



SESSION 1 of 4

The pearl

MEETING AIM

To present the kingdom of heaven as something valuable and worth searching for.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:45-46.

BACKGROUND

Jesus speaks at length on the kingdom of heaven in Matthew's Gospel and often uses parables to illustrate his point. The parable of the pearl appears in the middle of an extended sequence of similar parables. This parable (and the parable of the hidden treasure, which it echoes) is short but vivid, conveying important truths about what the kingdom of heaven is like. This session will encourage your young people to see how valuable and joyful the kingdom is, but also to challenge them on what they are prepared to give up in order to gain it.

10 GATHERING TIME

You will need: chocolates or dried fruit

Give each young person one chocolate or piece of fruit as they arrive. Encourage them to really savour it. For example, they could spend a minute enjoying the aroma of the chocolate before putting it in their mouths. Once it is in their mouths, suggest that they let it melt slowly rather than chewing it (for a piece of fruit, suck it and appreciate the texture before finally biting into it). Closing their eyes may also enhance the experience. This approach can really add to the simple joy we take from what we're eating.

Afterwards, discuss joy with the group. What does this word mean to them? What brings them joy?

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: TV; DVD player or access to a streaming website; copy of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005) or *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971)

Show the sequence near the beginning of either film where Charlie finds a priceless golden ticket inside the wrapper of his chocolate bar. Despite receiving extravagant offers from other people he refuses to sell his ticket and runs straight home to keep it safe.

After showing the clip, explain that you're going to be talking about treasure; about what really matters and what we're prepared to give up to get it.

If you don't have access to the films or the facilities to show them, borrow something that belongs to another leader – preferably something they value but wouldn't cost the earth to replace. A teddy bear or something similar would be ideal. Conceal the item somewhere in your meeting room.

At this point in the session, announce what you have done. Give the leader five minutes to find and retrieve their property. Once this is done, ask the leader to explain how they feel to have the item back and why it means so much to them.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: Bibles; pens; paper

Divide the young people into pairs or groups of three. Give out Bibles and have each group read Matthew 13:44-46.

Explain that these are famous parables (stories), but that people today might struggle to relate to them because they use images that are not so familiar for us now. Few people go looking for buried treasure these days, for example. If Jesus was telling these stories today, what images might he use?

Encourage each group to suggest modern equivalents of the hidden treasure and the pearl. If they need hints, point out that both of these things are very valuable but hidden; you need to work hard to find them. Take feedback from each group.

10 CHATTING TOGETHER

You will need: flip-chart paper; pens

Following on from the Bible exploration section, discuss the questions below. Creating a spider diagram on a sheet of flip-chart paper might be a good way to record the group's responses.

- What do you think these parables say about the kingdom of heaven?
- What is the kingdom of heaven? (This is a complicated question, but it's important to clarify what we mean by this term. For the purposes of this exercise, a helpful working definition might be: "Wherever what God wants happens.")
- If the kingdom of heaven is something hidden, how do we look for it?
- What might it mean for us to sell (or give up) everything we have to gain the kingdom of heaven?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: modelling clay or other craft materials

Give each of the young people a lump of modelling clay or craft materials. Encourage them to create a model that represents something important to them. As they are creating it, suggest that they reflect on how easy or difficult it would be to give this thing up. God won't necessarily ask us to give up the things that matter most to us, but how would we respond if he did?

When they have finished making their models, ask if anyone is willing to show their model and say a little about it. What kinds of things do we stand to lose by going after the kingdom of heaven? What makes that worthwhile?

5 PRAYER

You will need: models from 'Creative response'

Gather the young people around the collection of models, which represent things that are important to them. Allow a couple of minutes of quiet for the group to reflect on the things God might ask them to give up, and pray for his help in giving up anything that holds us back from living his way.

To finish, give out more chocolates as a reminder of the joy we find in the kingdom of heaven. Anything we give up in order to gain the kingdom is definitely worth it!

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