

GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Greatness

Mark 9:33-37

Philippians 2:3-11

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

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Sermon

Who's the greatest? This is a question we ask time after time in life. Who's the greatest? We ask this question when it comes to sports, grades, jobs, money, intelligence, celebrity, and in regards to every kind of talent and ability you can think of.

The world of sports provides some of the most extreme examples of this competitive attitude. From the Olympics to the World Series to the Super Bowl to the World Cup . . . we seem to find plenty of opportunities to ask, who's the greatest?

It's from the world of sports, in fact, that we get one of the most famous quotes about greatness. Ambitious American football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing." And later, perhaps after he was challenged for making such a statement, he said, "If it doesn't matter who wins or loses, then why do they keep score?"

Wanting to Be Great

After reading the Gospel passage for today, perhaps it's comforting to us to realize that this desire to end up on the top of the heap isn't something new. It's a wish that has been circulating in the human heart ever since sin entered our race. There is this innate drive in us to go farther, run faster, be the best, win the race, grab the crown, put down the competition, and then enjoy a little gloating time.

Who's the greatest?

That's what the disciples wanted to know. On the face of it, doesn't that seem a little strange? These were guys who didn't have anything, guys who were travelling around the countryside, following a homeless man. They didn't have any money. They didn't have a place to live. They might have frequently wondered where their next meal would be coming from. They had nothing. Why would they be talking about who was going to be the greatest? The greatest at what?

Well, if our Gospel reading had started one chapter earlier, maybe that would have given us a clue. In Mark 8, Peter declares that he believes Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These disciples realized that Jesus was the Messiah, the One the Jews had been expecting for centuries. They believed that He had come to free them from the Romans and to set up His kingdom. Perhaps they were eager to hold the top offices in that kingdom. You know, get in early and rub shoulders with the Big Guy, and you can really go places.

Shattered Dreams

So, it must have been disconcerting to Peter that, right after his acknowledgement of Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus began to tell them about how He would be rejected by the Jewish leaders, how He was going to suffer and be killed. Frankly, this was *not* good news to the disciples, because the Bible says that Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him.

The disciples wanted a glorious, conquering King. They wanted a Person who embodied power, victory, and crushing defeat to the opposition. They wanted strength and dominion. They couldn't wrap their minds around humiliation and suffering. So that's why we find them, in Mark 9, still going with their original ideas about the Messiah. They wanted so badly to believe that Jesus was going to squash the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel, and when that happened, they were eager to know which of them was going to be the top dog.

Who's the greatest? That's what they had been arguing about on the road, when Jesus called them together and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." *That* wasn't what they wanted to hear. It's likely they didn't even understand what Jesus was saying, but it wasn't too long after He said this that Jesus took the basin and the towel and washed His disciples' feet in the Upper Room. To Peter especially, once again, this was an embarrassment. This was Jesus, their Messiah, their conquering King . . . He wasn't supposed to be on the floor doing a slave's job!

The Key to Greatness

Some people have speculated that Jesus' reply to the disciples and His washing their feet in the Upper Room was intended as a rebuke. Some say Jesus was disappointed in their discussions about greatness and wanted to steer their thoughts in another direction. Perhaps. But, what if Jesus was

just seizing the opportunity to answer their question? What if—knowing that they were talking about being great—Jesus wanted to actually teach them the key to greatness?

On the night of the Last Supper, what Jesus was showing them was that, in reality, service and greatness are *linked*. What we often try to do is bypass the service and head straight for the greatness. But greatness without service is no greatness at all. That's what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples. "Guys, if you *really* want to be great, look for ways to serve others."

Jesus didn't say that to reprimand His disciples for wanting to be great. He wasn't trying to get them to forget about being great. On the contrary, God wants us *all* to be great; He wants us to aspire to *true* greatness, the kind of greatness He has.

There is sort of a paradox here. When we are trying to be great, we are usually looking for ways and opportunities to benefit ourselves . . . just like the disciples were. We are trying to get the advantage, we are trying to set up a perfect scenario, we are trying to stack the deck in our favor. But when we realize that we truly *are* great, that our worth comes from being children of the Most High God, we stop trying to set things up for ourselves. We relax and know that we're going to be taken care of, and we start trying to look for ways to bless others. *That's* true greatness.

True Service is an Attitude

But service isn't just about helping others; true service is an attitude. That's what Jesus was trying to help His disciples understand—that truly great people are *always* servants.

Let me repeat that: Truly great people *are* the greatest servants. Let's explore this for a moment. As Christians who have come here to worship God, who do *we* say is the greatest? Whom do *we* say is worthy of all praise? God!

But where does God's greatness come from? Is He great just because He's God? Is He great just because He created everything? Is He great because He has all the power?

No, if we believe the words of Jesus today, we must conclude that God's greatness lies in the fact that He has made Himself *the very last*, and the servant of all. Is that the picture we like? Do we want a God who is, primarily, a suffering servant? Or are we still looking for and hoping for the conquering King, the victorious squasher of the competition?

God's greatness doesn't lie in the fact that He is all powerful. His greatness lies in *how* He uses that power. And as we heard from Paul today in the reading from Philippians, He doesn't use His power for His own advantage. He doesn't use His power on His behalf; He uses it on our behalf. He uses *His* power for *our* advantage.

God's greatness is in direct proportion to His service. The more He serves, the greater He becomes; the greater He becomes, the more He serves. You see, Jesus wasn't just telling His disciples to get it together and stop arguing. He was revealing the reality of greatness. He was telling them how to get exactly what they wanted.

God is a Servant

More than anything else, our God is a servant. He lives to bless His creation. All His activity is saving activity, which places more focus on *us* than on Himself. In fact, we might even say that the very nature of Godhood is servanthood. That's what Jesus said: greatness and service are linked.

We attain true greatness when we're not *trying* to attain greatness. Imagine what that would make our sports competitions look like. Imagine if one of the teams decided that they really *are* the greatest, no matter what. Imagine if they decided that—because they were already great—they weren't worried so much about *proving* their greatness as they were about helping the other team feel like they were great, too. Can you imagine one team helping the other win the World Cup?

In 1976, at a Special Olympics Track and Field event in Spokane, WA, a group of young boys were running a race, and the two boys in the lead happened to be friends. As they were coming to the end of the final lap, the boy who was in the lead suddenly realized that his friend had taken a tumble on the asphalt.

Immediately, he stopped and turned around. Though he was just a few steps from winning, he went back and helped his friend to his feet so they could cross the finish line together. Meanwhile, the race had been won by another boy, and several others had also crossed the line.

Who won the race that day? But who was the greatest?

In God, we see the first and best example of service. As we worship Him for having that

servant's heart, may we also be inspired to serve. May we come to do what Spencer W. Kimball suggested: "Love people, not things; use things, not people."

For that's what our *great* God is like.

Prayers, Etc.

INVOCATION

Oh Great God, You are worthy of all praise. You are the greatest, because You have made Yourself the least. Precisely because You are God, You came to serve us. Come now and be with us. By Your humble service, awaken in us a servant's heart. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come now, come and worship the One who is the greatest of all. He is exalted. He is worthy. He is high and lifted up. As we bask in His glory, He is willing to teach us how to also be great. Come now, let us learn from Him!

PARTICIPATORY PRAYER *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Great God of the ages, You are high and exalted above everyone and everything. Yet You became nothing, poured out to death. Often, we have sought to achieve greatness by avoiding service and sacrifice. Thank You for showing us how to be great as You are great. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

While we were yet sinners, Christ sacrificed everything to save us. His greatness expresses itself in total service to His creation. Because of that, today, you may have assurance that your sins are forgiven in Christ. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

God is the greatest *everything*. The greatest Giver and the greatest Servant. We have all benefited enormously from God's gifts. He has given us the gift of love, life, freedom, and salvation. And as we benefit from His gifts, He gives us the opportunity to respond by giving gifts that will help others benefit from God's gifts as well. May we be inspired to give as generously to others as He gives to us. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Gracious God, we know very well that we can't out-give You. There will never be anyone who is more generous than You. Thank You for accepting these gifts we have returned to You today. Thank You for receiving them as the overflow of our grateful and appreciative hearts. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Father, Your servant's heart is astounding. In a universe where Your creation has run amok and sought to destroy what You have created, You have responded with grace and love. Instead of being a powerful dictator who rules by force, You are a suffering servant who rules by serving others.

Because You are God and because You are truly great, You emptied Yourself to become as nothing. You endured the shame of the cross and, for the joy set before You, lived among us as One committed to blessing our lives with Your presence. Everything You have done, everything You are now doing, and everything You will do in the future has been for the benefit of Your creation.

Jesus has revealed that the heart of God is a heart full of love, forgiveness, compassion, and power to heal all the damage done by sin. Because of His testimony, we know that You accept us, that You love us, and that You hear us as we pray. Hear us now, dear Lord, as we bring our specific concerns to You: **[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]**

Now and for all eternity, You are to be praised for Your greatness. Your name is above every name, and You are worthy of all honor, glory, and worship. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now, may our great God give you every opportunity to practice true greatness—in humble service and self-sacrifice—so that you may know what it is to be great like He is great. To the honor and glory of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Children's Story

Method: Story

Purpose: To help children understand where true greatness comes from.

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Johnny. And Johnny was very good at running. In fact, he was *the best*. He could run faster than anybody else he knew. He could even run faster than most of the boys who were *older* than him. Nobody wanted to be in a race against Johnny, because they knew Johnny would win.

One year, there was a huge state-wide race, and Johnny spent months and months preparing to run in this race. He trained hard, because he knew he would be running against a lot of older boys, and he really wanted to win the prize.

You see, the top prize was \$1000. Just imagine what you could do with \$1000! That is a lot of money for a young boy, and Johnny had a lot of plans for what he would do with it. He wanted to buy himself a brand new bike and some video games, and he thought he might put away several hundred dollars of it so he could buy a car when he got older.

Because Johnny lived in a small town, there was a lot of interest in the state-wide race. Nobody from Johnny's town had ever won a big race before, let alone a race that was open to anyone from the state! So, when the day of the race came around, everybody was anxious, just waiting to see what would happen.

And do you know what? Johnny won! He ran faster than every other boy in the entire state—even the ones who were older than him. He beat them all . . . and not just by a little bit either. He ran so fast, it was clear that Johnny was *the best*. And he won the top prize of \$1000.

The people of the town were so proud of Johnny. They held a parade in his honor and printed a story about his victory on the front page of the newspaper, with a picture of Johnny holding up his check for \$1000.

A couple of weeks later, a reporter from the newspaper came ‘round to Johnny’s house to do a follow up story. She had heard Johnny talk about his plans to go shopping with the prize money, and she wanted to print a story about Johnny’s brand new bike and video games, and also to find out if he had any more plans to race in the future.

But when she got there and asked Johnny to see his bike, Johnny said he didn’t have a new bike. She asked about the video games, but Johnny said he didn’t have those either. So she asked him what he had done with his prize money.

And Johnny said, “I gave it away.”

The reporter was shocked. She couldn’t believe her ears! “You did *what?!?*” she cried.

And Johnny told her how, a couple of weeks before the race took place, he learned that the father of one of his friends had suddenly lost his job. And their family was struggling to make ends meet. He said they might even lose their house if they couldn’t find a way to make the mortgage payment.

“So,” Johnny said, “I realized that if I won the race, I could give them my \$1000. I thought that would help.”

“But that was your prize for winning the race!” the reporter exclaimed.

“It’s okay,” Johnny said, smiling. “I’ll win another one.”

Boys and girls, we can learn a very important lesson from Johnny. Being great, or even being the best, doesn’t have anything to do with our abilities. We are *great* when we think of others before ourselves. Johnny was a great boy—not because he could run fast, but because he thought of others before himself.

That’s what God is like, you know. He gave up everything He had to come to this earth and become a human being. He did that because He cared more about you and me than about making sure He stayed happy and comfortable.

So, whenever you think about wanting to be great at something, I hope you’ll also remember that true greatness—God’s kind of greatness—comes from helping others.

Responsive Reading

God is not jealous or proud.

He is humble. He thinks of others before Himself.

We know God is like this because of the testimony of Jesus—

Who, because He was God, gave up everything to become a servant.

God became like one of us,

While our hearts were still hostile against Him.

The greatness of Christ expressed itself in total humility.

This great Creator allowed Himself to be tortured and killed by His own creatures!

For this reason, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow.

His greatness is in direct proportion to His service to others.

The more He serves, the greater He is.

That's why our God is the greatest!

Hymn

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

sung to the tune of *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name* (Coronation)

You are the King of heav'n above, and at Your feet we fall.
We praise You for Your wondrous love, and crown You Lord of all.
We praise You for Your wondrous love, and crown You Lord of all.

We crown You as the God of light and this terrestrial ball;
You do all things through Your great might; we crown You Lord of all.
You do all things through Your great might; we crown You Lord of all.

As man, You stepped into our race, redeemed us from the fall.
As God, You saved us by Your grace; we crown You Lord of all.
As God, You saved us by Your grace; we crown You Lord of all.

Your pow'r is seen in servanthood; for us, You became small.
Throughout the ages, You are good, for You are Lord of all.
Throughout the ages, You are good, for You are Lord of all.

The key to being great and grand is serving those who fall.
And when we help them, Lord, to stand, we crown You Lord of all.
And when we help them, Lord, to stand, we crown You Lord of all.

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Song Suggestions

Hymns

Christ, whose glory fills the skies (Ratisbon)

Words and music by Charles Wesley and Johann Werner

Fairest Lord Jesus (Crusader's Hymn)

Words and music by Joseph Seiss and Richard Willis

I must tell Jesus

Words and music by Elisha Hoffman

Praise Songs

Ascribe greatness to our God

Words and music by Mary Kirkbride-Barthow and Mary Lou King

© 1979 Integrity's Hosanna Music

Great in power

Words and music by Russell Fragar

© 1998 Hillsong Publishing

How great is our God

Words and music by Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, and Jesse Reeves

© 2004 *worshiptogether.com* songs

I worship you, almighty God

Words and music by Sondra Corbett

© 1983 Integrity's Hosanna Music

Let every tongue confess

Words and music by Elton Smith

© 1997 Elton Smith

Helping others makes us great.

Jesus said that to be great, you should
Trace the letters below, then circle the correct number.

BEA
SERV



How Many Words?

1 2 3

Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

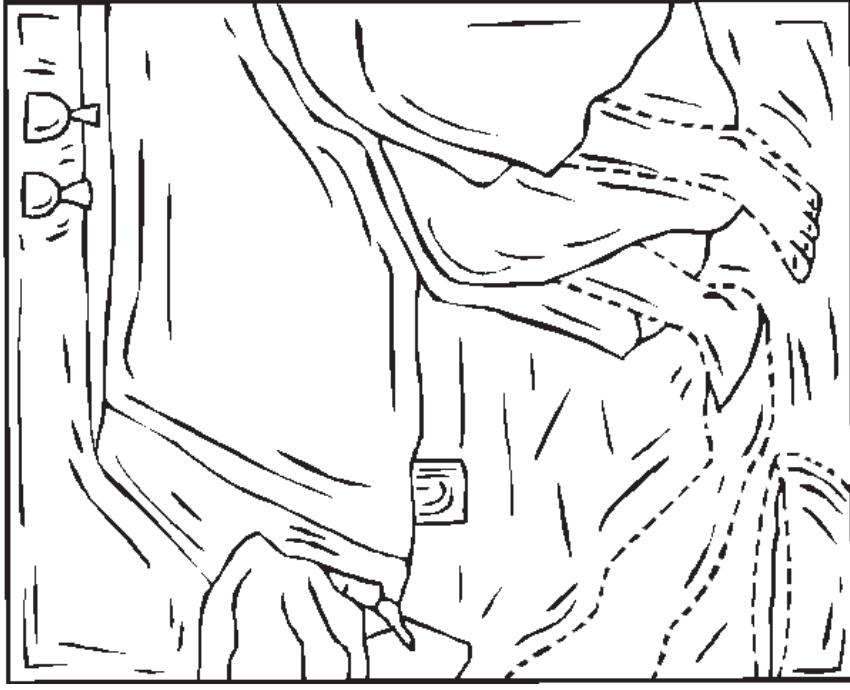
Mark 9:33-37



How to Be Great

Jesus taught His disciples how to be great.

Trace the picture to see how Jesus acted great.



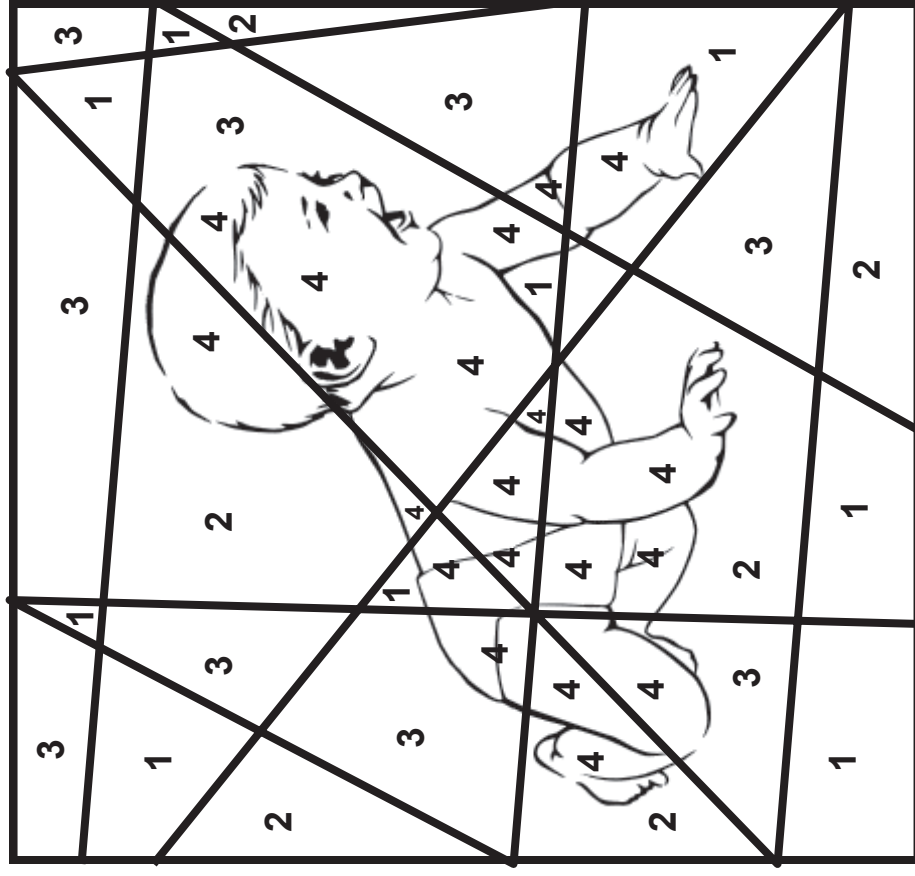
Truly great people are servants.

Circle the six changes in the second picture below.



Serving those in need is like serving Jesus.

Shade in the 4's.





Jesus said serving others is like serving Him.

Use the code to find out what He said.

♥ ♥ ♥	♥ ♥ ♥	♥ ♥ ♥
A B C	D E F	G H I
♥ ♥ ♥	♥ ♥ ♥	♥ ♥ ♥
L M N	O R S	U W Y

♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

iWorship

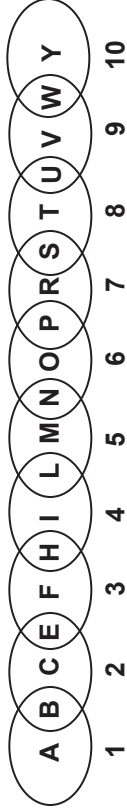
ages 7 to 12

Mark 9:33-37

How to Be Great

Jesus taught His disciples how to be great.

Find the letters in the circles to fill in the blanks.



4 3 10 6 8,9 9,10 1 5,6 8

8 3,4 2,3 6,7 4,5 1 2 2,3 6 3

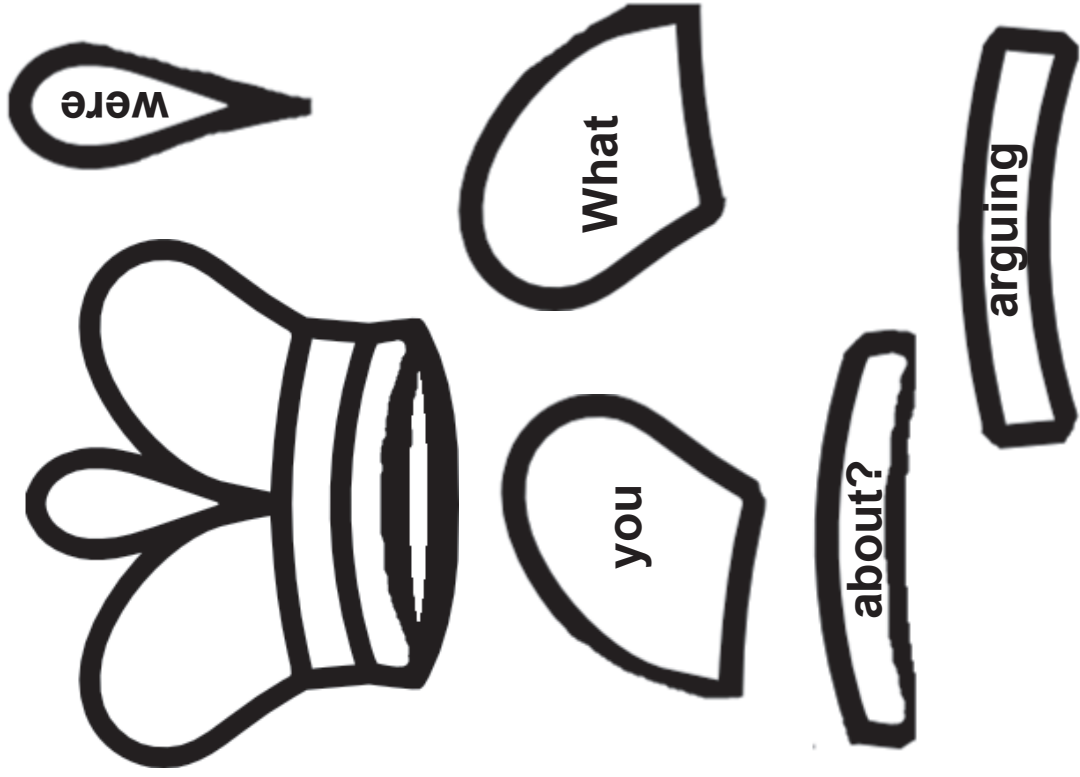
3,4 6 5,6 6 7 10 6 8,9

5 8,9 7,8 8 1,2 2,3 2 6 5 2,3

1 7,8 2,3 7 9 1 5,6 8

Jesus wants us to be great.

Find out what He asked the disciples by
arranging the words into their shapes.



Nobody is greater than God.

Find the letters to fill in the blanks. Write the letter that's missing
from the second word of the pair.

God is the greatest because He

is the best

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- 1) STARS — RATS =
- 2) PLEASED — PLEADS =
- 3) SPORES — POSSE =
- 4) MAVEN — NAME =
- 5) PEDAL — PLED =
- 6) PANTS — TAPS =
- 7) BUTTER — REBUT =

