



Key Bible passage: Matthew 21:12-16

The children praise Jesus in the Temple

Aim: to give space to think about who we should respect and why

1 Pre-arrange this assembly with an older child. Explain to them that you want them to perform a short piece on a musical instrument but that you will be very rude during it. They should just carry on and ignore you.

2 Introduce the assembly by saying that Freda is going to play a piece called: ... As Freda plays, yawn very loudly, look at your watch, talk over the top of her playing ('This music goes on a long time, doesn't it?' 'I hope she gets finished in time for the rest of this assembly.' 'Oh, I've forgotten something I need.' Go and get it from a cupboard, banging the door noisily.)

3 At the end of the playing, pick up the music stand and get Freda off stage as quickly as possible without giving anyone time to clap. But stop at the edge of the stage and notice some shocked faces - you may have to pretend to notice, if children take it for granted that this is a normal way of treating people.

- Ask yourself or the children what the matter is. Realise that you have been very rude to poor Freda and haven't treated her with any respect.
- Ask for suggestions as to what you did that was disrespectful.
- (Yawning, talking over the top of her playing, going out noisily, not saying thank-you or clapping etc).
- Ask Freda how she felt when you behaved like that.
- Ask the children why you should have treated Freda with respect. (Because showing respect for someone is showing how much we value them. When we don't show respect, we hurt other people's feelings.)

In our school, we all need to respect each other. Sometimes it's very hard for grown-ups to remember to respect children, and sometimes it's very hard for children to respect grown-ups. But there was one grown up who always knew how to respect everybody, whether they were young or old.

4 Story

If possible, put up a picture on the OHP of the Temple courtyard or of two first century Jewish priests in full regalia.

In this story, any time you hear the word 'respect', put your thumb up and make it bow down like a finger puppet. *Respect!*

What a noise there was in the Temple courtyard! The two priests looked down their noses in disapproval. 'My word, this is noisy!' said Ebenezer pompously.



'Absolutely, my dear chap,' replied his friend Silas. 'People today just don't show any *respect*. When I was young, we used to show *respect* for everyone older than us. Now no-one seems to *respect* anyone else at all.'

The two priests looked down their noses at the crowd in front of them.

Ebenezer snorted. 'It's all the fault of that young whippersnapper from Galilee. What's his name? - Jesus. He's a troublemaker. He doesn't *respect* any of us! Do you know what he did yesterday? He stormed into the courtyard here and tipped up all the tables of the pigeon-sellers and shouted out that nobody was showing any *respect* for the house of God! He called us a den of thieves!'

'Dreadful behaviour!' agreed Silas. 'No *respect*! And look! There he is now! With all those horrible sick people around him. And those revolting children! Ugh! Children! Has Jesus no *respect* - encouraging them to come into the house of God?'

Ebenezer gasped and pointed across the courtyard. 'Who is that rude man, dancing about, waving his legs in the air? Oy! You! Show some *respect*! This is the house of God!'

But the dancing man shouted back, 'Jesus has made me better! I can walk! Look! I can dance too! Thank you Jesus!' And he jigged away happily.

Then a little girl shouted, 'I can see! Jesus has made me see again!'

The two priests were horrified. But not as horrified as when a whole gang of children suddenly jumped up and shouted yelling at the top of their voices:

'Praise to the Son of David! Yo, Jesus! Wow Jesus, you're great! *Respect!*'

This was too much for the two priests. They strode across the courtyard and shouted at the children: 'Will you be quiet! This is God's house, not a playground! Show some *respect!*'

The children were frightened by the two important men getting angry with them. They looked at Jesus with big worried eyes. Would he be cross too?

But Jesus stood up and smiled at the children as if he thought what they were saying was brilliant. Then he turned to the two priests and he looked very sad. Silas shouted at him rudely, 'Do you hear what these revolting children are saying?'

Jesus' face broke out in a big smile. 'Oh, I can hear them all right,' he said. 'Haven't you read your Scriptures?'

'We're priests!' bellowed Ebenezer. 'We know our Scriptures back to front!'

Jesus nodded. 'Well, then. Can't you remember that bit in the Psalms where David says, 'Oh God, you've taught children and babies to sing praises?' These children are just doing what they should:



showing God's Son some *respect!*'

'You call that *respect*? shouted Ebenezer, his face purple with rage.

'I certainly do,' said Jesus quietly. 'That's real *respect*. Not just pretending.'

Silas and Ebenezer frowned. How dare he speak to them like that!

'We'll have to get rid of this Jesus,' muttered Silas.

'Yes indeed,' agreed Ebenezer. 'He has no idea who he needs to *respect* round here.'

5 Ask who showed no respect in that story. (Silas and Ebenezer showed none for Jesus or for the children or for the dancing man)

Ask who showed respect. (The children showed respect for Jesus and Jesus showed respect for them.

He also showed respect for his 'enemies' the priests, because he was polite, even when he was challenging them.)

6 Prayer:

Lord Jesus, help us to show respect for each other in the way we behave today. Help us to remember to put other people first and to think about their feelings, both in our classrooms and in our playground.

7 And now, Freda will play her piece again, but this time, I'm going to give her the respect she deserves. And let's show our respect by giving her a big clap.

8 Questions for circletime:

- I wonder if we should respect everyone?
- I wonder if that means doing everything they tell us to do?
- I wonder how we can show respect for each other?
- I wonder if showing respect always means being quiet?
- I wonder if adults should respect children?
- I wonder what that means?
- I wonder if children should respect adults?
- I wonder what that means?