**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 1 of 4

# The treasure and the pearl

### MEETING AIM

To learn that God’s kingdom is precious and worth everything we have.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:44-46

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

Imagine trying to describe the sea to someone who had never experienced it. You would start by comparing it to things they knew about: colour like the sky, spray like the biggest rainstorm you’ve ever been in. When Jesus told his followers about the kingdom of God (also known as the kingdom of heaven), he wasn’t talking about a place: he was describing God’s reign and the unique experience of living with God, doing things God’s way.

Jesus’ followers were ordinary folk such as fishermen, farmers, mothers and servants, so he told stories set in everyday situations. He used familiar images to build up a picture of God’s kingdom, so that the people who had never experienced it would know what it was like and want to be part of it, too.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met; share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children’s lives and share something appropriate from your own life. Chat with the children about what their most treasured possession is.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a collection of everyday objects

Spread out the objects and encourage your children to choose one to describe God, for example: “God is like…this sticky tape, because he sticks close to you.” Choose different objects, be inventive and discuss each other’s ideas, adding to them if possible: “God is like this sticky tape, because he can mend things.”

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** three buckets of play sand, one with lots of toy treasures hidden in it (gold coins, jewels, shells); a fancy cloth or cushion, on which you have spread a selection of plain wooden or plastic beads and one beautiful toy jewel, pearl or glass bead; two pieces of card with Matthew 13:44 and Matthew 13:45-46 printed on them

Show the three buckets of sand. Encourage the children to take a closer look at each one, using their hands to dig in each bucket and see if there’s anything special about it. If they find anything, they shouldn’t show anyone else; indeed, they should try not to speak or react at all – just bury it back in the sand and move on to the next bucket.

Once everyone has had a good search through each bucket, vote together on which bucket they would choose to keep. Ask them to share the reason why.

Say that you’re going to share out the treasure, but not before going shopping for jewels. Show the group the cushion with the jewels or beads. Invite them to decide which one of these they would like to buy if they had all the money in the world.

While everyone is doing this, bury a scripture reading in each of the two ‘treasure-less’ buckets of sand. Then discuss which jewel they would like to buy if they had all the money in the world.

Say that Jesus told a story about treasure to describe what God’s kingdom is like. To hear it they first have to find the two parts of the story! Invite everyone to dig for the two pieces of scripture in the first two sand buckets. The finders read them aloud.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* Which part of this story do you like best?
* Would you rather find buried treasure or the most precious jewel in the world?
* What questions would you like to ask Jesus about this story?
* What do you think is special about God?
* What do you think is special about God’s way of doing things?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** slips of paper and pens; plain boxes with lids, eg clean takeaway tubs; self-adhesive toy jewels, shiny stickers or a selection of beads and sequins and PVA glue

Give everyone a plain box and encourage the children to decorate it as their own treasure chest. As they do so, talk about how both people in the story gave everything they had in exchange for the treasure they found. Jesus said that God’s kingdom is like this treasure. Has anyone experienced something special that seemed to come from God? What can *you* give to God? How might you show him that you are grateful for all the special things he has done for you? Children can write or draw their answers on slips of paper that they can keep in their treasure chest.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** the sand bucket with buried treasure from ‘Bible story’

This is a quiet, thoughtful prayer activity. Invite the children to think about something special that God has done for them as they take it in turns to dig out a piece of treasure from the sand. In a time of quiet, use the pieces of treasure to spell out ‘GOD’ on the floor. You may like to add extra treasures or lighted tealights to the letters.

Pause briefly once everyone has arranged their treasure, then say this prayer:

“God, help us to treasure your way of doing things above all else. May your kingdom come.”

Together, finish by saying: “Amen.”

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