

Session 5 - The Eight Greats: The Great Want To

Participant Guide

Introduction: The Great Want To

When you were growing up, who was that someone you wanted to be like? Maybe it was an older brother or sister. Maybe it was a superhero or superstar. How about a parent, grandparent, teacher, or coach? Why did you want to be like him or her? What was it about that person that you wanted to emulate?

When I was growing up, I wanted to “be like Mike.” That is Michael Jordan, the best basketball player on the planet at the time (and current owner of the Charlotte Bobcats). I must not have been the only one because Gatorade put my sentiments to music. If you know it, sing it with me...

Sometimes I dream
That he is me
You've got to see that's how I dream to be
I dream I move, I dream I groove
Like Mike
If I could Be Like Mike
Like Mike
Oh, if I could Be Like Mike
Be Like Mike, Be Like Mike
Again I try
Just need to fly
For just one day if I could
Be that way
I dream I move
I dream I groove
Like Mike
If I could Be Like Mike
I wanna be, I wanna be
Like Mike
Oh, if I could Be Like Mike

Being like Mike wasn't in the cards for me. I couldn't “move,” “groove,” or “fly” like Mike. However, if I pay attention to the words, this song makes me wonder - how do you and I “dream to be?” If for just one day we could be a certain way, what way would we be?

How does God want us to be? What is He doing about it? How does our relationship with God impact how we want to be?

Selected Readings

Read Isaiah 6:1 – 7 and Psalm 99

What do you discover about God's character in these passages?

What is Isaiah's response to God?

What is the Psalmist's response to God?

Why do you think they responded this way?

Both of these passages talk about God's holiness.

How would you define holiness?

One theologian says that the Biblical meaning of holiness is being separated from sin and devoted to glorifying God.¹

How does that statement compare to your definition of holiness?

Read 1 Peter 1:14 – 16 & 1 Peter 2:9 – 12

What does this passage say about what God desires for his people?

Why does God want his people to be holy?

¹ Grudem, Wayne. *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Read 1 John 1:8 – 10 & 1 John 3:1 - 10

What does John say to his audience about sin in their lives?

How are they to respond when we they do sin?

What does this passage say about how a relationship with Jesus impacts the way a person lives?

How do you think continuing to sin impacts an ongoing relationship with God?

Read Philippians 1:6

What is God's role in this passage?

What is the timing of God completing His work in this verse?

Read Ephesians 4:17 - 32

What does this passage say about how followers of Christ are to live?

Reflecting on My Story

Take some time and think about God's holiness.

What is your response to His holiness?

God wants us to be holy as he is holy (1 Peter 1:15 – 16).

How does your “want to” line up with God’s desire for you to be separated from sin and devoted to glorifying Him?

Jesus says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” – John 15:5

How’s your relationship with Jesus? What is one thing you can put into practice to draw closer to Him?

Prayer

Be still and silent just for a few minutes and meditate on Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” Since you have reflected on the Biblical passages above, talk to God about where you are. Tell (or write to) Him all that’s on your mind and heart. Pray Psalm 51 to God and confess any sin that you need to bring to Him. Rest in God’s unfailing love and great compassion.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” - 1 John 1:9

Memory Verse

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6

Go Deeper (additional resources)

- *Knowledge of the Holy* - A.W. Tozer
- *The Me I Want to Be* - John Ortberg
- *The Pursuit of Holiness* - Jerry Bridges

Session 5 - The Eight Greats: The Great Want To

LifeGroup Discussion Guide

Introduction: The Great Want To

Who did you want to be like when you were growing up? Why did you want to be like that person? What was it about him or her that you wanted to emulate?

What are the character traits of God that you want to emulate?

One of God's attributes is holiness. What comes to mind when you think about God's holiness? What questions do you have about His holiness?

What does the Bible say?

Read Isaiah 6:1 – 7 & Psalm 99

What strikes you about how God is described?

What are some similarities between the two passages?

Why do you think Isaiah responds the way he does in verse 5?

One theologian says that the Biblical meaning of holiness is being separated from sin and devoted to glorifying God.

What are your thoughts about this definition?

How does this definition of holiness compare to how you think about holiness?

Read 1 Peter 1:14 – 16 & 1 Peter 2:9 – 12

Why does God want His people to be holy?

Read 1 John 1:8 – 10 & 1 John 3:1 – 10

What does John say to his audience about sin in their lives?

Do these two passages contradict one another? What is John saying?

What does it mean to abide (to live) in Christ?

How does our relationship with Jesus impact how we live?

Share with the group any insights God gave you during your study using the Participant Guide and from the weekend message.

What is our response?

When you think about God's holiness, what is your response?

What is God's role and what is our role in the process of becoming holy?

How can our LifeGroup encourage you to pursue holiness?

Break into pairs or triads and pray for one another.

Session 6 - The Eight Greats: The Great Perseverance

Participant Guide

Introduction: The Great Perseverance

Perseverance is defined as the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition; the action or condition or an instance of persevering; steadfastness. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perseverance>) While it is applauded in our culture, perseverance is often not discussed or approached from a Biblical perspective. This week we will unpack the concept of persevering in our faith and in prayer and how this makes us great in the eyes of God.

Read these sound bites and consider whether they reflect Biblical wisdom.

- When asked if he was ready to give up after trying 20,000 different ways to invent the electric light bulb, **Thomas Edison** replied, “*No, now I know 20,000 ways NOT to do it.*”
- *In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins- not through strength but by perseverance.* **H. Jackson Brown**
- *People of mediocre ability sometimes achieve outstanding success because they don't know when to quit. Most men succeed because they are determined to.* **George E. Allen**
- *Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.* **Walter Elliott**
- *Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no help at all.* **Dale Carnegie**
- *Consider the postage stamp; its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing until it gets there.* **Josh Billings**
- *Never give up. Never, never give up! We shall go on to the end.* **Winston Churchill**
- *There is no failure except in no longer trying.* **Elbert Hubbard**
- *Defeat is simply a signal to press onward.* **Helen Keller**

- *I do not think there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost everything, even nature.* **John D. Rockefeller**
- *To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it.* **Mother Teresa**

After reading these quotes, what is your view of perseverance?

Selected Readings

Read Luke 18:1-8

What do these verses say about the reason Jesus shared this parable with His followers?

What trait did the widow portray that Jesus encourages His followers to emulate?

What parallel is drawn between the reluctant judge and God?

What is Jesus seeking in his followers when He returns to earth?

Read Luke 22:31 – 34

When Jesus foretells Peter's denial, what does He say regarding Satan?

What do these verses teach us about Jesus?

What does Jesus pray for Peter?

How does this verse encourage you?

Read Hebrews 5:7-10, Hebrews 7:25 and Romans 8:34

What do we learn about Jesus in these passages?

Read Romans 5:1 – 5

What do trials produce in our lives?

What should be our response and why?

Reflection on My Story

In the midst of your trials, struggles, or suffering, from where does your hope come?

We can have hope because of what we read in God's word in Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

Can you point to a time in your past when your faith was tested? What did you learn?

How do these scriptures give you a different perspective on trials you have faced? How have your trials helped you grow your character?

What are the trials, the "all things," going on in your life right now?

Read Habakkuk 3:17 – 19 and be encouraged by this example of a man who rejoiced in God, not in his circumstances.

After reflecting on these questions, in what areas is God challenging you?

Prayer

Meditate on Hebrews 12:1 - 2. Thank God for the victory that we have in and through Him in our lives. Ask Him to help you rejoice in your sufferings and for continued faith as you persevere. In the midst of any current trials ask Him for a heart to worship Him. Thank Him for His power and strength and for the trials you are currently facing in your own life.

Memory Verse

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4

Go Deeper (Additional Resources)

- *A Grief Observed* - C.S. Lewis

Session 6 - The Eight Greats: The Great Perseverance

LifeGroup Discussion Guide

Introduction: The Great Perseverance

This week we will discuss perseverance, specifically in light of the tribulations we will all face, especially as Christians. In John 16:33 Jesus warned his disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." Many Christians are not properly warned and expect that following Jesus will result in constant blessings and joy. The Bible tells a different story. The study this week will shed light on Biblical teaching about tribulation, endurance and perseverance and will encourage us to press on in our faith. We will learn to persevere in prayer and in our faith, to be seen as great in the eyes of God.

Review the sound bites from the Participant Guide and discuss as a group your thoughts on our culture's view of perseverance.

- When asked if he was ready to give up after trying 20,000 different ways to invent the electric light bulb, **Thomas Edison** replied, "*No, now I know 20,000 ways NOT to do it.*"
- *In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins- not through strength but by perseverance.* **H. Jackson Brown**
- *People of mediocre ability sometimes achieve outstanding success because they don't know when to quit. Most men succeed because they are determined to.* **George E. Allen**
- *Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.* **Walter Elliott**
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Discuss with the group the definitions of the words perseverance, endurance and tribulation and unpack their meaning in our culture.

- Perseverance: continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition; the action or condition or an instance of persevering; steadfastness
- Endurance: the ability to withstand hardship or adversity; *especially* the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity
- Tribulation: distress or suffering resulting from oppression or persecution; *also* a trying experience

Share an example of someone you know who has persevered through hard times and talk about what you learned from him or her.

What does the Bible say?

Read Luke 18:1 – 8

Do you identify with the widow or do you admire her persistence and wish that you could emulate that in your own prayer life?

Is there something in your life for which you have been praying without ceasing?

How do we know when we should quit praying and asking God for something?

Read Luke 22:31 – 34

How do you feel about the idea that Satan is sometimes permitted to attack us?

Can you point to a time in your past when your faith was tested? What did you learn?

Have you ever considered that Jesus has prayed for you that your faith may not fail? How does that make you feel?

Read Romans 5:1 – 5

What are your initial thoughts on God's call for us to rejoice in our sufferings?

Can you share an example of a time where suffering produced endurance, which produced character, which produced hope in your life? How did you persevere?

What in these passages challenged you the most?

Share with the group any insights God gave you during your study using the Participant Guide and from the weekend message.

What is our response?

How will our prayer lives change in response to what we have learned from this teaching?

What are some practical tools we can use to help us persevere in prayer?

How will we respond when future tribulations occur in our lives? How will we "put on the full armor of Christ" and prepare ourselves to fight the fight of faith? (Read Ephesians 6:10 – 20)

How can we encourage others to persevere in light of the trials they face?

When we take a step in perseverance Jesus gives us His overcoming power. Pray and ask God for His overcoming strength to give you the perseverance necessary for victory. Thank Him for the trials and suffering that are producing character and hope in your life right now. Share with your group ways that they can pray for you as you learn and practice perseverance in your faith.

Session 7 – The Eight Greats: The Great Love

Participant Guide

Introduction: The Great Love

What does it mean to be chosen to be on a team? We all have childhood memories of wanting to be picked, either for kickball or by that cute guy/girl in the class. No one wants to be the last one standing. No one wants the note back with the box checked “NO.” Rejection is painful.

The good news is that God has taken away all those fears through His love for us. Our culture says love is a physical thing, an emotion. It is something that goes away when the feeling goes away. We commercialize love and make it cute and cuddly. The Bible gives a different definition. In 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 we learn an amazing definition of love. “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

In the Greek language, which was the common language of Jesus’ time, there are four meanings for love. There is a brotherly love for a friend. It is a dispassionate virtuous love called “phileo.” The second kind of love is “storge.” It is a natural affection for a child from a parent. “Eros” is the third definition for love. It is a passionate, romantic love. The fourth word, “agape,” is an unconditional, self-sacrificial love. “Agape” is the word that is used in 1 Corinthians 13. Love that does not change is the love that God has for us. In John 21:15-17, Jesus asks Peter if he “agape” loves him. Peter answers yes with a “phileo” kind of love. Jesus asks Peter two more times and he finally responds with “agape” and a realization that God offers and desires a greater love than the world expects.

God has given us this great love in spite of us. In His mercy, He didn’t give us what we deserve. In His grace, He has given what we didn’t deserve. These are big ideas that we need to unpack. How do we respond to such mercy and grace? Is there something that we can do?

Read these sound bites and consider whether they reflect Biblical wisdom.

- *All you need is love.* **John Lennon and Paul McCartney**
- *There is no remedy for love but to love more.* **Henry David Thoreau**
- *In real love you want the other person’s good. In romantic love you want the other person.* **Margaret Anderson**

- *Love is the beauty of the soul.* **Saint Augustine**
- *Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.* **Aristotle**
- *The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt by the heart.* **Helen Keller**
- *Take away love and our earth is a tomb.* **Robert Browning**

Selected Readings

Read 1 John 4:7 – 12 and John 3:16

What do these passages say about God?

How did God show His love for us?

What does this passage say about someone who doesn't love?

1 John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Propitiation means a sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it into favor, which was completed by Jesus' work on the cross.

How then do we respond to this act?

Read Ephesians 1:3 – 6

What is the significance of God choosing us?

How do you respond to knowing that God chose you before time?

Read Matthew 22:34 – 39

How are you called to love God?

How should you love your neighbor?

How are these two commandments related?

Why do you think Jesus connects the two commandments?

Read Luke 10:25 – 37

How does Jesus answer the question, “who is my neighbor?”

In light of this passage, who is your neighbor and how are you to love them?

Reflection on My Story

Reflect on your story in light of The Great Love.

Do you feel God’s love for you and do you accept it? Does His love change the way you live? If not, why?

In 1 John 4:10, it says that Jesus endured the wrath of sin for you. How does that make you feel?

How do you love God? What does this look like in your daily life?

Is it easier to love your neighbor than yourself? Why? If you struggle with loving yourself, who is someone you can share this with?

Do you struggle to love your neighbor? If yes, why?

What person have you cared for recently by your physical presence?

What one thing could you do to aid local or global injustice and poverty?

Have you prayed about a focus for serving? What is one step you can take to follow God's leading?

Prayer

Sometimes it is easy to go and love our neighbors without deeply knowing God's love for us. In Romans 8:15, Paul refers to God as Abba meaning "our Daddy." God is our loving daddy. After giving thanks to God for choosing you, sit silently and listen for Him to speak to you about His love for you. Then spend sometime thinking or journaling ideas that reflect how to love God with all your heart, mind, and strength.

Take a few more minutes and read Psalm 139 aloud. Ask God to give you His view for all your neighbors.

Memory Verse

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end."
Lamentations 3:22

Go Deeper

- *Abba's Child* - Brennan Manning
- *The Five Love Languages* - Gary Smalley
- *Hope Lives: A Journey of Restoration* - Amber Van Schooneveld
- *The Four Loves* - C.S. Lewis
- *The Search for Significance* - Robert S. McGee

Session 7 – The Eight Greats: The Great Love

LifeGroup Discussion Guide

Introduction: The Great Love

How does it feel to be chosen? Rejected? Loved?

Share about a time you were chosen or felt loved.

Read and discuss these sound bites. Do they reflect Biblical wisdom?

- *All you need is love.* **John Lennon and Paul McCartney**
- *There is no remedy for love but to love more.* **Henry David Thoreau**
- *In real love you want the other person's good. In romantic love you want the other person.* **Margaret Anderson**
- *Love is the beauty of the soul.* **Saint Augustine**
- *Love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.* **Aristotle**
- *The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt by the heart.* **Helen Keller**
- *Take away love and our earth is a tomb.* **Robert Browning**

What does the Bible say?

Read 1 John 4:7 – 12 and John 3:16

Why do we love?

What are the benefits of knowing God?

What happens when we love one another?

Read Ephesians 1:3 – 6

Why is God's acceptance important?

How do you respond to His acceptance?

What is your response to knowing God chose you before time?

Read Matthew 22:37 – 39

Why is this the greatest commandment?

How do you struggle to live by this commandment?

What is the relationship between loving God and loving your neighbor?

Read Luke 10:25 – 37

What do you learn about loving your neighbor from this parable?

In light of this passage, who is your neighbor?

How is your desire to reach out to your neighbor impacted when you consider how God loves her or him?

What is our response?

How have you experienced God's love?

How has God's love changed your life?

What should be our response to God's love?

How can we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind in our daily life?

What are some ways you can show love to your neighbor?

How can we, as a LifeGroup, love our neighbors?

Pray together and thank God for His great love for us. As a response to His love pray for the needs of our local and global neighbors and ask God to show us how we can share His love with them.

For volunteer opportunities to serve our local and global neighbors see the outreach page of the Forest Hill website: <http://www.foresthill.org/outreach>