter 3: We will excel like Joshua when we __________________________________________.

Chapter 4: We will excel like Joshua when we __________________________________________.

Chapter 5: We will excel like Joshua when we __________________________________________.

Chapter 6: We will excel like Joshua when we __________________________________________.
2. Great Men Create Great Habits

The Power of Our Habits

“Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your new identity.” (Atomic Habits by James Clear) Before studying the habits in this lesson, stop and list 10 habits you would like to practice as a Christian:

1. ___________ 2. ___________ 3. ___________ 4. ___________ 5. ___________
6. ___________ 7. ___________ 8. ___________ 9. ___________ 10. ___________

Consider Colossians 3:1-11. What is involved in Christians breaking old habits and starting new, Godly ones?

Habit #1. Great Men Don’t Make Excuses

What is wrong with the excuses made by each of these men?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 3:9-12</th>
<th>Proverbs 26:13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 4:1, 10</td>
<td>Luke 14:16-24</td>
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How does Matthew 5:37 and Matthew 21:28-32 direct us towards a higher level of integrity?

Habit #2. Great Men Move Forward

What approach helped Paul avoid being hindered by the pride of his past and by the regrets of his past?

Past Accomplishments: ________________________________ (Philippians 3:1-11)

Past Mistakes: ________________________________ (Philippians 3:12-16)

Habit #3. Great Men Develop The Discipline of Purity

Proverbs 5, 6, & 7 not only warn men about the danger of sexual sin, but also instruct us in critical habits. Identify the habits taught in...

5:8 ___________ 5:13, 18 ___________ 6:20,24 ____________

6:27-29 ___________ 6:32 ___________ 7:21-27 ____________

Habit #4. Great Men Do Good Works In Secret

Read Matthew 6:1-8. Why does God find joy in good works carried out with humility?

Habit #5. Great Men Practice Discernment

Discernment looks for the most significant factors to help us make wise decisions. What did Solomon have to discern in 1 Kings 3:16-28?

Christians must be able to discern ___________ from ___________. (Hebrews 5:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:21)
3. Great Men Sharpen Each Other

Who Can I Trust?
One of life’s great questions is, “Who can I trust?” What qualities of a trust-worthy friend are revealed in:


The Friends of Jesus
Jesus brought Peter, James, and John into his closest circle of friendship. What did this include?
(Matthew 17:1, Mark 5:37, Mark 13:3, Mark 14:33)

Gospel-Centered Friendships
Gospel-Centered Friendships Are Like Family Relationships (Colossians 4:7-9, Philemon 1:15-16, Mark 3:34-35)
  • Like Tychicus, how can we better demonstrate brotherly relationships in the body of Christ?

  • Like Aristarchus, how can we recognize when a brother needs us to stand with them in a trial?

Gospel-Centered Friendships Rise Above Social Barriers (Colossians 4:9-15)
  • Paul counted on the young & old, the Jew & Gentile. How can we be intentional to develop friendships with a broad range of brothers?

Gospel-Centered Friendships Encourage Prayer (Colossians 4:12-14)
  • Like Epaphras, what are some important things we should pray about for our brothers?

Gospel-Centered Friendships Encourage The Study of Scripture (Colossians 4:16)
  • Like the Laodiceans, what benefits come from studying the scriptures alongside a group of friends? When can you work this into your schedule?

Gospel-Centered Friendships Sometimes Discourage Us (Colossians 4:10, 14-16, 2 Timothy 4:10, Rev. 3:14-20)
  • Like Mark, Demas, & the Laodiceans, Paul was discouraged by the sins of his brothers. How should we respond to similar disappointments? How can we continue in faithfulness after these hurts?

Gospel-Centered Friendships Encourage Us To Excel In The Lord (Colossians 4:17-18)
  • Like Archippus, who can you build up and encourage to take the next step in their work for the Lord?

Building Godly Friendships
  • Take a genuine interest in others. Offer help to others – no strings attached. Mix up your routine.
  • Plan or join a shared activity. Reconnect with old acquaintances. Talk to the new people you meet.
4. Great Men Are Tough & Gentle

Rehoboam’s Big Decision
Please read 1 Kings 12:1-16.

What did the people request? (Vs. 4)

Why did Rehoboam need time to respond? (vs 5)

What two groups did Rehoboam seek advice from, and what did they recommend? (vs. 6-11)

Who was Rehoboam thinking about the most in his final decision? (vs. 12-14)

What did this harsh response cost him? (vs. 15-16)

Using Our God-Given Strengths
God created us with the ability to be very tough when needed, and to be very gentle when needed. Paul used both of these qualities to help him take the gospel throughout the world.

- Give an example of a time when Paul was tough: ____________________________________
- Give an example of a time when Paul was gentle: ____________________________________

Jesus is the perfect example of being tough when it was right and healthy, and being gentle when it was right and healthy. In Matthew 26:47-65 we get an excellent contrast between the righteous choices of Jesus and the short-sighted choices of Peter. Use this reading to answer the following questions.

How did the approaching threat appear? (26:47)


Why did Jesus exercise restraint? (26:52-54)


Based on Jesus’ example, what factor most determines whether we respond with gentleness or toughness?

Getting It Right
Being tough or gentle at the wrong time can have very high costs.

- How is John the Baptist another example of getting this decision right? (Matthew 3:1-12, 14:1-12)
- Like Rehoboam, what did getting it wrong cost Pharaoh?  What can it cost us?
- What insight does James 3:13-16 provide to help us determine when to be tough or gentle?
5. Great Men Lead By Example

A Timeless Principle
In 1 Peter 5:1-11, elders are instructed to lead by example. Then, Peter mentions five amazing attributes that make our examples shine. What are they?

_______________________ (vs 5-6) ___________________________ (vs 7) ___________________________ (vs 8),
_______________________ (vs. 9), ___________________________ (vs. 10-11)

An Example We Can Clearly See
Leading by example can be more challenging than leading by force, but also far more rewarding and enduring.

• Leading by example requires doing the right work with the right _________________. (John 13:13-17)

• Leading by example requires determining the right destination and pursuing it _________________.
  _________________. (Joshua 24:15)

• Leading by example requires inviting others to join you in the pursuit of common _________________.
  (Acts 16:3, 2 Timothy 3:10-11)

• Leading by example requires face to face time together so others can _________________.
  (Matthew 15:12-14)

• Leading by example creates a reputation that inspires _________________. (1 Thess. 1:6-8, 2 Cor. 9:1-2)

Leading By Example Is Enhanced With Clear Instructions
The Bible not only includes the life stories of great heroes of faith, it also provides clear commandments. When rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah used his authority, his example, and his speech to finish successfully.

How would you describe Nehemiah’s example in 5:14-19?

In spite of his good example, what problem arose in 5:1-8?

What steps did Nehemiah take to be sure his example was closely followed in 5:9-13?

Timeless Examples
Think of three areas where you would like to set a better example and list a Biblical hero who sets an excellent example for you to follow in this area.

I want to be a Godly example of ________________, so I am learning from the example of ________________.

I want to be a Godly example of ________________, so I am learning from the example of ________________.

I want to be a Godly example of ________________, so I am learning from the example of ________________.
6. Great Men Seek God & His Kingdom First

The Defining Direction of Jesus
In Matthew 6:33 Jesus elevates our thinking far above trusting in or worrying about wealth. He helps us trust in and focus on God. What is the meaning and significance of each key word in this famous verse?

- Great Men Determine to SEEK
- Great Men Determine What Will Be FIRST
- Great Men Determine Who Is Really In Charge: HIS
- Great Men Determine Which KINGDOM They Are Loyal To
- Great Men Determine The True Standard of RIGHTEOUSNESS
- Great Men Determine The Divine Source of ALL THESE THINGS

Great Men Give God The Honor He Deserves
Sometimes it’s the religious who have the most trouble putting God first. What problems were the people of Malachi’s day facing, even though they knew God?

_________________________________ (1:6-14) ____________________________ (2:3-9)
_________________________________ (2:13-17) ____________________________ (3:5-10)

What steps did they take to break out of these evil behaviors? (Malachi 3:16-18)

Developing The GOD FIRST Mindset
According to Psalm 5:1-3 how was David beginning his morning? Can you find a few references to other servants of God who began their day this way?

What did putting God first look like in the life of Noah? (Hebrews 11:7)

What did putting God first look like in the life of Ezra? (Ezra 7:10)

What did putting God’s kingdom first look like in the life of Paul? (Philippians 1:21-26)
7. Great Men Use Their Talents

Resources + Time + Labor = Profit
In Matthew 25:14-30 and in Luke 19:11-27 Jesus teaches that when God provides resources and time, He expects us to contribute our _______________ to produce a ______________ outcome.

- What qualities does God expect in our work?
- What will be given to the faithful servants? (Luke 19:17,26)

Great Men Use Their Talents At Work
Many passages address the importance and purpose of our work. What do we learn in these three?

Colossians 3:23-24  1 Timothy 5:8  Ephesians 4:28

How do your co-workers respond to the work ethic described in Ephesians 6:5-9 in your workplace?

Titus 2:9-10 describes our work ethic as adorning “the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.” When does your daily work feel spiritually significant? When does it feel spiritually irrelevant?

Great Men Use Their Talents In The Body of Christ
In Haggai 1:4-9, God challenges His people to “consider your ways.” What did they need to recognize about the use of their time and talents?

What areas of kingdom work are you best suited for? (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:18-31, 1 Peter 4:7-11)

Great Men Find A Healthy Rhythm of Work & Rest
God created people to work hard and to rest well. Under the law of Moses, He outlined a rhythm of weekly rest, annual rest, seven-year rest, and even a jubilee of rest. As Christians what should we learn from these Old Testament examples?

How did Jesus weave work and rest into His busy days?

Mark 1:35  _______________  Mark 4:35-40  _______________
John 4:31-38  _______________  John 12:1-2  _______________

How would you like to maximize your retirement years for God’s glory?
8. Great Men Serve With Integrity

A Biblically Trained Conscience
A well-trained conscience can be our greatest ally in building and maintaining integrity. How can you develop a Christ-centered conscience?

- 2 Corinthians 1:12
- Romans 14:19-23
- Acts 24:16, 1 Tim. 4:2
- 1 Corinthians 10:25-29

The Life of Job
Job 31 provides a detailed look into the character of a man God described as, “a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” (1:8) What categories of integrity do you recognize in each section:

Job 31:1-4 Job 31:5-8 Job 31:9-15

Job 31:16-28 Job 31:29-32 Job 31:33-34

Job 31:35-40

Personal Reflection: Who is a Christian man you can turn to and confess failures in these areas, and seek his help to rebuild your integrity?

The Enemies of Integrity
Satan targets the integrity of Godly men with five common, but powerful attacks. How does the Bible help us resist each? Do some careful study to bring a useful passage on each topic to share with the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Person Who Faced This Attack</th>
<th>A Passage That Helps Us Overcome It</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrisy</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
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<td>Lust</td>
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<td>Pride</td>
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9. Great Men Are Grateful

Samson Had It All, And Lost It.
In many ways, Samson ‘had it all.’ Review his life in Judges 13-16, then notice the blessings recorded in the following verses. How did he end up wasting or abusing each blessing?

- Samson had ____________________, but he __________________________ (Judges 13:3-5)
- Samson had ____________________, but he __________________________ (Judges 13:15-23)
- Samson had ____________________, but he __________________________ (Judges 14:1-4)
- Samson had ____________________, but he __________________________ (Judges 15:14-20)

Great Men Have Much To Be Grateful For!
Paul often expressed gratitude for the blessings of God, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 he taught all Christians to be thankful. What blessings did Paul commonly give thanks for?

__________________________ (Romans 1:8)  ____________________________ (1 Cor. 15:57)
__________________________ (2 Corinthians 1:1-7)  ____________________________ (1 Tim. 1:12-24)

Gratitude Needs To Show Up
Gratitude that is felt, but never expressed, looks just like ingratitude. How can gratitude tangibly show up in some of the areas Samson neglected:

- Our Speech: ____________________________ ( vs. )
- Our Self-Control: ____________________________ ( vs. )
- Our Sacrifices: ____________________________ ( vs. )
- Our Parenting: ____________________________ ( vs. )
- Our Diligence: ____________________________ ( vs. )

Determine To Be Different
In Luke 17:11-19, only one leper returns to thank Jesus for being healed. How can the following steps help us stand out in gratitude?

What visual reminders can increase our gratitude?  How can the Psalms increase our gratitude?

How can we be grateful in difficult circumstances?  When do you most notice the gratitude of others?
Great Men Steward Their Blessings

Nine Keys of Financial Stewardship

How we handle our finances and how we serve God are inseparable. The Bible calls all of us to become faithful managers of the life, blessings, and finances God entrusts to us. Our management is temporary, and we will give an account to the Lord.

**Good Stewards Honor God.** (Psalm 24:1, Proverbs 3:9-10, Matthew 6:24)
- What does it mean to honor God, not only in offerings, but in our care for all He entrusts to us?

**Good Stewards Keep Watch.** (Proverbs 27:23-24, Proverbs 21:5)
- What steps do you take to keep track of what God has given you, how it is used, and what is on the horizon?

**Good Stewards Embrace Giving.** (Luke 12:33-34, 2 Corinthians 9:5-11)
- In Acts 2:44-45, what compelled the early Christians to give generously?

**Good Stewards Save For What Is Coming.** (Genesis 41:34-36, Proverbs 30:24-25)
- How can we use wisdom to save for a rainy day, but also honor Matthew 6:34?

**Good Stewards Live with Contentment.** (Philippians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-11)
- What are the dangers of a discontent heart?

**Good Stewards Eliminate Debt.** (Proverbs 22:7, 26-27)
- Debt is not always sinful, but it is always a burden. How does Proverbs 6:1-5 describe the urgency of eliminating our debts?
- What does God think about refusing to pay our debts in Psalm 37:21?

**Good Stewards Avoid Waste.** (John 6:12, Luke 15:13)
- What are the areas of daily life where a little bit of waste can add up to a big cost over time?

**Good Stewards Invest Carefully.** (Proverbs 31:16, Ecclesiastes 11:2)
- What goals do Christians have for their investments?

**Good Stewards Give Thanks & Rejoice.** (1 Timothy 6:17-19)
- What can you learn from the way Abraham, Job, and Solomon enjoyed their wealth?
- What allows Christians to find joy in being “rich in good works?”
II. Great Men Address Their Stress

High Stress Seasons
From the political battles faced by Daniel, to the religious persecution faced by Paul, the Bible is full of godly men who faced high stress seasons of life. What three areas of your life are the most stressful today?

1. ________________________ 2. ________________________ 3. ________________________

How do you respond to stress? Some men stop talking, some get angry, some work furiously, some feel hopeless and stop everything. What do you usually do? If you are unsure, ask a close friend.

In 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, what indicators of stress does Paul mention?

In 2 Corinthians 4:13-18, what anchors of hope does he hold onto?

Great Men Build On The Rock
Until our life is built firmly on Jesus Christ, the storms we face will always end in disaster. What does a life with a firm foundation look like in the following verses?

_________________________________________ Psalm 127:1-2 __________________________________________ Eph 5:15-21 __________________________ 2 Tim. 4:16-18 __________________________

Great Men Improve Their Approach
Sometimes tangible changes to our workload need to be made, but often, it is our thinking and our responses that need to be adjusted. What do the following passages teach us to do in the middle of a high-stress life?

Matthew 6:34 __________________________ Isaiah 40:28-31 __________________________

Philippians 2:14 __________________________ Psalm 46:1-3 __________________________

Luke 21:34-36 __________________________

Great Men Avoid Making Matters Worse
Infertility is a heart-wrenching, high-stress challenge. It’s normal and reasonable for couples to look for options to address this. However, in Genesis 16:1-16 Abram and Sarai made a plan that made things worse. Read Genesis 16:1-16 and look for ideas we should keep in mind when navigating very high-stress problems.

• __________________________ (vs. 1-4) • __________________________ (vs. 5-6)

• __________________________ (vs. 7-9) • __________________________ (vs. 10-16)

Great Men Call For Backup
Pretending that nothing is bothering us doesn’t work. Sometimes what we need most is a helping hand (even if we hate to admit it.) How did Jonathan help David during his high-stress path to the throne?

1 Samuel 19:1-7 __________________________ 1 Samuel 23:15-18 __________________________
Men Who Finish Strong
The Bible is full of men with great beginnings and terrible endings.

- What problems disrupted king Asa (2 Chronicles 16:12) and king Solomon? (1 Kings 11:4)
- What kept Caleb on course for a strong finish? (Joshua 14:10-15)

Finish Strong: Commit To A Non-Negotiable Vision
A strong finish is not about wealth or prestige. What are the core qualities you are determined to finish with?

What makes Paul’s finish so admirable? (2 Timothy 1:12-14, and 4:7-8)

Finish Strong: Remember, A Painful Setback Is Not The End of The Story
Describe the changes Moses faced from Exodus 1 to Exodus 2.

- Work: Moses went from a _______________ in Egypt, to __________________________ in Midian.
- Recognition: from___________________ in Egypt, to ___________________________ in Midian.
- Relationships: from_________________ in Egypt, to __________________________ in Midian.

In Deuteronomy 34:1-8, how does the Bible describe the end of Moses’ life?

Finish Strong: Never Be Stripped of Your Faith & Character.
Joseph was stripped of his coat, his favored position, and his surroundings, but not his convictions or his courage. How would you describe the faith of Joseph? (Genesis 37-47)

Finish Strong: Never Trade Your Purity For Position.
Joseph was confronted with a dangerous woman. Her desires and her lies were nothing but trouble. How did he overcome? (Genesis 39:6-21)

Finish Strong: Never Let Betrayal Become Bitterness.
Joseph was positioned to inflict a painful revenge. What is Joseph more interested in than revenge? (45:1-15)
In Ephesians 4:31-32, what instructions are we given about our feelings of bitterness?

Finish Strong: Never Take Your Eyes Off of God’s Approval.
What can we learn from Nehemiah’s constant prayer? (Nehemiah 5:19, 13:14, 13:22, 13:31)