

SERIES OVERVIEW



The “GOAT” series is grounded in the book of Matthew and helps teenagers see how Jesus is the GOAT (Greatest of All Time) and challenges them to live out three of his greatest teachings. Drawing from popular current debates over who or what is the GOAT, students will encounter the authority of Jesus and some of his GREAT teachings. Throughout the series, there are opportunities to cast vision for your youth ministry as well as give students practical ways to put the Greatest Commandments, servant leadership, and the Great Commission into practice.

Week 1: The GREATEST Commandment(s)

Jesus shows he’s the GOAT as he sums up all of scripture in the two Greatest Commandments we can live out in as a church and as individuals.

Week 2: The Path to GREATNESS

Greatness requires elite skills, strength, confidence, and dominance - and there must be clear evidence that someone is superior to everyone else in that given category. With that idea in your mind, let’s look at Jesus and see how the actual GOAT defines greatness.

Week 3: The GREAT Commission

Jesus commissions us to reach this world, and he walks in walk in co-mission with us.

Coleader Teaching Format

CAPTURE

Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?

Goal: To captivate students’ interest and encourage them to actively engage and learn.

“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing...” Proverbs 15:2

SCRIPTURE

What does God’s Word say?

Goal: To foster a deeper understanding of Scripture among students.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.” 2 Timothy 3:16

INSIGHTS

What might this Scripture mean?

Goal: To present key insights in a way that resonates with teenagers.

“The teaching of your word gives light; so even the simple can understand.” Psalm 119:130

ACTION

How could we live this out?

Goal: To assist teenagers in implementing God’s Word into their daily actions.

“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.” James 2:17

DISCUSS

What can we learn from one another?

Goal: To foster meaningful discussions and encourage active participation among students.

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.” Proverbs 18:15

Each teaching comes with two teaching options: (1) an outline, and (2) full manuscript that is flavored with illustrations, humor, photos, videos, object-lessons, and/or stories. All scriptures are NLT unless otherwise noted. Feel free to customize to your own translation preference with blank slides and Word doc.

Teaching Guide

Week 2 GOAT: The Path To Greatness



Big Idea

Jesus teaches and models the path to GREATNESS is through serving.

Scripture

Matthew 23:1-12; Matthew 20:24-26, 28; Luke 22:26-27a, John 13:14-15; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5b-6; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 15:5-6

[Teacher note: please refer to Coleader Teaching Format document for a better understanding of the five teaching sections used. Also, our prayer is that you will feel tremendous freedom to adapt this content to best fit your unique context. No one knows your students better than you, so make this content your own.]

CAPTURE ► (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

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We are in week 2 of our GOAT series, which stands for “Greatest of All Time.” We are looking at the statements of Jesus (who is the GOAT of all GOATs) found in the book of Matthew.

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Before we dig into the Scripture, I’d love to ask you: What does greatness LOOK like? What must be present in someone’s life to be described as great? You can think about any category you think about, like athletes, actors, comic book characters, or whatever you want. What does greatness look like in the people you pay attention to?

[Teacher note: if your group size and dynamic allow for it, get some answers from the crowd, or have them get into groups of two or three and discuss.]

I’d love to hear some of your thoughts.

As you were naming these characteristics, it appears clear that greatness requires elite skills, strength, confidence, and dominance. And there must be clear evidence that someone is superior to everyone else in that given category.

With that idea in your mind, let's turn to Jesus and see how the actual GOAT defines greatness.

Many of Jesus' interactions with people in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were marked by compassion, kindness, and love. But, as we talked about last week, there were moments when Jesus called people out.

Let's quickly review: those religious leaders (the Pharisees and the Sadducees) held much power and influence within the Jewish community. They saw themselves as THE religious rulers over all of the Israelites, so they weren't excited about Jesus' popularity and unique teaching, which overshadowed them in the eyes of the people.

After Jesus issued His smackdown of all smackdowns on these guys, He didn't just stop there. He took it even further by turning to the crowd to say some not-so-pleasant things about the religious leaders He had just embarrassed. Let's see what He said...

SCRIPTURE ► What does God's Word say?

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1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. 3 So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach. 4 They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden." (Matthew 23:1-4 – NLT)

Can you hear it? This passage is just DRIPPING with confrontation. Jesus wasn't content to have evaded the trap set by the religious leaders; now He's talked right back to them. He called them hypocrites because: "they don't practice what they teach."

And He doesn't just stop there! As we keep reading, remember that the people Jesus was talking about WERE STANDING RIGHT THERE. Let that sink in. He wasn't talking about them behind their backs. They were STANDING RIGHT THERE.

Okay, let's keep going:

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5 Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. 6 And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. 7 They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi.' (Matthew 23:5-7 – NLT)

Not only were they not practicing what they preached, but now Jesus said that anything they did was simply for show. Plain and simple, Jesus was not messing around.

He continued:

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8 Don't let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. 9 And don't address anyone here on Earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your Father. 10 And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. (Matthew 23:8-10 – NLT)

I love this because it's not just Jesus picking on the religious leaders. He quickly moved from absolutely roasting them to explaining how things should be.

And how did He finish it all off? Jesus gave us a super-clear description of what true greatness looks like:

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11 The greatest among you must be a servant. 12 But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23:11-12 – NLT)

In these two sentences, Jesus completely flipped the script of what defines greatness. It flew in the face of the religious leaders but was also far from what most people would have expected.

It reminds me of the memes that contrast the ultimate expectation of something versus reality.

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You've seen this with burgers before, right? Let's see how these meme out.

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Expectation: The religious leaders saw flaunting their power as greatness.

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Reality: Jesus said, "the greatest among you must be a servant."

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Expectation: The religious leaders sought recognition of their greatness.

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Reality: Jesus said, “those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Before we criticize these religious leaders too harshly, let’s think about how we defined greatness just a few minutes ago.

We defined greatness as elite skills, strength, confidence, and dominance; identifiable ways that prove someone is better than others. It’s not the same, but our definition leans closer to “flaunting power” than “being a servant,” right?

I’m not suggesting we’re wrong by defining greatness the way we did. I define it the same way in the categories we initially considered (sports, arts, entertainment, etc.). For example, no one would ever think that a basketball player who keeps giving the ball to the opposing players because he wants to be humble and serve the other team to be the GOAT, right? Of course not!

It’s important to remember that when we apply the concept of greatness to categories (things like sports, music, or art that we’ve discussed before), greatness can accurately be defined by skills and dominance. But those are just human, earthly, and temporary categories. Jesus clarified that the true and lasting path to greatness looks much different from a spiritual perspective.

INSIGHTS ► What might this scripture mean?

Let me give you two thoughts about the true path to greatness from Jesus’ perspective.

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1. Jesus TAUGHT us that true greatness is achieved by serving.

These passages were not the first time Jesus equated greatness to being a servant. Three chapters earlier, we read about an odd request that Jesus received from the mother of His disciples, James and John. Many Jewish people during that time assumed Jesus had come to be the next King of Israel. Because of that, the mom of these two disciples asked Jesus if her boys could sit at His right and left hands should He ever become King.

[Teacher note: tell a personal story about an overbearing mom you’ve encountered or heard about. Or personalize the one below.]

First, it must have been embarrassing for James and John to have their mom come to Jesus and make that kind of request. It reminds me of a friend in school whose mom would always go to his coaches and tell them how she thought her son should get more playing time and would give them coaching tips. My friend HATED it, but she just couldn’t help herself!

Second, it's wild how far off she was by thinking Jesus came to be the King of Israel when He had come to be the King of the entire world. King over sin and death, and Savior to everyone. Jesus is the King of Kings!

As you might imagine, word of James' and John's mother's request got out to the other ten disciples. And understandably, they were pretty annoyed. Let's check it out:

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24 When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. 25 But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. 26 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant..." (Matthew 20:24-26 – NLT)

Jesus makes it clear that true greatness is achieved through serving others.

[Teacher note: if you need more examples, reference Matthew 20:16; Luke 22:26-27a; John 13:14-15; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5b-6.]

And here's what's incredible: Jesus didn't just teach the idea of leaders serving; He lived it out too.

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2. Jesus SHOWED us that true greatness is achieved by serving.

When the ten disciples were annoyed by James and John's mother's request, Jesus made another mind-blowing statement about Himself. He wanted to make it clear that He was all about serving too.

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28 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28 – NLT)

Let's read this slowly and consider that Jesus was talking about Himself when He used the phrase "Son of Man." He came to serve others even to the point of death. Now, let's compare this statement to what we saw Jesus say about the religious leaders in Matthew 23:

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3 So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach. (Matthew 23:3 – NLT)

Think about this. If anyone in the world could have said, "I deserve to be served," it would be Jesus, but He did just the opposite.

- He could have come to Earth however He wanted, but He chose to be born as a baby in a tiny town, in a stable, unwelcomed by most.
- He could have come as elite royalty with tons of money, yet He chose to be the son of a poor carpenter.
- He could have hung out with the cultural bigshots like the religious leaders, but instead, He hung out with people who were sick, people who had been neglected, and people who were outcasts. He met them right where they were, healed them, and sent them on a new path of life.
- He could have gathered the most elite soldiers and advisers around Him, but He chose tax collectors, zealots, and ordinary, uneducated fishermen to make up His group of followers.

The GOAT of all GOATs displayed what it means to live out greatness through serving and humility.

ACTION ► How can we live this out?

[Teacher note: the first option below is one where you will want to include the right opportunities for your students and the paths they can take to begin serving in your church.]

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1. Choose to serve in our church: I don't want this to be a place where you just attend and listen to a message. I'd love for you also to find an opportunity to serve here that will make your heart come alive. The church is not meant to be run by adults; I want this to be your church where you have your ministry.

And as odd as it sounds, you can get on the pathway to greatness by serving here. We have some incredible opportunities where you can help our church's ministries. You can serve within this group, but you can also serve our larger church. In fact, a fantastic way to grow in your connection to Jesus and the broader church is when you serve in our Kids' Ministry, as a greeter on Sunday morning, or with our weekday cleaning team. If you want to explore what it looks like to serve here in the church...

[Share your specific next steps here.]

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2. Choose to serve your family: In Jesus' view, serving your family is essential and honors God. In fact, Jesus said this:

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5 But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.' 6 In this way, you say they don't need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. (Matthew 15:5-6 – NLT)

So, while it's great for you to serve in one of our church's ministries, and I want you to do it, what Jesus is saying here is that you shouldn't say, "Sorry, Dad, I can't help you clean the garage because I'm serving at church."

Parents have a lot on their plates, right? I realize there are some exceptions, but parents work, take care of the home, make meals, mow lawns, and juggle the finances. The opportunity to serve your parents is virtually endless. Don't wait for them to ask; jump in and help lighten their load!

And just hear me out, but you can also serve Jesus by serving your siblings. Why not help them with a school project, help them clean up their bedroom, or play a board game with them? All acts of service, even small ones, count in God's eyes.

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3. Choose to serve others: We talked about loving God and our neighbors last week. If you were here, you probably remember we said your neighbor is everyone you come into contact with.

Simply put, serving others is identifying their needs and then meeting them. Imagine picking up Doritos at the grocery store, and you see that elderly woman struggling to carry her groceries to her car. Why not give her a helping hand? That's serving. Give food to someone who is hungry, share a bottle of water with someone who is thirsty, show a stranger some hospitality, take chicken soup to your neighbor who has pneumonia, visit a nursing home, and talk to someone who doesn't get many visitors. If you're looking, you can see opportunities for acts of service everywhere you look.

Ask God to give you eyes to see those opportunities to serve outside the walls of this church. In your home. On the way to school. At your school. At your extra-curricular activities. In your job. And when you're just hanging out with your friends.

No matter how you decide to serve, let's all choose to be the type of youth group that follows the path to greatness that Jesus taught and modeled!

[Close in prayer.]

DISCUSS ► (What can we learn from one another?)

[Note: These discussion questions are designed to be used in a Small Group setting. We have also included a phone-friendly PDF version of the discussion questions in the Small Group section of this series in Coleader.co.]

1. Who is someone you deeply admire for the way they serve others? What are some of the best qualities and character traits you see in that person?
2. What is a way you like to help others? What is a way that is hard for you to help others?
3. If you are in anything competitive, how do you balance that competition with Jesus' words in Matthew 23:11-12 and so many other passages?
4. If you are serving others, how do you avoid people taking advantage of you?
5. Look through Philippians 2:5-11. What jumps out to you in this passage?
6. What are ways we could serve each other as a group?