

NO SHORTCUTS IN RECIPE FOR GREATNESS

By Robert J. Tamasy

Do you aspire to greatness? Would you like to lead a great company, or create a business that became the standard in the industry for excellence? Or would you like to gain acclaim for being a great leader, the kind of person whose name appears in the pages of a book like *Who's Who* or be on the cover of *TIME* magazine as its "Person of the Year"?

Maybe you would simply like to be as skilled and accomplished as someone you highly admire. Besides writing, editing and photography, one of my primary interests has always been music. I played the drums in the high school marching and concert bands, and envied the talents of world-famous drummers. "I wish I could play the drums like that!" I often thought. But I wanted the results without the necessary effort.

On his website, organizational strategist and executive coach Stephen R. Graves recently this observation about leadership:

"There is no speed cooking in greatness. Becoming great won't happen tomorrow; it is instead a long perseverance in the same direction. As Malcolm Gladwell has artfully observed, even those that we revere as geniuses and prodigies – Bill Gates, Mozart, The Beatles – all worked unbelievably hard for an incredible period of time before truly achieving greatness. The best soups simply have to sit and simmer. You cannot rush them. You cannot speed cook maturity. We must log the time."

Many of us get impatient waiting for microwave ovens to heat our meals. We grow tired waiting for traffic lights to change. We detest waiting in lines. And too often, we refuse to invest the time and perseverance necessary for achieving greatness vocationally. We want what we want – and we want it right now!

It could be argued greatness is not so much earned – as with a college degree, or an hour wage – but rather bestowed. Two of Jesus' disciples, James and John, were seeking positions of greatness when they asked, "*Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory*" (Mark 10:37). After replying they had no idea what they were asking for, Jesus said, "*to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared*" (Mark 10:40)." Here are some biblical principles about the pursuit of greatness:

It takes time. When people wonder why someone has experienced great success when they have not, they should ask themselves, "Did I put forth the necessary effort?" "*Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor*" (Proverbs 12:24).

It takes perseverance. Attaining greatness requires willingness to confront obstacles and endure many kinds of adversity. "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything*" (James 1:2-4).

It takes the right motivation. We should honestly ask ourselves why we seek greatness – out of pride, or out of a desire to honor God and be faithful stewards of all He has entrusted to us. "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men*" (Colossians 3:23-24).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever aspired to achieve greatness? Are you pursuing it right now? Explain your answer – and why?
2. How do you think true greatness can be achieved – or bestowed – as this “Monday Manna” suggests is the way it should be done?
3. What, in your opinion, are some possible pitfalls of seeking personal, professional or corporate greatness?
4. How can we discern whether we are truly striving for greatness with this right motivations? What steps might you take to avoid pursuing it for the wrong reasons?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:4-5, 12:11, 14:23, 20:4, 22:29; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:17, 23-24