

# Children's Lessons for Life Groups

All-In-One lessons for kids ages 4-12

from

All-In-One Sunday School, Volumes 2 & 3

Lesson 10



# The Silliest Donkey

10

## LESSON AIM

To help kids see that ★ Jesus deserves our praise.

## OBJECTIVES

### Kids will

- ✓ recognize the drawbacks of bragging,
- ✓ learn to take healthy pride in what they do,
- ✓ affirm the talents they see in one another, and
- ✓ dedicate their own talents to God's service.

## YOU'LL NEED

- Bibles
- self-stick notes
- marker
- photocopies of the "Decoration Celebration" handout (p. 35)
- pencils
- confetti

## BIBLE BASIS

### Matthew 21:1-9

Jesus' choice of a small donkey to ride into Jerusalem was symbolic of his attitude. He was not coming as a conqueror on a great white horse but in peace and humility. What a contrast to the leaders of his day—and for that matter, to our leaders today.

Leadership philosophy today teaches that if you want to be a leader, you must demonstrate power and aggressiveness in the way you dress, speak, and conduct your relationships. On Palm Sunday Jesus literally had it all, but he chose to submit to the will of the Father. The world says take all you can get; Jesus' example is to give it all away.

## **Philippians 2:3-4**

“When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves.” Talk about contrast to today’s philosophies of leadership! You could never find that recommendation in today’s self-help leadership books. But Paul says our example is not the world, but Jesus Christ. Humility such as Jesus demonstrates means recognizing God as the author of our talents, being submissive to his will, and recognizing that others have worth in God’s eyes—just as we do.

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS**

Bragging is a nearly universal problem with kids. “My bike is better than yours.” “My grandpa gives me 50 dollars for my birthday every year.” “My music teacher says I’m one of her most talented kids.” Can’t you just hear them? Bragging is a temporary and unsatisfactory solution for a sagging self-image. Kids need to see bragging does exactly the opposite of what they hope it will do: It hurts them in the eyes of others instead of building them up.

This lesson helps kids see that whatever they do that is worthy of praise is a gift of God. Since God is the source of what we have and what we are, the honor and praise should go to him.

Younger kids with rapidly developing skills are justified in taking pride in their accomplishments. But they can learn not to put down others’ efforts to build up their own.

Older kids with their more developed abilities can express appreciation to God for the talents he’s given them. And they can dedicate those talents to God’s service.

# The Lesson

## ATTENTION GRABBER

### Strange and Wonderful Talent Show

Say: I've noticed what a unique and talented bunch of kids you are. So today I'm going to give you a chance to show off some of your talents. We're going to begin class with a strange and wonderful talent show.

Form four groups. Create a good mix of younger and older kids in each group. Send groups each to one of the four corners of the room. Explain that you'll come around and tell each group what it's supposed to do for the talent show.

Give the following assignments:

Group 1: Each child will do a different animal imitation, but they'll all do them at the same time.

Group 2: Kids will each make the strangest face they can.

Group 3: Kids will each try to stick out their tongue and touch the tip of their nose.

Group 4: Kids will stand in a line and try to rub their tummies and pat their heads at the same time.

Give kids about one minute to get themselves organized. Then have the groups take turns performing. Make sure each group gets a hearty round of applause for its efforts. After the talent show, ask:

◆ **What was different about this talent show?** (You made us do weird things; we were just being silly.)

◆ **What kinds of talents do you have?** Kids' answers will vary.

◆ **What happens when people brag about their talents?** (People get mad; no one wants to see their talent.)

Say: Today we'll learn that ★ **Jesus deserves our praise. It's good to work hard and feel good about what you can do. But we get into problems if we get carried away with how great we are or if we start bragging about being better than other people. Let's see how that happened in an imaginary story based on a Bible story.**

## BIBLE STUDY

### **The King's Entrance (Matthew 21:1-9; Philippians 2:3-4)**

Say: Our Bible story is about Jesus' grand entrance to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Open your Bible to Matthew 21 and look briefly at the words. **Well, that's strange! Back in Bible times, kings and conquering heroes rode beautiful horses when they entered a city. I wonder why Jesus rode a donkey.**

**We'd better find out by reading the story straight from the Bible.**

Have kids open their Bibles to Matthew 21:1-9 and take turns reading verses aloud.

Say: **The truth is, everyone *wanted* Jesus to be king. He could have ridden into town on any kind of animal he liked. But Jesus came to be a different kind of king than everyone was thinking about: He came to be the king of people's hearts. So he rode a simple donkey while everyone crowded around and shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"**

With all of Jesus' power, he could have taken over in Jerusalem that very day. But he was content not to. He knew exactly why God had sent him to earth. And he loved God and wanted to obey him. So for this one day, Jesus let the people celebrate, even though he knew that his death on the cross was soon to follow.

Not everyone is as humble as Jesus. Instead of being happy with who they are, they brag and try to make themselves bigger. This little story I'm about to tell will show you exactly what I mean. It's almost the same story we read from the Bible—almost. But the one who's doing the thinking in this story is the mother of the donkey Jesus rode. I know that sounds a bit strange, but stay with me—you'll get it in just a minute. Of course, I'll need your help to tell the story.

Practice each of these cues and responses with the kids:

- ◆ Whenever I say "mother donkey," the girls go "heehaw."
- ◆ Whenever I say "colt," the boys make donkey ears with their hands.
- ◆ Whenever I say "crowd," bump your shoulders together.
- ◆ Whenever I say "Jesus," wave your arms and shout "hosanna!"
- ◆ Whenever I say "disciples," everybody in the second grade and up count to 12 as fast as you can.

Then say: Ready? Here we go with the story, "The Proud Donkey."

Read aloud "The Proud Donkey" story on page 32. Pause after each underlined word to let kids do their actions. Ask:

◆ **Why did the mother donkey get so mixed up?** (She was so proud of her colt, she didn't even notice what the crowd was really saying.)

◆ **If you could talk to the mother donkey, what would you tell her?** (You silly donkey—they're praising Jesus, not your colt; quit bragging!)

Say: **Of course we know animals can't really think or behave like that. But have you ever seen people behave like that proud mother donkey? Sometimes people are so proud**

### Teacher Tip

*Younger children may know the story well and would appreciate this opportunity to shine in front of the older kids. Help them tell the story by asking questions and prompting them.*



### Teacher Tip

*Older kids can easily handle five cues and responses. If your class is mostly younger children, you may wish to eliminate one or two of the responses so kids don't get confused.*





## THE PROUD DONKEY

Once upon a time in the faraway village of Bethphage, there lived a mother donkey and her little colt. The mother donkey was proud of her little colt. She was sure he was the most handsome little colt any mother donkey had ever had. He would surely fetch a fine price for her master, for the little colt was just now big enough to ride.

One day two of Jesus' disciples came to the house. They walked right up to the little colt, untied him, untied the mother donkey, and began to lead them away.

The master stopped them. "Why are you leading this colt away?" he asked.

"The Lord needs him," the disciples answered.

The master smiled and nodded, and sent them on their way.

The mother donkey was thrilled. "I knew it! I knew it!" she thought. "I knew some important person would spot my colt. He is truly the most handsome colt that ever walked the roads of Judea."

The mother donkey was very glad the disciples let her come along. She wanted to see her son in his moment of glory!

The disciples brought the colt to a man they called Jesus. Jesus spoke kindly, and his hands were gentle on the reins. "See

what a good little colt I've raised," the mother donkey gloated as the little group started down the road to Jerusalem. "He's not giving that kind man Jesus any trouble at all."

As the group of travelers drew closer to Jerusalem, a strange thing began to happen. A crowd of people began to follow them. It was a happy, singing crowd. They were so happy to see the handsome young colt, they began to shout his praises. "Hosanna!" they cried. The mother donkey's heart swelled with pride as she followed behind. "I knew he would be great," she sighed. Then, wonder of wonders, the crowd began to cut palm branches and lay them in the path of the colt. All around them, people in the crowd were shouting and dancing and praising God for the wonderful colt. "That nice man Jesus must feel very honored to ride such a fine animal," thought the proud mother donkey. "Has any animal ever been so honored?"

Down through the streets of Jerusalem they paraded. The colt and the mother donkey stepped very proudly, for all along the way the crowd kept singing their praises.

and boastful, they're not very nice to be around. Let's see what kind of people God wants us to be.

Have kids turn to Philippians 2:3-4. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud.

Say: ★ **Jesus deserves our praise. God doesn't want us to go around bragging or putting other people down. He wants us to thank him for our abilities and to praise the abilities we see in others. To practice, let's do some "pop-up" answers.**

Explain that you're going to read some statements. For each statement, you'll say: **Pop up if you have a proud, boastful answer.** After kids have popped up and given proud, boastful answers, you'll say: **Pop up if you have a nicer, thoughtful answer.** Allow kids

to respond both ways before moving to the next statement.

Here are the statements:

◆ **That was a beautiful solo you sang in church. You have such a nice voice!**

◆ **I heard you got an A from Mrs. Altman. She's a really hard teacher.**

◆ **Did you draw that? I can't believe you're such a good artist!**

After kids give their pop-up answers, ask:

Say: **Sometimes it's easy to brag, even when people give us compliments. But God wants us to build up other people—not ourselves. So let's practice doing that.**

## LIFE APPLICATION

### Decorated Kids

Say: **On Palm Sunday the people of Jerusalem welcomed Jesus and praised him because they knew of the great miracles he had been doing all over Israel. They hoped Jesus would get rid of the Roman rulers and become the greatest king Israel had ever known. Jesus accepted their praises because it was true, he did come in the name of the Lord. But he didn't agree to do anything outside what God had planned for him.**

**When we understand what God has planned for us, we don't need to brag or make a big deal of ourselves. We realize right where we fit in God's kingdom, and let me tell you—that's a wonderful thing to know. ★ Jesus deserves our praise! Let's have some fun helping each other down that road to discovery by naming what's special about each person here.**

Have kids set their chairs in a circle, with one chair in the center. Have the person whose birthday is closest to Christmas sit in the center chair. Encourage kids to name talents and abilities they recognize and appreciate in the person who's in the center.

Besides the more obvious talents, encourage kids to recognize things such as friendliness, helpful attitudes and cheerfulness.

As kids list things, write them down with a marker on individual self-stick notes. Then have kids help you "decorate" the person in the center with the self-stick notes.

Give everyone a chance to be decorated, including you!

Then ask:

◆ **What was it like to get decorated?** (Really good; silly.)

◆ **What was it like to tell others what you admire about them?** (That felt good, too; it was neat to see how it made them happy.)

## COMMITMENT

### Decoration Celebration

Say: **It makes me feel good to look around at all you talented kids. I think God must be pleased, too. After all, he made all of you and gave you all these talents in the first place.**

Have kids find partners. Match older kids with younger ones as much as possible. Give kids each a photocopy of the "Decoration Celebration" handout and a pencil. Have partners help each other remove their self-stick notes and put them in the appropriate place on the handout.

Say: **Now, for each one of your self-stick notes, write or draw one way you can use that talent or ability for God's service.**

Ask older kids to help younger ones with this part of the activity. Older kids may be able to suggest things to draw based on the talent or ability. Encourage kids to share their "Decoration Celebration" handouts with their parents later.

## CLOSING

### Praising Partners

Bring everyone together for a pair-share. Have partners each share how their partner plans to serve the Lord. Have older partners give their younger partners a little help if necessary. Throw a little confetti on each person as his or her partner shares.

Close with a prayer, thanking God for the talented kids in the group and asking that God will help them serve faithfully and joyfully.

Then explain you're giving the class their first opportunity to serve the Lord joyfully by helping you pick up the confetti!





# DECORATION CELEBRATION!

Dear Lord, thanks for all these talents people recognize in me:

(Put your self-stick notes here.)

Here's how I want to use them for you:

"Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him, singing with joy" Psalm 100:2.

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