

Junior Soldiers

Unit 13 : Lesson 4



Who Is The Greatest?

PURPOSE: For the children to explore and understand that greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is not found in power or popularity but in humility.

**“If you put yourself above others, you will be put down.
But if you humble yourself, you will be honoured”**

Luke 14:11

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Luke 14:8-11

The measure of ‘greatness’ in today’s society is very different to the measure of ‘greatness’ in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the difference between pride and humility. It is position, power and authority versus humility and dependency. It is upside down thinking. Jesus’ teachings often challenge our thinking!

In this lesson we will focus on the need for an uncomplicated childlike trust and humility, culminating in a life of service.

Read:

Matthew 18:1-5

Although children are the focus of this passage in Matthew, they are the only people in the story who have no voice. They were brought by their parents, turned away by the disciples, but called and welcomed by Jesus. The children were the smallest and

humblest in the crowd, yet Jesus said that of all the people involved, we should be like them. We need to be innocent, trusting, teachable, eager to please Him, dependant on Him and open about our needs.

Consider these questions:

- What message was Jesus trying to teach the parents, and particularly the disciples?
- What attributes of children should we keep in relationship to God?
- Is there such a thing as false humility ... and if so, can you think of an example.
- What is the difference between 'sinful' pride and 'good' pride?

There are many other Biblical mentions of pride and/or humility. For example, in Mathew 20:20-28 the mother of James and John asked Jesus to give her sons the place of honour in His kingdom.

The greatest example of humility is seen in Jesus Himself when He washed the feet of the disciples.

So, in God's eyes, who is the greatest? Obviously the most humble. But how do we achieve this?

The fact is that most of us want to be the centre of attention. We tend to try to elevate ourselves. Humility begins when we admit that we are self-centred, move ourselves off the throne and become more Christ-centred.

Note:

- Today's lesson can be very affirming to children, particularly those who may be put down at home, experience bullying at school or some kind of abuse. Children are significant, and they need to know that.
- This lesson could give the opportunity to affirm each child's importance not only to Jesus, but to The Salvation Army and the whole family of God.
- It is also important that the children know there is nothing wrong with being proud of their achievements as long as it doesn't make them think they are better or more important than anyone else.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Mirror - one large or several small (for smaller groups)
- Prepare a set of cards – you will need enough for each child to have one.
On each card write the name or paste the picture of a person. Include a mix of well-known celebrities, ordinary people in the community, people in your corps and people who do not 'look' important. E.g., Queen, Prime Minister, movie star, singer, teacher, local officer, small child, homeless person, nurse, policeman.
- Song ... CD or music for "My God is so Great"

For 'The Main Thing'

- Bibles
- Pictures of an apple, a bee, krill, a whale, building foundations and a tower (Print or prepare to display on a screen)
- Game of Jenga (or similar)
- Three large sheets of paper and pencils or markers for each child

For 'Tying In'

- Small treats or prizes (enough for each child)

For 'Prayer Time'

- Writing paper or print sheets of paper with fancy borders (enough for each child to have a sheet each)
- Pens, pencils or markers

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home and Beyond cards for each child

Song Suggestion:

Song: "Our God is so big, so strong and so mighty" (Cedermont Kids, VeggieTales, Colin Buchanan)

Connecting In

Have you ever met a very important person? I wonder what made them so great. Who do you think the greatest person in your family is? Who is the greatest person in our church? Who is the greatest person in the world?

Activity – Choose one of the following options

Option 1 (small group)

- *Divide the children into pairs.*
- *Take turns to look in the mirror.*
- *Tell your partner what is great or important about yourself.*
- *Tell your partner what you think is great or important about them.*
- *Tell your partner what you think God might see as great or important about you.*

NOTE: Move amongst the children as they are doing this activity and mention at least one positive attribute to each child.

Link

Did you agree with your partner about what is great about you? Sometimes we have different opinions about what is great or important about ourselves or others. I wonder what Jesus said about what makes a person great or important.

Option 2 (larger group)

- *Give each child a card with the name or picture of a person on it.*
- *Ask the children to think about the person on their card.*
 - » How important is this person?
 - » Compare your cards then line up in order of importance.
 - » If you think the person is very important or great then go to the front of the line.
 - » If you think the person is not very important or great then head to the back of the line.
- *Expect some shuffling and discussion. When all the children are reasonably happy ask them to sit down in their line.*

Link

Affirm their efforts then ask:

- What was challenging about this activity?
- Does anyone think they are not in the correct place in line? Why?
- How did you decide where you should be in the line?

Sometimes we have different opinions about what is great or important about ourselves or others. I wonder what Jesus said about what makes a person great or important.

Option 3 (silent and fun)

Setting up:

- *Ask the children to sit in a circle.*
- *Begin by choosing one child to be the elephant (representing the greatest) and one to be the baby (representing the least) and show them the actions described here*
 - » *Elephant – hold one arm out straight, bring the other arm underneath then reach up and hold nose (this action is intentionally difficult to do)*
 - » *Baby – rock arms as though rocking a baby*
- *The baby and the elephant must sit next to each other*

Preparation:

- *Tell the children that they will need to remember the information you are about to give them. Assign every other child an animal name and an action they can do whilst sitting down. You can choose an animal and action from the list below or make up your own.*
 - » *Rooster – hand on top of head for the comb*
 - » *Cat – rub back of hand against cheek*
 - » *Kangaroo – swing arm back to represent tail*
 - » *Rabbit – Bounce closed fist up and down*
 - » *Snake – swish arm back and forth*
 - » *Butterfly – hook thumbs together and wiggle remaining fingers*
 - » *Giraffe – raise arm straight up in the air*
 - » *Spider – run fingers up arm*

The Goal:

- *The goal of the game is to become the elephant (the greatest).*

Getting started:

- *Each round begins with the elephant who will mime their own action and follow it with the action of another person in the circle. For example, elephant then cat.*
- *That person will do their own action and follow it with another action. For example, cat then giraffe.*
- *This continues until someone gets out.*
- *There should be no speaking, only miming.*

Getting 'out':

- *Someone is out if they are too slow to respond, they do the wrong action or they do the actions in the wrong order (they must do their own action first).*
- *If someone gets out they must move to the 'baby' chair.*

- *Everyone else will move one seat closer to the 'elephant', filling in the empty seat.*
- *Each child will then change to become the animal that was previously sitting in that chair.*

Link

Affirm their efforts then ask:

- What was challenging about this activity?
- In this game, the elephant was the greatest. Which animal do you think is the greatest or most important? *Allow for several different answers*
- How would you decide which is the greatest?

We might not all agree about which animal is the greatest. Sometimes we also have different opinions about what is great or important about ourselves or others. I wonder what Jesus said about what makes a person great or important.

The Main Thing

When Jesus was on earth, people had very strong ideas about who was important. If you weren't one of the important ones, you could not have any say in what happened to you. Your opinion didn't matter.

Have you ever been told, "Children should be seen and not heard"?

What happens at your house when you have visitors and there isn't enough room at the table or enough beds for everyone?

In many cases, the children have to eat in another room and possibly sleep on the floor (be sensitive to the fact that in some homes this may be the case anyway).

When this happens your parents are probably just trying to fit everyone in but you might feel that you are treated like you are less important than your visitors.

In Jesus' day, if someone important came along they didn't want to hear the children. In fact, they didn't even want to see the children! But Jesus didn't think like that, he was different. Let's look at a story that shows us how Jesus treated children.

Ask the children to look up Matthew 18:1-5 in their Bibles and follow along as you read.

- How did Jesus treat the children in this story?
- What difference do you think Jesus' behaviour made to the children in this story?
- Why do you think Jesus told the people to be like little children?

As you give each of the following options, point to the left then the right side of your space. Ask the children to run to the side of the room that best represents their opinion of who is most important in the pair.

Who is more important:

- The Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's hairdresser?
- The billionaire or his chauffeur?
- Rock star or the stage crew?
- Sporting hero or the referee/umpire?
- The General of The Salvation Army or the General's mother?

I wonder if people would have voted for the Prime Minister if he had long, shaggy, uncut hair.
I wonder if the billionaire would be able to do the work that earns him his money if his didn't have his chauffeur to drive him around.
Would the rock star be able to hold a concert if he didn't have a stage crew?
Could the sporting hero play the game that made him famous without the referee?
Would the General even exist without his mother?

Often we think the most important person is the strongest, the biggest, the fastest, the smartest, the most famous or the richest.
God created the world so that we rely on small things too.

Show pictures of an apple and a bee.

Which do you think is more important?

If bees became extinct then all the flowers would die. No plants, including fruit and vegetables, would grow. Animals would have no food. People would have no food. What would happen next?



Show pictures of krill and a whale.

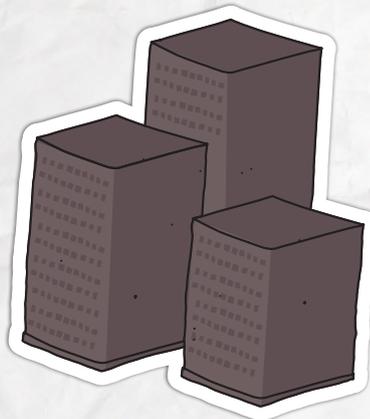
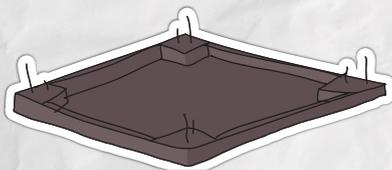
Which do you think is more important?

Krill are tiny fish but they are the main source of food for bigger fish, whales and many birds. What would happen if krill became extinct?



Show pictures of a foundation and a building.

Which do you think is more impressive?



Play a round of Jenga.

Allow each child a turn and then, if the tower has not already toppled, the leader removes a block from bottom that will ensure it does.

The foundations of a building keep it strong, upright and safe. The foundations are not pretty to look at, we can't live or work in the foundations and we might not even know that they are there! But, what would happen if the foundations of a building didn't exist?

In our game, you might have noticed that you could take the blocks off the top rows without doing too much damage to the tower. However, when we removed blocks from the base of the tower, the tower became very unsteady. It can be a bit like that with people too – even though someone might not seem very important we might find that we really depend on them.

Jesus doesn't base our importance on how big or strong or fast or smart or famous or rich we are. In Matthew 18:4 he tells us that "anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus says a great person:

- Is humble.
- Serves others.
- Loves everyone.

What does the word 'humble' mean?

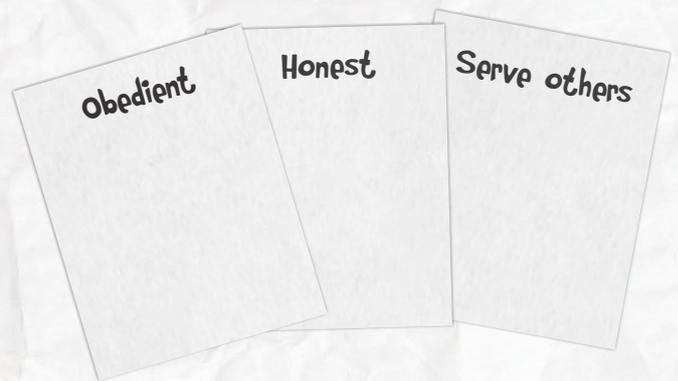
- Obedient to what God asks us to do.
- Honest – we don't pretend to be better or worse than we are.
- Willing to love, serve and help others.

Place three large sheets of paper on tables in your space.

Write a heading on each one: 'Obedient', 'Honest', 'Serve others'

Ask the children to move around the tables and write a word or draw a picture or emoticon on each one to answer these questions (you might want to write these questions under the headings):

- *How can I obey God?*
- *When am I tempted to pretend I'm better or worse than I really am?*
- *How can I serve someone else this week?*



Remember that Jesus says that in the Kingdom of God those who are considered great are those who are humble. God will make great in His Kingdom those who obey God, are honest about who they are and serve others.

Tying In

Invite the children to stand up and spread out.

Let's look at a few examples.

Which of these things would make you greater from God's perspective?

As I read each one, if you think it would make you greater then take a step towards me.

- » You have a lot of money.
(No, having a lot or a little money doesn't make us great.)
- » You spent some of your money to buy a gift for someone in need.
(Yes.)
- » You are very popular.
(No.)
- » You always try to include everyone, especially those people who are not very popular.
(Yes.)

- » You came first in your maths test.
(No, this would be fantastic but it doesn't make us the greatest!)
- » You helped your friend study after school so that they did well in their maths test.
(Yes.)
- » You made your mum a cup of tea.
(Yes, serving each other makes us great in God's eyes.)
- » You sang the solo in your school musical.
(No, although God does love it when we use the gifts he has given us.)
- » You came last in a race.
(No, our speed doesn't make us any more or less important.)
- » You came last in a race because you stopped to help someone who tripped over.
(Yes.)
- » You cleaned up rubbish in the playground to make it look nice for everyone.
(Yes, this is a humble way to serve others.)

Often we think the most important person is the strongest, the biggest, the fastest, the smartest, the most famous or the richest. But today we have learnt we are great in God's eyes when we humbly love and serve others.

So, I would like the smallest person here today to humbly serve the group by passing out some treats.

Memory Verse

Ask the children to repeat each section after you 3 times, then try to say it with you.

**“If you put yourself above others (head up, nose in air),
you will be put down (head down).
But if you humble yourself (kneel),
you will be honoured. (hands like crown on head)”**

Luke 14:11

Prayer Time

Provide the children with pens and writing paper.

*Ask the children to write a prayer based on what they have learnt today.
They might like to write sentences or key words or draw pictures.*

If the children are struggling with where to start ask them:

- What would you like to thank God for?
- What would you like God to help you with? (continue on the next page)

Give the children time to compose their prayers.

Allow time for the children to read their prayers aloud if they would like to.

Invite the children to sign their prayers.

Home & Beyond

Jesus said that the greatest people are those who are humble.

Humble people serve God by serving others.

- This week, talk to your family or friends about ways you can serve someone else.
- Choose at least one act of service and do it.
- Pray for the person you serve asking God to show them his love through you.

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