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# VERITAS

*Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.*

## *How to Go from GOOD TO GREAT in God's Eyes*

*A Challenge to  
Spiritual Greatness  
in Our Lives*

**by Chip Ingram**



**DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

## DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER



**Chip Ingram** is president and teaching pastor of *Living on the Edge*, an international teaching and discipleship ministry through radio, television, and the Internet. His vision is to partner with the local church to be a worldwide catalyst for discipleship.

Ingram is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M., 1984) and is the author of nine books: *Holy Ambition*; *Finding God When You Need Him Most*; *The Miracle of Life Change*; *Love, Sex & Lasting Relationships*; *God: As He Longs for You to See Him*; *Sex 180: The Next Revolution*; *The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know About Satan, Demons & Spiritual Warfare*; *Effective Parenting in a Defective World*; and the newly released book, *Good to Great in God's Eyes*.

Chip lives in Atlanta with his wife, Theresa, and has four grown children and six grandchildren. He presented this message to a recent meeting of the Dallas Seminary Leader Board.

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3909 Swiss Avenue • Dallas, TX 75204 • 214-824-3094

*Veritas* is a publication of Dallas Seminary for our valued friends and partners, designed to provide biblical encouragement and instruction in keeping with our strong commitment to minister to those who stand with us in prayer and financial support. We are pleased to present the messages of outstanding leaders and Bible teachers who speak during chapels and at other events, as a way of bringing you “on campus” with us and giving you the benefit of their insights. *Veritas* is also available online at our website, [www.dts.edu/veritas](http://www.dts.edu/veritas).

*How to Go from*  
**GOOD TO GREAT**  
*in God's Eyes*



*Chip Ingram* says it's natural for us to compare ourselves with others. But he says God has a different standard. When we stand before Him, He will ask us one question: "Did you fulfill the potential I gave you while you were on earth?" *Ingram's* dynamic message shows you how to tap that potential and go from good to great in God's eyes.

**L**et me begin by asking you an important question: Could it be that God gave you the intelligence, position, money, and spiritual maturity you have to make a huge difference in the world at this important time in history?

I firmly believe that this is exactly why God gave you the particular set of gifts you have, and the same is true for me and for every believer. The reason I say that is because I read in God's Word, "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (2

Chronicles 16:9). I believe this was not only true when it was first spoken, but is still true today.

*A holy ambition  
is one that God  
births in your  
heart and then  
leads you to  
accomplish as you  
follow Him  
in obedience  
and faith.*

This verse was actually spoken to King Asa of Judah, who began to depart from the Lord after 30 years of being a king who "did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God" (2 Chronicles 14:2). Asa's story reminds us that success in the past is no guarantee of success in the future. Spiritual accomplishments in the past are no assurance that we will be just as spiritually fruitful and productive in the future.

## **An Ambition That God Births in Your Heart**

The key at all times is a strong sense of dependence on God—a feeling in your gut that you know you can't do what God has called you to do without His power and enabling. That's why the ambition I want to talk about is a *holy* ambition, one that God births in your heart and then leads you to accomplish as you follow Him in obedience and faith.

So with that caution as our background, I want to show you how anyone who has a genuine heart for God and is willing to take some risks can be great in God's eyes and do things for Him. Usually, when someone talks about greatness, too many people excuse themselves because they figure they aren't smart enough, talented enough, wealthy enough, influential enough, or whatever enough to make a huge difference.

But let me clue you in on something. Being sharp and smart and talented and all of that is overrated in God's economy. The first time I read the Old Testament, I began to think about the kind of people God really uses. And what I discovered is that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. God's criterion for greatness is not what we think of as great human skills or abilities, because He is looking for someone whose heart is fully His.

So the fundamental question you and I need to ask ourselves is, How do we know if our hearts fully belong to God?

To answer this question, I want to give you some principles from the life of Nehemiah. One reason I like Nehemiah is because he's what we would call a layman, a guy from the business world. As the cupbearer and confidant to the king of Persia, Nehemiah is a person of influence. But it's not his influence in the Persian palace that makes Nehemiah great, but the fact that his heart fully belonged to the Lord.

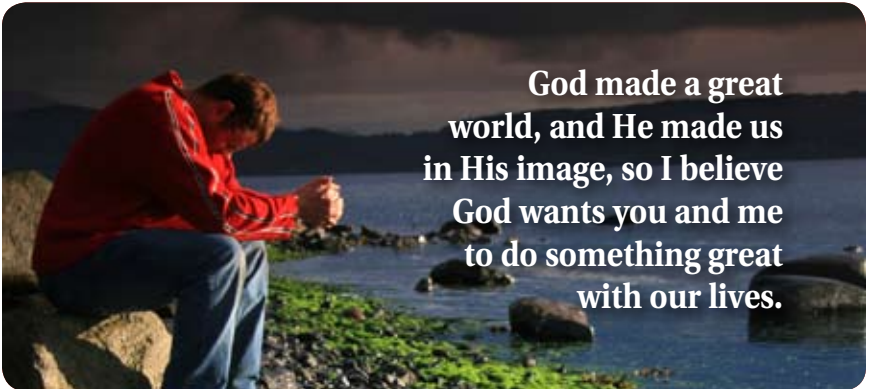
So what God did in Nehemiah's life was raise up a person who would take steps that changed the entire course of history and fulfill the promises



God made to Abraham and to David—as Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem that had been destroyed for decades.

You can read Nehemiah’s story for yourself. What I want to do is give you six conditions that will tell you if you have the kind of heart God is looking for, which is the prerequisite for His doing something great in your life.

Before I share these, I sincerely hope you want to make a difference for God and be used by Him to do great things. God made a great world, and He made us in His image, so I believe God wants you and me to do something great with our lives.



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## **A Dislocated Heart and a Broken Spirit**

The first condition for greatness in God’s kingdom is to have what I call a **dislocated heart**. Nehemiah was living a life of luxury in the palace of the king of Persia. If life were all about personal peace and prosperity, then Nehemiah would have gotten an A+. But we learn that although Nehemiah’s body was in the Persian capital of Susa, his heart was in Jerusalem, because Jerusalem represented God’s agenda.

So Nehemiah wasn’t content with his life of comfort after a messenger came to him from among his Jewish

brothers back in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1–3). Nehemiah questioned him about the people and the place, and the report was not good. Jerusalem was not only in shambles, but the way God’s people were living was an embarrassment to God’s great name.

As soon as Nehemiah heard this terrible report, he wept and began to pray that God would use him to do something about the disgraceful conditions in Jerusalem. There are times when we need to get alone in a room, take stock of the world, and then pray, “God, I want to see the pain the way You see it. What do You want me to do? What part can I change?”

A dislocated heart is a God-given concern for others that propels us out of our comfort zone. It’s a passionate concern for God’s agenda that supersedes our own desires for personal peace and prosperity. It’s something in your heart and your gut. Nehemiah wept and mourned because it hurt to think of God’s people and God’s holy city in disgrace. Nehemiah said, in effect, “I don’t know what to do. I’m just one person, with one king, and God’s agenda is going south. I am going to refocus and fast and pray.”

The second condition we see in Nehemiah is a **broken spirit**. Nehemiah 2:1 shows us that Nehemiah had been praying for four months with intensity, night and day, that God would give him the opportunity to make a difference back in Jerusalem.

That’s the kind of spirit we need. God grabbed Nehemiah’s heart and said, “I put you on the planet for a reason. I placed you over there in Persia with power and influence, and now I have changed your heart to see where the needs are.” A broken spirit begins with a restored view of God.



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If you study Nehemiah's prayer in 1:5–11 carefully, you'll find 44 references to God either by personal pronoun, by adjective, or by His name. Nehemiah prayed a God-centered prayer. Here's a principle you need to remember: *If you have a big God, you will always have a small problem. But if you have a big problem, you always have a small God. Nehemiah had a big God.*

Notice that the only issue was that Nehemiah knew he couldn't do the job of rallying support and going back to rebuild Jerusalem on his own. Nehemiah knew he couldn't do it himself, which is what a broken spirit is all about. You say to God, "I can't do it." But God says, "That's all right, because what I am looking for is someone whose heart is fully Mine."

## A Radical Step of Faith and a Strategic Plan

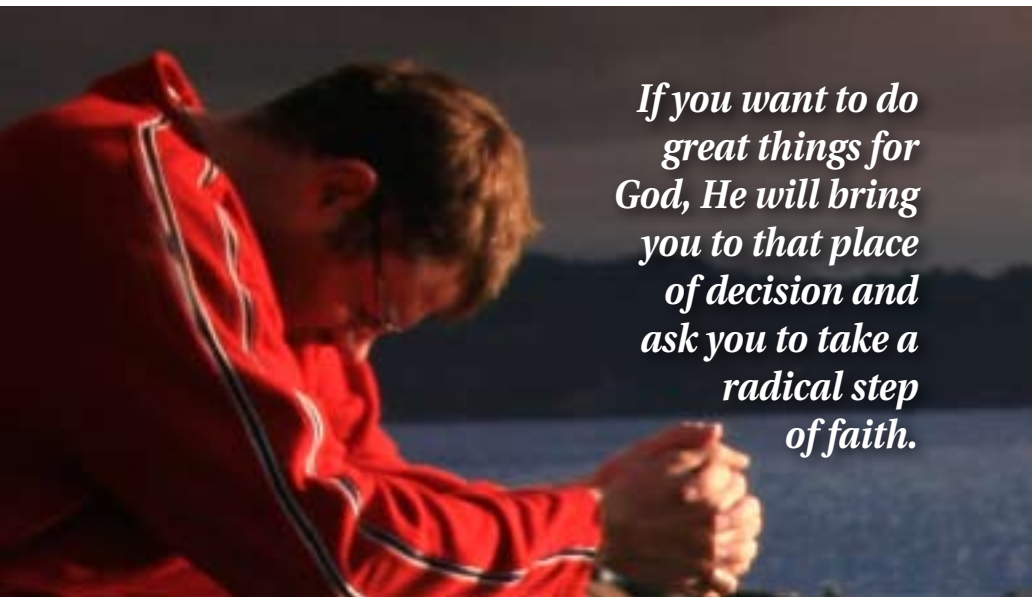


The third of the six conditions for greatness in God's eyes is a **radical step of faith**. This is where it starts getting a little risky—but remember that God's eyes are going to and fro through the whole earth looking for someone whose heart is fully His, someone He can strongly support! That means giving you whatever you need personally, corporately, or any other way to help you fulfill His agenda.

That's what God did for Nehemiah, as the king of Persia outfitted him with everything he would need to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the wall, and more important, restore God's glory in the eyes of His people and the people who surrounded them.

Many of us want to do something big and great for God, but we often need to narrow our vision down to a few people and a few things instead of trying to do everything. The issue is what God has called you to do. Once you find that, then make your difference for Him.

A radical step of faith is obeying God's known will

A man with short brown hair, wearing a red jacket with white stripes on the sleeves, is shown from the chest up. He is looking down and to the right with a thoughtful expression, his hands clasped together. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a body of water and a distant shoreline under a clear sky.

*If you want to do great things for God, He will bring you to that place of decision and ask you to take a radical step of faith.*

to you, even at great personal risk and sacrifice. This is why a lot of people don't experience the strong support of God. They come to a fork in the road that calls for a radical commitment, and they take the easier road and go off and do some nice things. But other people take the God-directed risks and are strongly supported by God.

Nehemiah prayed for four months and then discovered that he was the answer to his prayer. He knew he couldn't stay in the luxury of the king's palace, so he risked his life to go back to Jerusalem. I don't know what a radical step of faith would look like in your life, but I can tell you that if you want to do great things for God, He will bring you to that place of decision and ask you to take a radical step of faith.

The fourth condition for true greatness is to make a **strategic plan**. Nehemiah did more than pray. He drew up a plan with exactly what he would need so that when the king gave him permission to go back to Jerusalem, Nehemiah could say, "Great. Here is what I need and who I need and how much time I need."

Many great visions fail because they lack a plan for

their fulfillment. A strategic plan answers such crucial questions as, How am I going to get where I believe God wants me to go? What resources do I need? Who am I going to partner with? You don't have to put it on a brochure, but you need to write it out like you would a business plan.

## A Personal Commitment and a “Niche on the Wall”



Here are the fifth and sixth conditions for greatness I want to share with you. Number five is to make a **personal commitment**. Once you have your strategic plan and know that this is what God has called you to do, go for it. Once you see the bull's-eye of your life and define what the target is, make a commitment to hit it.

Finally, find your “**niche on the wall.**” As you read Nehemiah chapters 3 and 4, you see that every person who worked on Nehemiah's wall-rebuilding team had a personal niche, a personal place to serve that connected each individual with the person next to him on the wall. And within 52 days, Nehemiah and his workers had achieved a miracle—rebuilding the destroyed walls of Jerusalem.

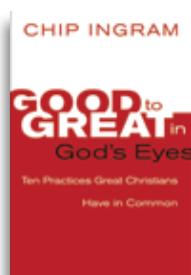
This is what it takes to make a real difference for God, to achieve greatness before God the way Nehemiah did. My goal in this message has been to inspire and to disturb you, to challenge you to dream a great dream for God, yet also to help you realize the radical commitment it will take to achieve that dream.

I hope you will take the challenge, because the fact is that we can't make it today without a new generation of Nehemiahs—and you can be one of them!

IN APPRECIATION FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF DALLAS SEMINARY . . .

# GOOD to GREAT

## Learn the 10 Practices That Great Christians Have in Common . . . and How to Put Them into Practice!



Popular Bible teacher and author Chip Ingram opened his Bible and asked a crucial question: “What characteristics do great Christians have in common?” The discoveries Chip made have been life-changing for thousands of people, and now he shares them with you in his new book, *Good to Great in God's Eyes*.

Using Scripture, stories, and examples from biblical and contemporary believers who left a lasting legacy, Chip offers you those 10 practical steps for honoring God with a well-rounded life of outstanding faith and excellent work—spiritually, personally, and professionally. Through the book's chapters like “Dream Great Dreams,” “Pray Great Prayers,” “Take Great Risks,” and “Make Great Sacrifices,” you can see why *Good to Great in God's Eyes* holds so much potential to help set you on a path that leads to your making a major impact in your world.

No matter what your profession or particular sphere of influence, this dynamic, extremely practical book will open your eyes to possibilities you may never have considered before!

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Dr. Mark L. Bailey

*Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!*

## Doing the Things That Matter the Most

I'm convinced that I have one of the greatest jobs in the world. And seeing the impact of Dallas Seminary graduates like Chip Ingram across the globe does nothing but strengthen my conviction!

I appreciate Chip's call to us not to settle for the ordinary, but to believe God for great things. The wonderful thing about greatness from God's perspective is that all of us can achieve it. Jesus turned the world's idea of greatness on its head when He told His disciples:

"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves" (Luke 22:25–26).

The Lord's statement is part of the biblical basis for the concept of "servant-leader," which describes the goal of our training at Dallas Seminary. This is also the kind of leadership that Chip Ingram is advocating in this issue of *Veritas*—and I truly hope that we will take it to heart.

Remember the old phrase, "Expect great things *from* God; attempt great things *for* God"? That's what Chip is talking about as he urges us to take great risks while dreaming great dreams.

I also appreciate Chip's example of the biblical leader Nehemiah. God gave this Jewish leader in exile one of the Bible's greatest challenges: to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and restore God's glory about both His people and the surrounding nations.

We're also building a great project at Dallas Seminary—in bricks and mortar but in human hearts. And like Nehemiah, we couldn't do it without friends like you who work shoulder-to-shoulder with us to complete God's work in the lives of people like Chip Ingram . . . and ultimately, the millions who are touched by him and other graduates.

Your prayers and financial support for Dallas Seminary are helping mold leaders for a world that is desperately short of true leaders. Thank you for standing with us in this work.

**Dr. Mark L. Bailey**  
*President*  
 Dallas Theological Seminary