

Series: With the People

Lesson 2: My New Found Popularity

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify some of the things that they and other people do to be popular
- Identify that Jesus set aside his privileges to hang out with people on earth
- Identify some of the risks and rewards of setting aside one's popularity

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Several popular magazines
- ☐ A table
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ A board and markers
- ☐ A prize (optional)
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ A picture of yourself that shows a ridiculous fashion from your youth (optional)
- ☐ One copy of handout "With the People: Two"

Lead-In:

Spread several (e.g. 8-10) popular magazines on a table along with several pairs of scissors. Instruct each student to cut out a picture of someone famous, no duplicates allowed. When they are finished, clear the magazines and scissors. Have each person sit around the table, with their famous person cut out in front of them on the table (use the floor if your group is too large). Ask the students to hold up their famous person for each of the following statements, if they apply to the famous person. Record one point for each time their famous person fits the description. For example, if my famous person is Tom Cruise and the statement is “My famous person is rich”, I raise my picture and get one point. If they don’t know, they can guess. The “famous person” with the most famous attributes wins. You could have a silly famous person prize (sunglasses) to give to the winner.

1. My famous person is rich
2. My famous person lives dangerously
3. My famous person is beautiful
4. My famous person has really nice clothes
5. My famous person can sing
6. My famous person can act
7. My famous person has won awards
8. My famous person is associated with a high profile charity
9. My famous person is on TV
10. My famous person has great hair

Which famous person wins? Who is most popular and why? Crown the famous person by putting him or her on the board (draw him or her a throne and a crown). Keep him or her on display for the rest of the lesson to remind the students what the world thinks is popular.

Transition by saying something like, *Wouldn't it be cool to be as popular as (insert famous person)? To have nice hair, be on TV, have lots of money? To be noticed, loved, and appreciated? Whether we admit it or not, many of us spend a lot of our time pursuing popularity. Last week we compared spending our lives on things that don't last with investing our lives in things that do. This week we are going to look more closely at popularity, should we try to get it or try to give it up?*

Task One:

Give every student a pen and a piece of scrap paper. Tell students to think of the strangest thing that they ever did to fit in and draw it on the paper. The wackier the better! Now instruct students to mingle around the room talking to one another. When two students meet, they should show each other their pictures and decide whose was wackier. The least wacky can go to the sidelines while the most wacky can keep mingling. Do this until only two or three students remain. It would be great if you could bring a picture of yourself with you, in which you are shown to be indulging in some ridiculous fashion from your youth. Participate using this as your picture and see how you fare.

When only a few remain, ask them to share their picture with the whole class and crown them alongside the famous person from the Lead In. Then ask the whole class why they think we all participate in the (often silly) business of trying to be popular. Make sure that students connect popularity with privileges. In other words, there are definite advantages to being popular, famous, and powerful! Don't move on until you think they have connected these things.

Task Two:

Say something like, *Well, we've clearly established that being popular has its rewards. What about risks? Can anyone think of an example where trying to be popular backfired? And I don't just mean 'cause you wore stirrup pants or some other funny fashion. I mean, can anyone think of a time when someone's attempt to be or become popular hurt others?* Solicit some examples and be prepared with one of your own as an example.

Ask, *What other pitfalls can happen when we pursue popularity?* Possible answers are that others are left out, we hurt people we love, we waste our money and energy on things that don't last, etc.

Task Three:

Say something like, *Last week we learned that Jesus taught us to invest in God and invest in other people, because these things last forever. Sometimes when we spend our energy pursuing our own popularity, we trample on others along the way. There is a passage in the Bible that talks about Jesus' own attitude towards his power. Does anyone happen to know which passage I mean or could you take a guess? The passage is from Philippians 2:5-7. I have it here in an easy-to-understand version. Will someone please read it?*

Give a copy of the handout, "With the People: Two", to a student. *Everyone else, let's listen and make a list of the risks and rewards that Jesus experienced.*

Invite a volunteer to use the board to record some of the risks (giving up status, power, connection to God the Father, suffering as a human, being crucified, etc.) and rewards (being among the people he loved, bringing salvation, experiencing life as a human, etc.) of the incarnation.

Ask, *Can we add to this list some of the things that we can risk for the people we know? What could you give up for a friend? What could be the reward?* For example, befriend an unpopular kid at school. It could cost me some popularity and it could gain me a valuable relationship.

Closing:

Conclude by saying something like, *Investing your life in others starts with a heart attitude that says that people are more important than popularity. Jesus put his own neck on the line for us because of his love for us. Can you put your neck on the line for someone who needs you?*