“Who’s the Greatest?”
by
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What
Peter and Matthew are in a counseling session trying to determine who really is the greatest. Then Jesus reminds them that it’s the servant of all who is the greatest.

Themes: Servant, First Shall Be Last, Disciples, Following Jesus, Humility

Who
Peter
Matthew
Dr. Frank
Luke
Mark
Child

When
Could be either modern day or Bible times

Wear (Props)
Smallish rock
3 chairs

Why
Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 20:26

How
Make sure you practice the transitions from one scene to the next. If you have a small stage, get creative with your space. For instance, put the Dr. Frank scene on stage and the disciples on the steps of the stage or the floor. Just be sure to project if you’re not wearing microphones.

Time
Approximately 5 minutes
At curtain, Group and Child are upstage left, standing in various poses, as if arguing. All are frozen. At upstage center, Dr. Frank is sitting in a chair, facing both Peter and Matthew who are also seated.

Dr. Frank: Thank you for both coming in, Peter (nods to Peter) and Matthew (nods to Matthew). Now, seeing a counselor is normal for many people, especially when there’s been some conflict—

Peter: (interrupts, sarcastic) No conflict here.

Matthew: (sarcastic) Yeah, nothing here either.

Dr. Frank: (sarcastic) Riiigghhtt. Well, I understand something happened recently in Capernaum. Do you remember? Something about an argument among the disciples?

Peter: (avoiding) I don’t have any idea what—

Matthew: (also avoiding) I can’t think of a thing—

Dr. Frank: (referring to notes) Something about an argument regarding who was the greatest among you all? Ring any bells?

Peter and Matthew stay quiet for a few beats, obviously trying not to say anything, then.

Matthew: (blurting out) OK, doc, here’s what happened!

Dr. Frank freezes. Matthew goes to upstage left where the Group is gathered, and they come to life. There is also a Child in their midst, but the Child stays off to the side and says and does nothing. Peter has joined the group. Several start to talk at once, with calls of “I’m greatest”, “No I am!”, etc. Matthew approaches them, hands outstretched.

Matthew: My dear, dear friends, it’s I, Matthew. (they all look up—except for Peter, who stays off to himself with his arms crossed—and run to Matthew, embrace him, give him high fives, etc. etc. Matthew revels in their adoration) Oh, my friends, please, please. It’s good to see all of you, too. It sounds like your hearts are troubled. (various of the Group agree, their hearts are troubled, etc.) Tell me what’s wrong.

Luke: Um, er, we’re running out of money.

Matthew: I’ll get us some more from my old tax collector friends!

Mark comes up to him.
Mark: Yeah, and uh, too many people want to see Jesus...and us...heal them!

Matthew: I've already made arrangements for all of us to take a quiet boat ride and get away for a while.

Mark gives him a fist bump, others cheer.

But your angst sounds like it's much more than these things, yes? (the Group gets quiet, hanging their heads in mock shame, etc. Matthew goes over to Peter) Peter! My dearest friend and brother. Can you shed light on—?

Peter: (a bit jaded in tone, jumps up) Just letting you and (looking around) everyone else know that I am the greatest disciple, case closed (grabs the prop rock and holds it up, bragging) Remember, I’m Petra! P-E-T-R-A! Rock city, baby! The Master himself called me that.

Matthew: Yes, of course, that’s true. And of course, I think we all (sweeps his hands to the others) have value, yes?

Peter: No! Rock! Petra! I’m number one! I’m number one!

Matthew slowly shakes his head, and the rest start their “I am the greatest” grumbling for a beat, and then all freeze. Peter and Matthew quickly return to their seats by Dr. Frank.

Dr. Frank: (unfreezes, then, to Matthew) Well, I see now how everyone got so angry—

Peter: Time out! That’s SO far from the truth!

Matthew: It’s the gospel truth! Well, not the gospel-gospel, but—

Dr. Frank: (holds his hand up, cutting off Matthew) Peter, what’s your recollection?

Peter: Well…

Dr. Frank freezes again, Peter goes to where the group is. The Child is again in their midst, but again, stays off to the side and says and does nothing. Matthew also goes and sits off to the side, in the same spot Peter was in the first time around. The Group unfreeze and start the same grumbling among themselves as earlier. Peter approaches them, hands out stretched.

My dear, dear friends, it’s I, Peter. (they all—except Matthew, who stays off to himself with his arms crossed—run to Peter, and embrace him, give him high fives, etc. etc. Peter revels in their adoration) Oh, my
friends, please, please. It’s good to see all of you, too. It sounds like there is some discord. I want to hear what’s going on.

Luke: Uh, er, we need help with so many, many things. Can you help?

Peter: Of course, I can fix anything. But there’s more to this meeting, isn’t there?

Several start to talk at once, with more calls of “I’m greatest”, “Not I am!”, etc. Peter finally holds his hands up:

Peter: Wait, dear friends. This talk is not important. Yes, I humbly accept that the Master has called me Petra, the rock, which I don’t feel deserving of at all. Nonetheless— (Matthew starts making fake vomiting noises. Peter ignores him and continues) We are all of value, are we not?

Matthew stops gagging when he sees Peter and the rest are looking at him.

Matthew: Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever. (picks up the prop rock, looks at it and mumbles to himself, in a mocking tone) Petra sha-ma-tra (then tosses it; Peter picks it up)

Peter: Matthew, (holds up the rock) we can all be Petra’s in our own way, right?

Matthew rolls his eyes. The rest stare at Peter and Matthew for a quick beat, then start their “best” chants up again, then all freeze while Peter and Matthew quickly return to their seats by Dr. Frank. He un-freezes.

Matthew: Now wait a minute, that’s not—

Peter: Yes, it is, and I’m standing by that—

Dr. Frank: (interrupting) Gentleman, please! (they both stop) Although I do appreciate these, um (air quotes with his fingers) “truthful” accounts, I am not convinced I am hearing what really happened. (Peter and Matthew start arguing again. Dr. Frank stops them again) Gentlemen. In true healing, there needs to be complete trust. You both have been together for a long time. Been through a lot already. Together. You were some of the first to be called by the Master (they are both looking down, then up to Dr. Frank and then to each other). Now, tell me, what really happened?

They both hesitate, then look at each other and nod. Dr. Frank freezes. Peter and Matthew go back to the Group, who all start up again with their “best” rumblings, and Peter and Matthew fall into same. Finally, Jesus enters and goes to them.
Jesus: What are you talking about? (All stop talking and start shuffling their feet, looking away etc.) Come over here. (They all reluctantly go to him.) I know what you were discussing (heads now bowed, still not looking).

If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. (Jesus gestures to the Child, who goes to him. Jesus takes the Child and says) Whoever receives one child like this in My name, receives Me. And whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.

The Group listens, look at each other, start to slowly pat each other on the back, embrace, etc. and then all freeze. Peter and Matthew then return to Dr. Frank.

Peter: (Quiet) He...was right. As always.

Matthew: Yes. Servant of all.

Peter: Servants first.

Matthew: Yes. (Pause) Peter, I’m sorry—

Peter: No, I should apologize to—

They both stop. Dr. Frank smiles.

Dr. Frank: Thank you. I think we’re done here.

He stands, as do Peter and Matthew. Each shakes Dr. Frank’s hand, and then start to exit. Peter leading the way. Peter then stops and gestures to Matthew to go out ahead of him. Matthew puts his hands up, indicating no, Peter should lead. Peter does the same, indicating Matthew should go first. After several beats of this, they both simultaneously go and bump into each other, then, shoulder to shoulder, both exit. Dr. Frank shakes his head and exits.

Lights out.