**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 1 of 4

# The treasure and the pearl

### MEETING AIM

To discover something about what is special about God.

### 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 particular situation.

These two short parables are packed full of meaning, and we can discover something new each time we come to them. While the whole idea of the ‘kingdom of heaven’ might be too abstract for younger children, we can certainly start them off on this journey of discovery. At their most basic, these two stories show how special following Jesus is, and how great it is to be part of his family. It is something worth more than anything else in the world!

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children and share any refreshments you have. Ask the group what their most treasured possession is. Show the children one of your most treasured possessions, if you can.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** shopping toys such as food packaging, toy money and a till, plastic fruit and vegetables, dressing-up clothes

Before you start, gather together anything that the children can play with which will inspire shop play. You could set up a supermarket, a clothes shop or a bakery – or all three! Encourage everyone to play together, but let your children lead the play and invite the adults into their imagination. As you play, chat about what the children thinks things are worth.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** all the items you used in ‘Play’; a box marked ‘Treasure’ filled with sweets or other snacks; a marble or similar; a fancy box or bag (optional); Bible

Before you start, hide the box marked ‘Treasure’ and the marble (your ‘pearl’) somewhere in your meeting space. (You might want to put the ‘pearl’ in a fancy box or nice fabric bag, if you have one.)

Share out all the items you played with in ‘Play’ so that everyone has a similar amount. Ask the children to go in search of both the pieces of treasure. When they have been found, bring them back and place them in the middle of the group.

Ask everyone whether they would swap any of their play items for the treasure or the pearl. How many items would they swap? Is there anything they wouldn’t want to swap? Why? Why not?

Get out the Bible and open it up at the book of Matthew. Explain that your story today comes from the New Testament, from Matthew’s story of Jesus’ life. Read out Matthew 13:44-46. Ask one person to hide the treasure and the pearl; read the passage out again and invite everyone else to re-enact the two parables as you do so. (You could do this as often as the children would like to.)

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* What is your favourite part of the story?
* What could be so important that someone would swap everything they owned to get it?
* Would you swap everything to get the treasure or the pearl? Why? Why not?
* What might the stories of treasure and the pearl mean?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** paint; saucers or small plates; paper; toy or real coins; shallow tray; marbles; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Put some different-coloured paint onto some saucers or plates. Dip the faces of some coins into the paint and they press them onto the paper to make prints of the coins. (You might find it easier to stick a blob of Blu Tack to the coin to hold onto as you dip it into the paint.) Use different coins and different colours to create a pattern.

Place the paper into the tray and put a marble on top. Roll the marble around the tray, so that it picks up paint from coin prints and trails it over the paper. You could put blobs of paint onto the paper if the marble isn’t picking up much paint.

As you work, chat more about the story. You might want to share with the children why following Jesus is important and valuable for you. If you have given something up in your walk with Jesus, then you could tell the group about it now.

When the pictures are dry, stick them up around your meeting space. Encourage the children to take them home at the end of your session and put them up there. Every time you pass one, invite the children to chat with their parents or carers about how special it is to follow Jesus.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** praise music and the means to play it; any musical instruments or items that could double as musical instruments (such as pans and wooden spoons, jars filled with dried beans)

Play some praise music and dance around. Play your musical instruments (real or improvised) along with the music. Occasionally stop the music and encourage the children to shout out something they have discovered today, or something that is wonderful and special about following Jesus.

Continue alternating the dancing and shouting for a few minutes, or until the children lose interest. Finish your time together by thanking Jesus for the amazing, special adventure of following him. Ask him to help you remember this special adventure every day.

**ALEX TAYLOR**

is an experienced children’s and youth worker living in Milton Keynes.