

LESSON 3

WHO IS THE GREATEST IN HEAVEN?

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Servanthood

Before and during the last supper, Jesus taught His disciples about the importance of humility. The next few lessons focus on Jesus' servanthood. In today's story, Jesus talks to His followers about what it takes to be a great person in God's kingdom. In order to be real leaders, His followers had to be ready to serve selflessly. There was no room for petty arguments over who was better or more honored. But it was not enough simply to verbally settle the dispute over who was greater. Later on, Jesus actually set the example by humbly washing the feet of His disciples. This theme of servanthood is a very important one in the life of Jesus. His life of service culminated in His death on the cross. Paul also comments on Jesus' servanthood in Philippians 2:5-11.

Jesus' Disciples

During Jesus' ministry, His twelve apostles were always somewhere in the background, following and helping. But Jesus shifted His attention to them towards the end of His work on earth by spending His last days giving them some final instructions and teachings. Despite spending so much time with Him and witnessing all the miracles and signs, they did not seem to understand Jesus' real purpose for coming into this world. They did not seem like the twelve people who would later boldly preach God's message of salvation. Sometimes, they fought over who was more favored. When Jesus referred to His coming death, they either protested or missed the point altogether. It was not until the resurrection of Jesus that they finally understood everything they had been taught in the past. From that point onward, their behavior changed dramatically.

BIBLE TEXT

Mark 9:30-37; 10:35-45

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus came to earth as a servant.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To learn to serve others and perform acts of kindness.
2. To understand that when we serve others, we serve God, which pleases Him.

MEMORY VERSE

"Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant."

(Mark 10:43b)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for guiding us through another week. Today we will learn about what it means to be humble. Please teach us how to serve one another with love as You have done. We want to obey You. In this way, we give praise to Your holy name. Hallelujah! Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Everyone has wanted to be the first, the best, or the greatest in at least one thing in their lives. There is nothing wrong with ambition and wanting to be the very best, but when the motive is selfish, it can lead to destructive behavior. The disciples were supposed to serve others, and even though they had followed Jesus for quite some time, they still lost their focus. They struggled and argued among themselves for personal prestige and position. The kingdom of God is not about personal advancement; Jesus made that very clear when He said, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10:45),

At this age, your students are obviously not seeking after prestige or honor, but they may be a little selfish. They might find it hard to share, whether it be belongings,

time, or space. "That's mine!" is a phrase that young students commonly say. They want to make sure that they have staked out what is rightfully theirs. After a little prodding, they may part with their selfish ways for a while. God does not want them to fight over things or compare who is better. Remind your students that God wants them to share. Sharing is a way to show service. Sometimes, they may be more blessed and have things others do not. By sharing those things, it is a way to show humility and kindness. In the previous lesson, they were taught that spreading God's message of salvation is another way to share what they have. Personal success is not the way to heaven; seeking after God's kingdom is the only road to take.

VOCABULARY

servant: a person who works around the house performing lowly tasks (e.g., a maid)

REVIEW

Does anyone remember last week's lesson? [If not, ask questions to jog their memory. Who did Jesus try to preach to? What did that person do? How did the people feel after talking to Jesus? Why? Below is a summary.]

Last week, we learned about how Jesus spread God's message to the Samaritans. Jesus and His disciples were passing through the region of Samaria. While His disciples went to buy food, Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman who was drawing water from a well. When she realized that He was the Savior, she quickly ran back to town and told her neighbors. They all came to see Jesus for themselves and listen to His words. After two days of discussions, they were glad that Jesus stopped by because they were able to learn more about God. They praised God and thanked the woman for telling them about Jesus. We learned that even though the Jews and Samaritans did not get along, Jesus was friendly and still spoke to the woman because God wants to save everyone. We should also do the same and spread God's message to our friends and neighbors.

BIBLE STORY

The Disciples Argue

One day, Jesus and His disciples were walking to a town called Capernaum. As they walked, Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God. He told them that He would die soon and come back to life three days afterward. What Jesus was saying was very important but the disciples didn't really understand Jesus' words, and they were too afraid to ask Him to clarify. So they began to talk quietly among themselves. They were doing something that we might have done before. What do you think the disciples were doing? [After a few guesses, proceed with the story.] They started comparing and talking about who was the best disciple. Soon, it became an argument because they couldn't decide who was the greatest among them, but they spoke softly because they didn't want Jesus to know that they weren't listening to Him.

Jesus Teaches Them a Lesson

After awhile, Jesus and His disciples finally arrived in Capernaum. Jesus' followers were glad the long walk was over. It hadn't been a pleasant trip because they argued most of the time. Jesus surprised them by suddenly asking them a question.

"What were you arguing about on our way here?" Jesus asked.

The disciples were speechless. Jesus had heard them arguing and now they were embarrassed. But they had not been able to solve their argument: they could not agree on who was the greatest among them because each one thought he was the most important. Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking. He had an answer for them.

"Let's sit down," Jesus said. "I want to tell you something very important."

So the disciples sat down near Jesus and listened very carefully.

"If you want to be the greatest person," Jesus said, "this is what you need to do."

What do you think Jesus said? [Allow for 1-2 answers before continuing the story. List them on the board or have students write them on a piece of paper.]

Now the disciples were very eager to hear the rest of what Jesus had to say.

Jesus continued, "To be the best, you need to help other people. If you want to be the first, you must be the very last and become the servant of others."

Is this the answer you expected? The disciples weren't expecting to hear this at all. They thought there was some way to prove to Jesus that they were the greatest. Yet, in order to be the greatest in God's kingdom, it was necessary to be the last. Jesus wanted them to understand that serving others makes them great in the eyes of God because they are helping people.

Sitting Next to Jesus

Later on, James and John, two brothers who were disciples of Jesus, wanted to ask Him a personal question about the kingdom of God.

"Jesus," they said, "could we talk to You alone? We want to ask You for a special favor."

Jesus asked them, "What kind of favor do you want Me to do for you?"

This was a hard question to ask but they wanted to know if Jesus could help them.

Together, they said, "When You become the King, let

us be the ones who sit next to You—one on Your right side and one on Your left side."

Jesus couldn't believe what He had just heard. They wanted to sit at the most important positions. James and John had forgotten what Jesus said about serving others and about being the very last to become first in God's kingdom.

Jesus replied, "I cannot promise you anything. The names of the people who will have the honor of sitting there have already been prepared by God."

The Other Ten Are Angry

When the other disciples heard about James and John's request, they became angry. How dare they ask Jesus to let them sit at the best places? So the disciples began to argue again about who was the best among them. When Jesus heard their argument, He decided that it was time for another talk.

Acts of Kindness

Jesus called them together and spoke very seriously. "To be the greatest person does not mean having power over other people and ordering them around. This is the way worldly people think," Jesus explained.

"Instead, if you really want to be a great person, you need to serve others. You need to show kindness to them. Even I did not come to earth to be served, but to serve. I came to show love to everyone. When you can all understand this, then each of you will be the greatest in God's kingdom."

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Fill In the Blank and True or False

1. Jesus' disciples were arguing about who was the _____ (greatest/best) among them.
2. The disciples did not understand when Jesus told them that He would die and rise again in _____ (three) days.
3. James and John wanted to sit at the _____ (left) and _____ (right) of Jesus in the kingdom of heaven.
4. Jesus told the disciples that they should fight for the best things. False; they should serve others if they want to be the best.
5. Jesus wants us to be servants in order to become the greatest in God's eyes. True.
6. What are some ways that you can serve others? Answers may vary.

Questions to Think About

1. Why did the disciples fight over who was the greatest? Possible answer: The disciples knew that Jesus was going to die soon, and they might have been deciding which of them would become the leader of the disciples after His death.
2. How did Jesus explain what it really meant to be a great person? Possible answer: Jesus said that to be a really great person, you had to serve others.
3. What does it mean to be the very "last" if you want to be first? Possible answer: To be the last means to be the person who is always serving others, not the person always being served. A person who serves others is great in the eyes of God.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

“Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.” (Mark 10:43b)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus set the best example by coming to this world to serve us. He is God Himself, living in heaven without any sorrow, toil, or pain. But for Him to come to this world, Jesus had to give up many things—much more than just a wonderful place to live! In order to set an example for us, Jesus gave up His glory as God. Even though He is God Himself, He did not come to this world to be served by men but to show others the love of God by serving men. He didn't seek the praise of others, wealth and riches, or a high social status as many people do today. Instead, He preached to the poor, the sinners, and the sick the gospel of salvation everywhere He went. The Bible says, Jesus did not even have a place to “lay His head” (Lk 9:58),

meaning that He didn't have a fixed place to stay. He had to walk a long way on a daily basis to get to people in different places to preach to them. Even though He faced many people who didn't support Him and people who wanted to hurt Him, Jesus never gave up on His ministry. He endured fatigue and danger just so He could fulfill the will of God and serve us.

Today, God wants us to be like Jesus and have the mindset to serve one another. He came to set us a perfect example and our goal is to be more like Him, pleasing God in everything we do. Here are some principles to think about that may help us:

1. We serve to glorify God

Sometimes, there may be no one around us when we do good deeds. Do we still pick up that piece of trash on the floor in church? Are we still faithful in cleaning even if our friends are not there? Colossians 3:23-24 says, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” God sees our work in secret and will reward us accordingly.

When we serve one another, our motive is what determines whether or not we glorify our Father in heaven. If our only motive to do good is to receive praise from others, then sure enough, our reward is the praise we get from others, not from God (Mt 6:1-2). On the contrary, if our motive is to glorify God's name, our reward will be from God, which is worth much more than just applause or a compliment! In fact, a true heart of service is one that rejoices in being able to glorify God and see others being helped, without seeking any rewards.

When Jesus was on earth, He didn't seek praise from people. Even though He was the Son of God who had power to work the impossible, He didn't say to the people, “Look what I can do! Now you know I'm the Son of God!” Instead, He gave all the glory to God, His Father in heaven. This is the same attitude we should have when serving one another. Let me share a story with you:

1. On the way home from school, Andrew saw a boy around his age trip and fall on the ground. His arm was

bleeding, and he seemed to have trouble getting up. Andrew looked around and saw a few other people on the street, so he thought to himself, “My favorite TV show is about to start... I can't stop to help him. If someone I know were around, I would stop and help him just to show how good I am, but everyone here is a stranger. Besides, they will help this boy, not me!” Andrew walked away and continued on his way home.

When Andrew reached his neighbor's house, he saw another boy who had also fallen off his bicycle. Andrew looked over and recognized him—“That is our neighbor's son, Vincent!” This time, Andrew hurried up and went to help Vincent. In his mind, Andrew was thinking, “If I help Vincent, he will definitely tell this to his mom, and his mom will tell my mom since they always talk. Vincent's mom might even bring me some of her homemade treats!”

Reflection Question

• Did Andrew have the right motive to serve?

No, because he chose to help Vincent only because he thought about the compliment and treats he would get from Vincent's mom. He didn't help the first boy because he didn't think there was any benefit he could get from helping him. Andrew didn't know that by helping others, even though other people may never find out what he did, our Father in heaven sees and will reward him. Sadly, his motive to do good was not to glorify God but to glorify himself.

2. During lunch today, Annie told Michelle that her dad has been suffering from lung cancer for a while and that her family's hopes are dwindling. Michelle thought to herself, "This is a good time to preach to Annie about God... If I tell her more about the power of God, she may be able to bring her dad or even her whole family to our church! But I'm really, really, really scared! No one in school goes to the same church as I do... No one can help me out! What if Annie asked me questions that I don't know how to answer? What if she thought I was being crazy? ...I shouldn't be afraid to tell people about God. Even if the outcome is not as I wanted, at least I have planted the seed for God. I will do this for God!" Michelle prayed silently in her heart and decided that she would speak to Annie after school. That day,

Michelle told Annie many stories from the Bible. Annie was thrilled to know about God. She also said that she was very interested in going to church with Michelle and that she would try to bring her family with her!

Reflection Question

• Did Michelle have the right motive to serve?

Yes. Even though Michelle was very afraid to talk to Annie about God, she did it not because she wanted anything for herself but rather to please God by preaching the gospel. She knew that even though Annie may not respond the way she wished, it was God's will for her to at least try preaching to her. She did what God wanted her to do!

2. Everything we have is from God

Sometimes, we may feel so comfortable and deserving of the good things we are blessed with in life, for example, living in a big house, having beautiful clothes, or earning good grades in school. However, these things often bring us pride. They give us a feeling of being superior to others—a feeling that makes us not want to serve others.

The Bible encourages us to "in lowliness of mind [...] esteem others better" than ourselves and "look out not only for [our] own interests but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:3-5). If we always see ourselves better than others, we would never be able to serve others with a genuine heart. But if we humble ourselves and remember that God has given all of us different gifts, we would be more willing to serve others because we know that we are not more special than others in God's eyes.

Everything we have is from God, including our gifts and talents, riches and possessions. It is God who allows us to have shelter, food, and clothing. He even allows us to have things that we don't need to survive, such as toys or computer games. God gives to His people according to His plan for every single one of us. If someone is gifted in speaking, let him help with the ministry. If someone is rich, let him help when the church needs money. The bottom line is that we must know that everything we have is from God to glorify His name. We should not feel arrogant about what we have that others don't have because everything belongs to God. He is the One who gives and the One takes away (Job 1:21); if we use what we have from God to boast about ourselves rather than serve, God will surely take these things away.

3. We should be doers, and not only hearers

Today we learned that "the last will be first"—this doesn't sound like a popular concept at all. Our society today seems to teach us to be more aggressive, to push and shove to get ahead in the world. We may also feel a bit disappointed when we see others using deceitful ways to get ahead, seemingly without facing any consequences. However, using such methods is the way of the world and contradicts God's way. God certainly sees all the wicked deeds in this world, and He will punish them in due time. As children of God, we must always follow the word of God, even if some untruthful ways seem better or faster. Being the greatest in this world is not at all important. Gaining God's pleasure and glorifying His name are more important. Besides, Jesus has taught us that the ones who are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven are the ones who serve others (Mt 23:11).

The Bible tells us that we should be "doers" of God's words and not only "hearers." In other words, after we hear the wisdom of God, we should keep it in our hearts

and apply it to our daily lives. The easiest way to know if we are "doers" of God's words or not is to think about whether or not we have been doing the things that we learned from our past R.E. lessons. Do we remember what we have learned in the past, or do we forget everything we have learned as soon as we leave the classroom every Saturday? Have we been applying what we have learned into our daily lives? Do we often think about whether or not our actions and words please God? I will leave these questions for you to think about. We must put what we have learned into action so that we can be true followers of God. 1 John 2:5 says, "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him." Being doers and not just hearers of the word shows that we love God and that we are His children. The "hearers" who are not "doers" will not inherit the kingdom of God. Let us strive us to be a "hearer" and "doer" of God's word by serving one another, giving glory to our Father in heaven as Jesus did.

ACTIVITY

1 Showing Our Kindness

Objective: To help students think of ways they can be helpful.

Instructions

1. Lead a discussion on things the students can do to show kindness. Talk about ways they can serve other people. How can they serve at home, at school, and at church? Encourage the students to show one act of service today at church.
2. Give the students some scenarios to start with. For example, they can pick up the garbage on the floor or take the right amount of food so that there will be some left for others.
3. Brainstorm other acts of service with the students and list them on the board. Have each student pick one thing they will accomplish today or in the upcoming week.

2 Good Christians

Objective: To create objects that will remind the students to be helpful and kind.

Materials

- Clay

Instructions

1. Introduce the activity by letting the students know that they will be making an object out of clay.
2. Tell the students that the object will be something that reminds them to serve others. For example, they can make a bowl or plate to remind them to take care of the house, or a tic-tac-toe game board to remind them to be fair when playing with their friends.
3. Brainstorm with the class so that the students have many options.
4. When everyone has an idea, pass out the clay and have them work on it immediately before it sets and dries.
5. When the students have finished making their objects and cleaned up, ask for a few volunteers to share their object and the corresponding act of service.

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. heaven
2. last
3. serve, serve
4. B
5. False; they did not understand, but they were too afraid to ask.
6. True
7. False; serving others will make you the greatest.
8. True
9. Answers may vary.

E1 Year 3 Book 2 Lesson 3—Who Is the Greatest in Heaven?

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: Jesus came to earth as a servant.

Lesson Objectives: 1. To learn to serve others and perform acts of kindness.
 2. To understand that when we serve others, we serve God, which pleases Him.

Bible Reading: Please put a check mark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a check mark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Mark 10:43b)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Fill In the Blank

serve	last	heaven	serve
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1. James and John asked Jesus to let them sit at His right and left side in _____.
2. Jesus told the disciples that they needed to be a servant and the _____ of all to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
3. When we _____ others, we _____ God.

Multiple Choice

4. _____ : What did the disciples argue about?
 - a. Who was the funniest.
 - b. Who was the greatest.
 - c. Who could run the fastest.

True or False

5. The disciples understood Jesus when He told them what would happen to Him later on. _____
6. Jesus was telling His disciples that He would die and come back to life in 3 days. _____
7. Having power and ordering other people around will make you the greatest in the kingdom of God. _____
8. Jesus came to earth to serve everyone. _____

Life Application

9. How did you serve someone this week? Draw a picture and write a sentence below.
