



Date: _____
Series: Good Kings – Bad Kings
Fall Year 4, Lesson 16

More of God— Less of Me!

Primary Scripture: Matthew 11:11, 14

Key Verses: Matthew 11:11, “...Of all the people ever born, no one is greater than John the Baptizer. Yet, the least important person in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.”

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

The world would try to convince kids that true greatness is seen in acclaim above others. By the world's standards, greatness is measured by how many people look up to you or by how many people you control. For this reason, kings and rulers are perceived as great people. God turned that upside down when he sent the King of Heaven to be the king of our hearts. Jesus achieved greatness by making himself less. Kids need to know that through Jesus' act of service, their sins are forgiven, and they are adopted into God's family. As such, they can be like Jesus and make themselves less so they can better honor God – “more of God, less of me.” Kids will encounter John the Baptist, who personified greatness in God's eyes. Jesus referred to him as the greatest man who ever lived. In contrast, King Herod and his ruling lines sought only to exalt themselves. Their lives ended in utter ruin and failure.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus, as King of kings, humbled himself and gave his life for us so that we may be children of the King.

Jesus in us: Through God's Holy Spirit, Jesus rules in us so that we, too, would have a humble attitude and seek to exalt God.

Jesus through us: As we seek to exalt God, we serve others and give them a glimpse of God's heart for them.

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Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

An Introductory Drama

Supplies: an adult size chair, a cross

In advance, enlist another adult for this drama and instruct him/her in his/her role.

Stand on a chair, and strike a muscle pose. Say:

I am king of this chair. I am king of this room. And I am king over all of you.

The other adult steps forward and announces, "I want to be king! Off with you!" And with that, he pushes the presenter lightly on the leg. The presenter pretends to be pushed off the chair. The second adult immediately stands on the chair, and declares himself as king of the chair, king of the room, and king over all.

If available, a third adult could even repeat the actions of the second adult. Conclude the drama with all three trying to climb onto the chair at the same time until the presenter says,

"Stop! This is a silly game. And if we don't stop, someone will get hurt!"

Kids, have you ever played "King of the Hill," a contest to see who gets to stay on top? Who really is the King and the most powerful

one in the whole universe? Right. It is God. But do you know how God showed that he was “King of the Hill”?

Hold up the cross for all to see.

Jesus was King on a hill called Calvary. And that is where he gave his life for us. Jesus did not have to do this. After all, he was God’s own Son and ruler over the world. But his idea of being great was to be a servant to us all through his death on the cross, taking away all of our sin. So today, let’s worship the true King of the hill, Jesus, who gave his life for us.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Supplies: chair

Step up on the chair and say:

I am in the position of power. But to God, is this real power? No, this really looks rather silly. What is the position of true power? It is not saying, “I’m the greatest.” It is saying, “God, you are the greatest.” And it looks like this.

Step down from the chair, and strike a kneeling position of prayer.

When we kneel and pray, it reminds us that we cannot demand anything from God. It shows that we are humble and desperate for his love and forgiveness. Please join me in prayer.

Dear God, there are times when we think that we are the most important people in the world. Sometimes we think we are the greatest, and we want to push everyone over and try to get on top of our own little hill. Being “King of the Hill” might be a fun game, but it is not the way we should live our lives.

You are the greatest! Forgive us for the times when we have forgotten this and when we have not thought about you or what you want us to do. Forgive us for not treating others with respect because we thought we

were more important. Please forgive us if there have been times when we have tried to push others aside by saying bad things about them or hurting them. Sometimes we think this will make us feel better, but it really doesn't.

For Jesus' sake, please forgive us and live in our hearts. Help us to be like Jesus and honor you by thinking more of you and less of ourselves. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Your choice of music.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Place the cross in an elevated position next to the offering basket. Invite kids to picture putting their offerings at the foot of the cross where Jesus gave his life for them. He gave us everything, so we give him back these small gifts as expressions of our thanks.

Safety and Security: Safety and security procedures are important for each church to carefully define and implement according to their unique needs. The security, safety, illness and accident procedures described in this curriculum are provided for example purposes only and may not be appropriate, applicable or adequate for every situation. Each church is responsible for determining whether any security, safety, illness and accident procedures contained in the curriculum are appropriate, applicable or adequate for its unique situation. The activities described in this curriculum require adult supervision and may not be suitable for each child and each situation. Each church is responsible for ensuring that adequate adult supervision is provided for all activities and for determining whether an activity is appropriate for each child and each situation. Kids Kount Publishing disclaims all liability for the implementation of any procedures or the performance of any activities described in this curriculum.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

More or less Clothespins

Supplies: five clothespins per child

For larger numbers of children, divide the kids into smaller groups that take turns. This will reduce the number of clothespins needed.

Have each child clip five clothespins to his own clothes. When the leader says “Go!”, the children will remove the clothespins from their own clothes and try to clip them onto other people. As soon as they have removed all of the clothespins from their clothes and have attached them to others’ clothes, they can sit down. The challenge is that they will receive more clothespins as they are attaching their clothespins to others. The first five children to sit down are the winners.

***Warn the kids to be careful to clip the clothespins only to articles of clothing and to avoid pinching anyone’s skin.**

Learning Point:

In order to win this game, you had to do something kind of unusual. Rather than trying to collect the most clothespins, the object of the game was to give your clothespins to others.

Most often, we win games by getting more for ourselves. However, in this game and in the Christian’s life, we win more by giving ourselves to others—just like Jesus gave of himself to us.

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Supplies needed: the video The Visual Bible: Matthew, Volumes 1 and 2, produced by Visual Entertainment, Inc., 1997, ISBN 0-718000-02-1 (order from: http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41); a crown; a pair of old tennis shoes with shoe laces

The crown should be fastened high on the wall to illustrate King Herod and his descendants. This will be referenced from time to time as kings and greatness are described. The pair of old tennis shoes with shoelaces should be lying nearby. These will be referenced when John the Baptist is described.

This Bible presentation will include three excerpts from the film *Visual Bible: Matthew, Volumes 1 and 2*, produced by Visual Entertainment, Inc., 1997, ISBN 0-718000-02-1. The video technician will queue to the next section of the video while the presenter is telling the story. The chapter and verse are displayed in the bottom right corner of the video.

Show the following video clips:

- King Herod and the wise men: Matthew 2:13-20
 - The video clip is 4 minutes 6 seconds in length. Begin 15 minutes 36 seconds from the beginning of the tape when 2:13 appears on the screen, and end after the sentence “Those who are trying to take the child’s life are dead.”
- John the Baptist in the wilderness: Matthew 3:1-12
 - The video clip is 2 minute 22 seconds in length. Begin 52 seconds after the previous video clip when 3:1 appears on the screen, and end after the phrase “burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”
- Herod kills John the Baptist: Matthew 14:3-12
 - The video clip is 1 minute 29 seconds in length. Begin 49 minutes 9 seconds from the beginning of the tape when 14:3 appears on the screen, and end after the sentence, “Then they went and told Jesus.”

Begin with:

This is the story of two men who were called “great.” One was a king who called himself “great,” and wanted everyone else to, also. Point to the crown. The other was a man who did not call himself “great.” He was very poor. He certainly wasn’t a king, but Jesus called him “great.” Point to the shoes. The king tried to make himself look great on the outside, but he certainly wasn’t very great on the inside. Point to the crown. The other didn’t care about looking great on the outside,

but, in his heart, he was one of the greatest men who ever lived. This is the story. Point to the shoes.

Continue pointing to the crown and/or tennis shoes as you retell the Bible event.

The man who wanted to be great was King Herod. King Herod said, “I’m the greatest.” He wanted everyone to think so. He ruled over the land where Jesus was to be born. “I am the greatest,” he often thought to himself. “That is why people call me Herod the Great.”

King Herod built many wonderful buildings. He built mighty fortresses in the wilderness. He built beautiful towers in the city. He even built the splendid temple in Jerusalem for the Jews. He wanted them to agree when he said, “I am Herod. I’m the greatest.”

King Herod would not share his kingdom with anyone. He was afraid, of anyone who would try to take his kingdom. If he knew someone was trying, he would have him killed. He didn’t even trust two of his sons. He thought they were plotting against him to take his kingdom. So what did he do? He even killed them. He killed his wife, too, because he thought she was against him. Remember, above all else, he said, “I am the greatest.” Point to the crown. What did the people say? One said, “It is better to be this king’s hog than his son.” The king would not kill his hog, but he would kill his own son.

Once, when King Herod was in his temple in Jerusalem, he heard about some wise men who were visiting his city. They had seen a sign in the heavens that indicated a new ruler had been born. They were following a star to find this ruler. They had come to ask those who knew the secret writings of the prophets where this king was to be born. They found out it was in Bethlehem.

How do you think King Herod felt when he heard that another king had been born – one who would be known as King of the Jews? Let’s find out as we watch this from the Bible.

Show the video clip from *Visual Bible: Matthew 2:13–20 (King Herod and the wise men)*.

King Herod the Great wasn’t great at all. Though he had been ruler over the land and a mighty builder of fortresses and a temple, most people remembered him for his cruelty.

We know Herod tried to kill Jesus when he was a baby. Jesus was truly the greatest person ever born. Jesus was God’s Son and would serve all people by giving his life for us on the cross. This is true greatness. But to prepare for Jesus’ ministry, God sent someone else before him whom Jesus called “truly great.”

In Matthew 11:11, Jesus says, “Of all people ever born, no one is greater than John the Baptizer. Yet, the least important person in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.” Greatness is measured by what is on the inside—not on how you look on the outside. Let’s take a look at a man who wore camel’s hair and ate locusts for his food. He lived in the wilderness. It was John the Baptist.

Show the video clip from *Visual Bible: Matthew 3:1-12 (John the Baptist in the Wilderness)*.

Did John the Baptist say, “I’m the greatest?” No. In fact, he said that he was not even fit to untie the sandals of the one who was coming after him. Refer to the shoes. Who was John the Baptist talking about? Right. Jesus.

What do you think would happen if King Herod, who thought he was the greatest, met this man, John the Baptist, who God thought was the greatest?

Allow the kids to guess. They may guess that the king wanted to kill him.

Something like that happened. Herod the Great had already died. But his sons were like him. They, too, wanted to be great rulers. And they, too, were cruel. One son name Herod Antipas was the ruler of the land where John the Baptist was preaching. King Herod Antipas said, “I’m the greatest, and I don’t have to follow everyone else’s rules.” He decided that he would marry someone else’s wife. It was the wife of his half-brother. Even stranger than that, she was also his niece.

John the Baptist was not afraid to say, “King, you are wrong for doing this.” The king’s wife, Herodius, was outraged that a wild man in the wilderness would criticize the actions of a king. So she had her husband arrest him and have him killed. This is what happened. It is recorded in the Bible.

Show the video clip from *Visual Bible: Matthew 14:3-12 (Herod kills John the Baptist)*.

So who was the greatest? Was it cruel King Herod who killed John the Baptist? Or was it John the Baptist who, on the outside, looked like a crazy man and ended up dying in a dungeon? According to Jesus, of all people ever born, no one was greater than John the Baptizer.

There is a far greater kingdom than any kingdom here on earth. It is God’s kingdom. Jesus says that if you know, love, and follow him, you will someday be in the kingdom of heaven with him forever. Even the least person in *God’s kingdom* is greater than the greatest

person that ever lived here. But the secret to greatness here and in heaven is not saying, “I’m the greatest,” but saying, “God is the greatest.” The key is to say, “more of God and less of me.”



Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Ask the kids to talk about a time when they gave up something or built up or encouraged someone else. Ask them how this made them feel.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber and Power of the Cross:

- an adult size chair
- a cross

Learning Game:

- five clothespins per child; for large groups, the group can be divided into smaller groups that take turns. This will reduce the number of clothespins needed.

Bible Presentation:

- video: *The Visual Bible: Matthew, Volumes 1 and 2*, produced by Visual Entertainment, Inc., 1997, ISBN 0-718000-02-1—order from:
http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41
- crown
- pair of old tennis shoes with shoelaces