

# The Greatest

## Scripture

He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. John 1:27

I heard a story about a little boy who walked out into the backyard wearing his baseball cap and carrying a ball and bat. "I'm the greatest hitter in the world," he said. Then he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it, and missed. "Strike One!" he yelled.

He picked up the ball and said again, "I'm the greatest hitter in the world!" Again, he tossed the ball into the air, and again he swung at it and missed. "Strike Two!" he cried.

The boy looked at his bat and ball, straightened his cap and said again, "I'm the greatest hitter in the world!" A third time he tossed the ball up in the air and swung at it. He missed again. "Strike Three!"

The little boy picked up the ball, looked at it, and cried out in a loud voice, "I'm the greatest pitcher in the world!"

I guess all of us at some time have dreamed of being the greatest. This morning I want to tell you about a man who had no desire to be thought of as being the greatest. In fact, he wanted to make sure that everyone knew that he was NOT the greatest. The man's name was John.

John was very popular in his day and people would travel for miles to see John and to hear him speak. He was so popular that many people began to think that he might be the Savior that had been promised -- or that he must at least be Elijah or one of the great prophets who had come back from the dead.

John assured people that he was not the Christ, or even one of the great prophets. He told them that he was just a man who had come to tell them about one who was coming who truly was the greatest. "The one who is coming -- why, I'm not even worthy to unbuckle his sandals," John said. Of course, the one he was talking about was Jesus.

## Activities

### FIRST AND LAST RELAY:

Divide the children into teams. Each team can run a relay together in a designated area. The last one on each team to reach the other side will be the first ones to begin the next running relay. Continue as time allows. The teacher could also tell the children what

each relay is if a change from just running the relay is desired, such as hopping, skipping and such.

### **SERVING EACH OTHER:**

Divide the children into two teams and have them stand across from each other. The teacher can hand each player on one team an item that they will SERVE to the other team member standing across from them, or the "serving team" can run to a table and take ONE item to serve to someone on the other team. After everyone is served, then the other team will serve their opposing team.

### **SERVING CLAY:**

Each child can be given some modeling clay to form items that can be served, or forms of people, etc. Ideas would be to serve food items, or a rake or a lawn mower, bed to make, book to read to someone, etc.

### **RAINBOW FISH:**

Give children construction paper, markers/crayons, and scissors to cut out fish. Encourage children to color their fish with many colors like a rainbow and encouraging words from today's lesson so children can remember to share and serve others. Children could also write words from our Bible verse today and place the fish in the correct order to recite the verse together.

### **FISHY PRAYER:**

Provide children with cut out fish such as a starfish, an octopus, blue fish, etc from today's story. Tell children to write words for a prayer and place the various types of fish around a poster board and let children form a prayer circle and each can say a sentence prayer to ask Jesus to help them to serve others and to think of others as greater than they are.

### **RAINBOW PLATE:**

Each child can be given a paper plate and many different colors to color the entire plate with colors of a rainbow. The children can then write J - O - Y in a vertical line, in bright red colors. Beside the J, the children can write JESUS, beside the O, they can write OTHERS and beside the Y, they can write YOU. Children can share with each other how to serve JESUS and OTHERS.

### **WHO IS THE GREATEST:**

Divide the class into two teams and let them do a chant as they face each other. One side can shout -- WHO IS THE GREATEST? The other team will call out their answer,

JESUS IS... continue to let the teams shout their chants back and forth. The teacher can give the teams other chants as well with questions from today's lesson with the opposite team chanting back the answer!

# Christmas Lights

## Scripture

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was

Christmas is the most wonderful season of the year! Don't you agree? I love all of the decorations, especially the lights. Many towns have a lighting contest to see who can decorate their home the best. Usually, the newspaper publishes pictures of the most beautifully decorated homes and during the holidays, people get in their cars and drive all around town to see the beautiful lighting displays. It is so easy to get so caught up the beauty of the lights that we might think that that is what Christmas is all about, but it isn't. You see, the lights aren't Christmas, the lights are just reminders of the One True Light that came to bring light into the world.

Our Bible reading for today tells us that there was a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came to tell about the light so that everyone would believe. John wasn't the light, he only came to tell others about the light. Who was the light that John came to tell people about? That's right, it was Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

This Christmas, as we enjoy the beautiful Christmas lights, let's remember that while they are beautiful, they are only reminders of the one true light -- Jesus. Let's also remember that we have been called to tell others about Jesus -- the light of the world -- that they might be saved, that they might have life, that they might find their way in the darkest night.

Heavenly Father, this is such a beautiful time of the year. As we enjoy the lights of Christmas, we give thanks for your Son, the light of the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Activities

**LIGHTS MARCH:** Give each child a battery-operated candle to march around a designated area. As the children march, have the first child say, JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT, then the next child will shout out, JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT, and then the third child and continue through all the children.

**CHRISTMAS HUNT:** Hide cards with a single letter on each, of the word C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S and send the children out to find all the letters and bring them back and put in the right order on the floor by the wall. Tell children to think of ideas to be THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD from each letter of the word CHRISTMAS (ie: C = caroling, H = hugs for the poor, R= running to help a neighbor, I = interest in others; S = sacrificing my toys for someone else; T - time for others; M = making Christmas cards about Jesus' birth; A = asking someone to Sunday School and church; S = saving money to help others, etc).

**J-E-S-U-S LETTERS:** Let children draw and cut out large letters to spell J-E-S-U-S. Give the children markers to color and glitter to decorate the 5 letters. Hang the letters on a string of Christmas lights to hang on the classroom wall. Ask the children WHO is the LIGHT of the world? Yes, JESUS!!!

**LIGHT CHRISTMAS CARDS:** Provide the children with the materials to make a Christmas card with a candle on the front. Let children decorate the candle with a bright YELLOW flame and glitter. On the inside of the card, write JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT OF THE WORLD! Celebrate JESUS this Christmas.

**CHRISTMAS TREE JESUS LIGHTS:** Let the children draw and decorate a triangle Christmas tree with various star stickers and strings of lights. Encourage children to write J-E-S-U-S on their Christmas tree art, as tree "ornaments" hanging from their tree!

**CANDLE LIGHT CRAFT:** Give each child a toilet paper roll and a piece of construction paper cut to cover the toilet paper roll. Write JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD on the piece of construction paper and tape or glue it around the roll. The children then cut out 2 large FLAMES out of yellow construction paper, to tape to the top of the candle or stick some pieces of red and yellow tissue inside the roll to represent flames.

**CANDLE IN BEANS:** Give each child an empty baby food jar (or some other similar container). Let the children pick out various beans that the teacher has available, such as dried split peas, navy beans, lentils, etc and place the beans in their little jars. Use a craft stick to stir some white glue into the jars of beans and place a red candle in the middle of the jar of beans. Let children hold the candle for a few minutes while the lesson is being shared, so that the glue and candle can "set up". Give children a small piece of construction paper and let them write JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT on the paper and then tape it around the outside edge of the baby food jar .

**LISTENING TO THE LESSON:** Give the children a piece of paper and some crayons or markers. Tell them to listen closely and every time they hear the teacher or another classmate says the word LIGHT, they are to quickly draw a candle on their paper. Teacher, make sure you say the word LIGHT many times so children will continue to listen and will have fun seeing how many candles they make during the story time! The pictures of candles can be very simple with just a stick and a little flame on top. Let children count how many candles they drew while listening and then encourage

children to write JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT, or TELL OTHERS ABOUT JESUS WHO IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, etc.

**CANDLE VERSE:** The teacher will draw and cut out a large candle from poster board. Let children color the very BIG candle with a yellow flame as well and then take turns writing a word (for each child) of the poem in our Bible lesson today (Lord, let your light, light of your face shine on us. That we may be saved, that we may have life, to find our way in the darkest night, let your light shine on us!). Let children write their own word in any color of their choice and continue to write out the poem until all the words have been written. For younger children, the teacher could have the words already written out before the class time and the younger children could just trace the letters, if desired!

## The Light of the World

Cut circles from the construction paper to symbolize light bulbs. Make them large enough so kids can write a word or two on them.

Turn down the classroom lights, and plug in the Christmas lights so they light the room.

Our Bible reading for today tells us that God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light--Jesus--so that everyone would believe. John wasn't the light. He only came to tell others about the light. Jesus is the one true light, who gives light to everyone. Let's think about lights in our lives to help us think about that.

When do you need light or what do you need light for? Encourage kids to try to work together to name a use for light for every bulb on the Christmas strand.

At this time of year, we see lights everywhere that remind us of the coming of Jesus, the true light that John told about. Turn and tell a neighbor in one sentence about the coolest Christmas lights you've seen. Allow time.

Those lights can help us remember that Jesus is the one true light in our hearts and in our lives. Jesus brought light into the darkness of this world.

Think of a way Jesus brings light into your heart and life, and write a word to tell what you're thinking on a construction paper light bulb.

Give kids construction paper light bulbs and allow time. As they finish, have them tape the paper light bulbs between the real light bulbs on the strand.