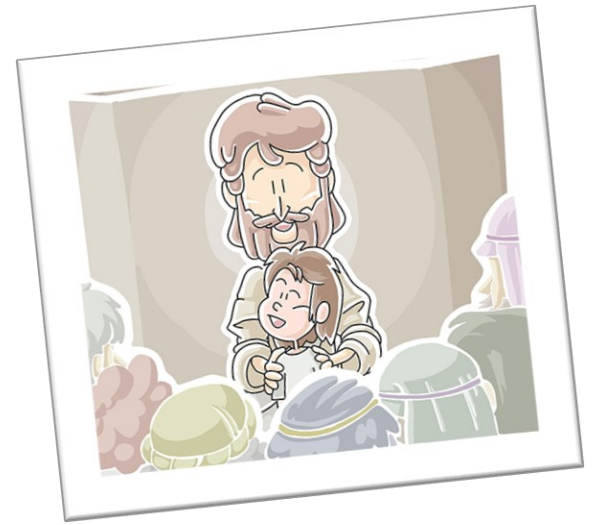

The Greatest is the Least

Kids Bible Lesson from Mark 9:30-37



What does it take to be the best? This is a question that might arise when we contemplate the lives and efforts of sports stars or historical figures. Greatness in the eyes of society usually means recognizing those who work hard, achieve success, and operate competitively. Yet in this Gospel passage, we see that God has different concepts of being great. Jesus tells His disciples that to be great requires thinking less of ourselves and recognizing who is truly in control of our lives.

Lesson focus: God's ways our not our ways. While we might consider greatness a matter of personal achievement and discipline, Jesus invites us to be humble and to live devoted to loving and serving the Lord. We must recognize that we depend on God for all things, and that truly being "great" means relying on His greatness.

Passage: Mark 9:30-37

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (See notes for specific age modifications)

Materials Needed: Construction paper; paper plates; glue; markers or crayons; paper towel tubes; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; Bibles.

More Teaching Ideas:

- Watch the video of this [children's sermon lesson](#) and the related [Bible craft ideas](#)
- Compare our full [Mark 9:30-37 Sunday School lesson](#)
- Compare the [children's sermon for rfour.org](#)
- Compare another [Least Shall Be Greatest Bible lesson for kids](#)

Lesson Introduction and Game Activities

Lesson Opening: Use the element of reversed expectations and “upside down thinking” to kick off the lesson. Jesus flipped around how the disciples might have viewed being great, so mix things up a little! Some possible ideas include:

- Reverse relay: line students up in two lines for a relay race. Explain that they will take turns racing to completion, and create variations for movement such as hopping or galloping. Just before starting the race, explain that the last person in each line will go first, and the “starter” will run last. Make sure teams keep track of their line up!
- Unexpected trophies: have a simple race, either to walk or run, or to complete a task. However, congratulate the “winner” as the last person to finish!
- (Younger students) Read the story *Rainbow Fish* and discuss the importance of humility and not thinking too highly of ourselves.
- Play “red light/green light” with signs that read “stop” and “go” to consider how Jesus directs and orders our lives.
- Scrambled up: Use words from the story, or verses, and write the letters or words on individual cards or pieces of paper. Mix up the order and have students place them back in the correct order.
- Who is the greatest? Brainstorm people or characters who might be considered the “greatest of all time” in various categories such as sports, politics, food, or super powers.

Explain to students that today’s lesson involves some challenging things that Jesus told His disciples. He often changed the order of what people expected, and in this passage, He wanted to transform the way they thought about greatness and prestige.

The Least Shall Be Greatest (Mark 9:30-37) Bible Lesson for Kids

Bible Lesson:

Although this passage involves dialogue between Christ and the disciples, it is not one that necessarily lends itself to being acted out in skit format. It might be best to read it with your students, or have older students take turns reading passages. Pause at intervals to discuss the action and conversation happening. Begin by setting the stage a little. When this passage occurs, Jesus has been doing some remarkable healings. However, in these verses we see Jesus trying to explain to His disciples that difficult times are ahead:

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. -Mark 9:30-32

Before Jesus was crucified, He predicted His own death many times. Yet each time, the disciples had a hard time understanding or accepting what He said. Here, we see that they were afraid to ask what He meant.

Ask: Have you ever been afraid to ask God something? Are there things that confuse you? Do you think there is anything He doesn't want to hear from His children?

And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. -Mark 9:33-34

Sometimes we argue with those around us, even our friends or family members. The disciples here argued (and not for the first time!) about who was the best. They hoped to be the greatest follower of Jesus. Each of them would have liked to be considered the "top of the class" among those who were in Christ's special circle. When Jesus asked them about it, though, they realized what they had been discussing really wasn't that important. They knew they should not have been arguing about who was the greatest, so they didn't directly answer the question their master asked. It was time to mix things up and reverse expectations. Jesus called the disciples together to teach a critical lesson...

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." -Mark 9:35

Jesus sat down when He had something to teach, as was often the custom in those days. He wanted to make sure His disciples heard and grasped the importance of what He said. Jesus wanted to communicate that greatness does not lie in recognition, esteem, or political power. Greatness means becoming humble. He told the followers that being "first" or greatest necessitated being "last of all." Jesus came to live a life of servant leadership. He gave Himself for us, dying in the greatest example of humble service we can possibly imagine. He wanted to tell the beloved disciples that they should spend their time serving and loving one another, rather than arguing. We might think being the greatest requires personal discipline or practice. Jesus described greatness as humble service and dependence on God.

Ask: What does it mean to be a servant to someone else? How can we practice humility? (*Discuss possible answers.*)

And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." -Matthew 9:36-37

Explain that in the days of Jesus, children didn't have much status. People did not think that kids were too important, and usually didn't pay much attention to them. Jesus, however, cared about kids, and emphasized how special they were! In this case, He uses a child to show the disciples how important it was to take care of all people. If they could welcome and devote themselves to lowly children, they could show that they would take on lowly tasks and care for others who were not as well thought of. Jesus even went so far as to say that caring for those with low status was the same as caring for Christ Himself. Going one step further, Jesus reminded the disciples that welcoming Him meant welcoming "the one who sent" Him...that would be God! We can't turn Him down, after all. He is truly the greatest, and we rely on Him! Being humble and loving God means understanding that He, and not we, is responsible for every great thing that we do!

Close with prayer, thanking God for being the greatest in our lives, and asking for His help in maintaining that hierarchy. Pray for humility and love, and thank God for always helping us and providing what we need.

Craft: Consider crafts that will remind students to live in humble dependence on God, and that will inspire them to consider ways of doing so. You might also have fun with the “topsy turvy” or upside-down element of Christ’s instructions, to consider how seemingly backwards—and yet better—were His descriptions of greatness. Ideas include...

- Decorate a paper plate or card stock/envelope heart to consider what it means to have a humble heart. Fill the heart with verses or phrases to consider how to live humbly.
- Make a two-sided puppet or sign, using a paper towel tube or large rod. Decorate each side with characters or features that can help to share a story, or just have fun.
- Draw a picture that can be seen multiple ways. This might be a “flip-able” cartoon or a picture within a picture (perhaps better for older audiences).
- Create a topsy-turvy jigsaw puzzle. Draw a picture on card stock or card board, and cut into several pieces. Keep it together to re-create the original image.

Bible Verses or Craft Project Captions to Consider... (Mark 9:30-37)

- *And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” -Mark 9:35*
- *The last shall be first!*
- *To be greatest, become least...*
- *Jesus gives unexpected instructions!*
- *Turning things upside down...*
- *Be a humble servant...*

Craft one: “Humble Heart Pocket”

You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue, tape, or staples
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, etc.
- Paper plates
- Pipe cleaners (optional)
- Other decorations (jewels, stickers, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Cut the paper plates (two) into heart shapes.
2. Add verses or captions and decorations to the paper plates.
3. Cut additional heart shapes out of construction paper or cardstock.
4. On the hearts, write ways to serve others or live with humility.
5. Add additional decoration as desired. Staple the paper plate hearts together and place a pipe cleaner within to hang the heart and consider ways to demonstrate humility!



Craft Two: “Topsy Turvy Cartoon”

You will need:

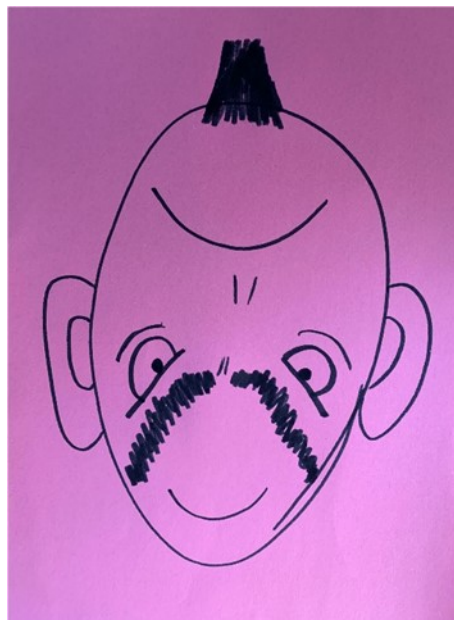
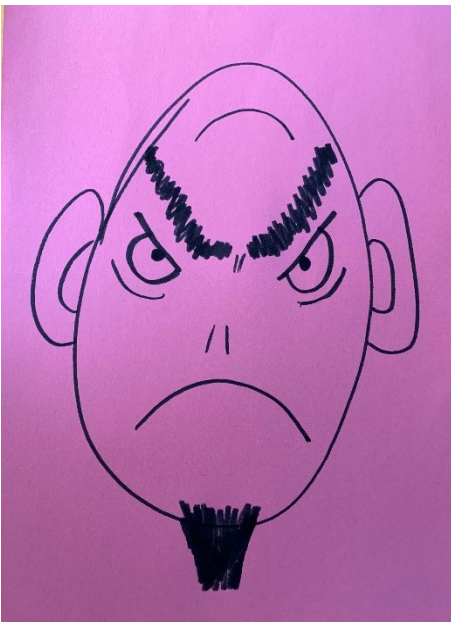
- Pens and pencils
- Markers/crayons
- Cardstock/paper
- Captions/verses



Procedure: *Note: these are instructions for the image

pictured below. There are a variety of other “two-sided” drawings to choose!

1. Select a face style and color of paper. Trace in pencil before filling in with marker.
 2. Begin with an oval, adding ear shaped half-ovals on either side.
 3. Add bushy eyebrows and an upside down “u” near the top of the oval.
 4. Add eyes with rings underneath. Make two vertical lines for the nose, and a wide “U” for the mouth.
- Draw a patch of hair near the bottom.
5. Admire your angry man illustration. Then, flip it upside down and adjust your eyes to see a happier man! Sometimes our expectations get turned around and upside down!



Craft Three: “Topsy Turvy Puppet”

You will need:

- Paper towel tubes
- Construction paper or card stock
- Markers or crayons
- Glue, tape, or staples
- Additional decorations as desired (googly eyes, jewels, stickers, etc.).



Procedure:

1. Decide on a “design” for your puppet. Focus on one end of the paper towel tube at a time.
2. Decorate one side of the tube with facial features and “hair” or a “hat.”
3. Turn the tube over and add features to the other side as well.
4. Add to the puppet sides with extra decoration or even “clothing” elements. Add a verse or caption, if desired.
5. Tell a story with your puppet or let it have a conversation with itself. Have fun!





Thank you for downloading these free materials. Our team is grateful for your trust and pray that God will bless your ministry.

This resource was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#) (pictured right). She serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO. She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.



Every week she writes new [Sunday School lessons](#), [Bible crafts](#), and [children's sermons](#).

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

My name is Tony Kummer (pictured below). I started Ministry-To-Children.com in 2007 as a free resource for anyone sharing Jesus with kids. It is my personal honor to share these resources with churches around the world.



[Reader donations](#) and your support at [The Sunday School Store](#) fund these free materials. Please keep us in mind when you are choosing your next children's ministry curriculum.

If you enjoy our material, be sure to [sign-up for my free email newsletter](#) called "Sunday School Works!" Every Tuesday, I send the latest new lessons, crafts, and coloring pages in print-friendly format to make your lesson planning easy.

May God continue to bless your ministry!

Tony Kummer