**Script 4**

**Topic**: **Greatness –** What type of life do you seek? The celebrity lifestyle where you are recognized by others as great and seek their approval and envy, or the servant lifestyle, the life of a disciple of Jesus.

**Expert**: What does the world value as great?

**Testimony**: Leaving the Rock band chasing fame, fortune, popularity, and taking on the life of a servant and using your gifts for the benefit of others, not just yourself.

**OT Reading**: 1 Samuel 18 NIV

**NT Readings**: Philippians 2:6-7 NLT

John 12:42-43 NIV

**Gospel**: Mark 9:33-35 NET

Episode 4

Hello and welcome back to school, our lesson will begin with a little word play. If I say the word POPULAR, what comes to mind? Perhaps you see flashes of high school or junior high… maybe you have good feelings, maybe you have bad… perhaps for my theater friends out there you are thinking about sweet pink Glinda trying to help Elphaba become more popular. Before you break out into song, one thing is probably certain: we are now adults and that word is behind us. We’ve matured, we’ve grown up, we’re no longer concerned with popularity.

But if we examine the word popularity, we might be surprised to find that synonyms for popularity are words like admiration, approval, acceptance, fame, status, reputation, attractiveness, even greatness. Regardless of age we all struggle with wanting greatness. After all, this is America. We don’t do second place. No one raises their child to be second best, no one wants to be the back-up quarterback. No one tries to be the second best anything.

*Maybe Jerry Seinfeld said it best in his stand-up comedy when he was describing the Olympics and the winner. An Olympic athlete works so hard, dedicates their entire life to a single race and then something like this happens: (switch to side view, say first line, “Fastest man in the world” move nose back half an inch, say second line “never heard of him”)*

We value winners. We value celebrities. What they do, what they say, what they wear, what they have. We see them and try to emulate their lifestyle. We want the celebrity life. Bottom line is the world worships success, the most popular, the greatest. It says, be the one everybody knows, do whatever it takes to be first, that’s the message we get, that’s the life you are **supposed** to strive for. But the word of God that engages us in this study is in stark contrast to this message. In this study, we ask, what life are we pursuing: the celebrity life or the servant life?

**[Testimony]**

You don’t have to spend too much time searching the Bible to try and find an example of someone struggling with wanting to be the best, the most liked. One example of a popularity contest gone wrong is 1 Samuel chapter 18. In the previous chapter David has just defeated Goliath, and after this, David continues to be successful in battle and in whatever he does, and King Saul puts David in charge of the army. As the army is coming home, women come out from all the cities singing and dancing and celebrating. Hear the words of the song from 1 Samuel 18:7, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” But their song causes King Saul to burn with anger and what follows next in scripture is a series of events in which King Saul tries to kill David. King Saul becomes so jealous of David that he is responsible for killing 85 priests and their entire city because they had given aid to David.

Saul had become obsessed with who was the most popular, who was the most well liked, who was greater. He had lost sight of what he as the King of Israel was supposed to do. He ignored God’s will, and instead only cared about how he was being perceived by the people and himself. He did not care about the life God wanted for him, he wanted the celebrity life.

This type of behavior was also a problem during the time of Jesus’ ministry. In the Gospel of John, there were Pharisees who believed in Jesus but were too afraid to confess their faith. Their desire was for the approval of men, not of God (John 12:42-43 *on screen*). They weren’t ready to follow Jesus, if it meant being put out of the synagogue. The Pharisees wielded a weapon of fear to control each other and others who would choose to follow Jesus, if you chose Jesus, you would be out of the “IN CROWD”.

It wasn’t just the Pharisees who struggled in this area, even our favorite disciples had their own problems. In Mark 9:33-34 we read, “33 Then they came to Capernaum. After Jesus was inside the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.”

The disciples were discussing who was going to have the highest position or rank after Jesus. Who would be the most famous, the big deal, the celebrity. Sure they would all be great, but there had to be one who was going to be the greatest. There is a lot to unpack in these 3 sentences. Notice how Jesus addresses his disciples in response to their discussion. Jesus waits until after the journey, when they are settled in the home to address this issue. He did not just quickly put a stop to the discussion on the road immediately, but by waiting to address the matter in the home, he shows how dangerous the underlining root of this question of being the greatest really is, because it could eventually lead to jealousy, pride, or even hatred for one another. The desire for greatness can be destructive

Notice also Jesus’ all-knowing power and how he knew the hearts of his disciples. He sees exactly where the disciples are in their thinking.

It is interesting to note that this matter of who is the greatest is mentioned not just here in the Gospel of Mark, but in the Gospels of Matthew, and Luke as well and in all 3 of these gospels the matter arises twice! Later on in Jesus’ ministry this question will arise again, only this time the sons of Zebedee, James and John will send their mommy! This worldly view of greatness is a temptation hard to resist.

Hear Jesus’ response, “9:35 After he sat down, he called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” This response can be confusing. Is Jesus saying that we shouldn’t strive to do great things? That we shouldn’t work hard? Are we to teach our children to not try too hard, to not be successful? Perhaps we should just view our self as worthless and when we do that, then somehow we have manipulated the system and become great? Think lowly of myself than I am really thinking highly. Certainly not.

You are a child of the most high; made in His image. There is much work to be done. But if you want to be great, if you seek true greatness Jesus teaches you that you must become a servant. You must look at greatness in the way that it was done by Him. Who as the apostle Paul put it, “Philippians 2:6 Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. 7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.” This radical way of living, turns everything on its head. Imagine just for a second if you woke up saying to yourself, “self, today I take on the role of servant. I will serve everyone I come in contact with. I will no longer worry about my status, but instead will choose to follow the example that my Jesus has given me. One in which I love and serve other people. I will not view others as in competition with me and look only for their faults, but instead will look to build them up and encourage them. I will not lie, but speak the truth in love. I will not put myself first, but will look to other’s needs. I will not fight to be first, but instead I will fight against my sinful nature, my pride, my vanity. I will not be afraid of not being in the “IN CROWD” or having all the nice things of the world, but instead will embrace the servant life.”

Ultimately Jesus is not against his disciples or our ambition to be great, but he shows that the false, worldly idea of greatness, is not what is right. Instead he lays before us the true, spiritual reality of greatness. True greatness is to choose to be a servant.

This shocking response is not at all what the world says.

**Expert Witness**

Jesus turns the idea of what the world views as great, and it exposes it for what it is, foolishness. When we insist on being the most popular, when we insist on doing whatever it takes to be the greatest, when we chase the celebrity life, we destroy the very life God wants for us. You see, the world’s view of greatness, popularity, worth, all comes from the father of lies, Satan. This world is not our future, the celebrity life is not our way of life. There is infinitely more for those who put off that way of living and instead follow in the steps of their master and take on the life of a servant. Notice the things that Jesus chooses instead of what was popular or great in the world’s eyes: the weak things not the strong, the lowly things, the despised things, he calls fisherman, sinners, whores, thorns not gold or silver for a crown, sweat and blood not comfort, these choices of being a servant led to suffering and death. Thanks be to God! For it is in Jesus’ choices of taking on the servant life, that we ourselves have received Eternal life. Along with this comes true joy, true fulfillment, and the peace that passes all human understanding. Take some time to examine your own life. Find the areas where you are looking to be served rather than serve and pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the strength and courage to change. Look past yourself and look to serve. Serve the homeless, the broken, the divorced, the hurting, the lost, all people! I believe Luther sums it up well when he describes the way a Christian should live their life: He says, “A Christian lives *outside* themselves in faith and love. By Faith they look to Christ for their salvation and in love they take the gifts that God has given them and uses them to serve the people God’s places in their lives.”