READY TO USE PARABLE

# Jacob and the job with no joy

“Congratulations, Ethan, Jacob and Blessing! You’re now the head students of Manchesterford High!”

Ethan shook Miss Whittaker’s hand as the rest of Year 11 applauded. The head teacher had announced that she was introducing the practice of having head students for the school a couple of months ago and the campaigning had started almost immediately. The competition for the three posts had been fierce, but one name had stood out above all others – Ethan’s.

Ethan was on the football team, he sang in the choir and he had helped set up a World of Warcraft club. That Blessing had won too was not surprising. She was popular and friendly, and liked to help the younger students in school. Jacob, on the other hand, was a shock. None of the teachers has seen him as head student potential. He was always causing trouble, making ridiculous claims about himself and gathering small groups around him to disrupt the status quo.

After the assembly, Miss Whittaker gathered Ethan, Blessing and Jacob together in her office.

“So, when we discussed with Year 11 what the head students would do, this is the list of responsibilities everyone agreed on. What on here do you want to take responsibility for?” the head teacher asked, passing them a list of jobs.

“I’d love to do the speaking at the prize-giving, and this thing about going to meet our local councillors,” Ethan said immediately, before the other two had even looked at the list.

Miss Whittaker had no hesitation in putting Jacob’s name down for those. She was relieved that Ethan had got in before Jacob had had a chance to volunteer.

After a minute, Blessing said: “I can chair the student council. I think I get on well with people in the rest of the school.”

Again, relief hit Miss Whittaker. A council chaired by Jacob would descend into chaos in two minutes.

“I’d love to organise the litter pick,” said Jacob.

Miss Whittaker stared at him. She had no idea what Jacob would want to do as head student, but it wasn’t the litter pick. She’d expected him to go for the jobs with all the glory, not this messy, thankless task.

“OK…if you’re sure,” she said.

Two weeks later, Miss Whittaker was looking out of her office window when she saw Jacob, Mr Walsh, the site manager, and a random collection of Year-9s knee deep in rubbish that had been dumped at the edge of the school grounds.

She was so surprised she had to sit down.

## Discussion questions

* If you were competing in an election like this, how would you do? Would you win and become a head student? Would you want to be?
* What do you make of Jacob’s choice of job? Why do you think he chose to do that?
* How do you judge what people are like? Can people change the way they act? Or can we misjudge people, thinking they’re something that they’re not?
* Do you do the jobs that no one else wants to do? Why? Why not?

This story is based on John 13:1-20. Read this passage to the group and compare the story to this one. You may want to chat about the story using these questions:

* What do you make of Jesus’ choice of job? Why do you think he chose to do that?
* Do Jesus’ actions change the way you think about him? Have you learned anything new about Jesus from this story?
* What do you think he was trying to tell his disciples through his actions?
* What difference might this story make to your lives?

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