

Unit 25 • Session 1 * Kingdom Parables

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 13

STORY POINT: God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.

KEY PASSAGE: Colossians 1:13-14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.

OPENING

Prompt kids to talk about what they would do if they were king or queen of a kingdom.

SAY • No matter how cool you think it would be to be in charge of a whole kingdom, none of our kingdoms could ever be perfect. Today, we will talk about God's kingdom and some of the things Jesus taught about it. Jesus is the perfect King. Let's learn more.

SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 2: Find the treasure

You will need: • plastic tubs, 1 per kid • dry beans or play sand, enough to fill the tub(s) • plastic gems or plastic coins, 5–10 per tub

What to do: Place a few plastic gems or plastic coins in a large tub. Fill the tub with dry beans or play sand. Allow the kids to sift through the beans or sand to find the treasure hidden within. Make one tub per child.

SAY • Finding a buried treasure may sound to you like the start of a wonderful adventure story. Jesus explained that the kingdom of God is like a buried treasure. Entering God's kingdom is the start of a wonderful adventure too!

TEACH THE BIBLE STORY

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we get into our story, let's ask a big picture question to help guide our study. *How does God care for His creation?* That's an important question because the Bible tells us that all of creation is under God's rule. He is the King of the universe, so understanding the ways He takes care of everything under His rule helps us see that He is a good King. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out the answer to our question.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 13. Tell the Bible story or if you purchased the app, you may show the Bible story video "Kingdom Parables."

LEADER • For a second, I want you to imagine how silly you would look to your family and friends if you sold everything you owned just to buy a bit of land. It's likely that people would think you had lost your mind. Land can be valuable, but selling everything is extreme! At least, it seems that way until you come back from your new land with a chest of treasure!

God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything the world can offer, but to people living in the world, it doesn't always seem that way. When we give up things to follow Jesus and be in God's kingdom, we might seem silly too. But what is sillier: giving up something that will eventually fall apart to gain something perfect that lasts forever; or holding onto something that won't last instead of chasing after something wonderful?

In addition to the value of God's kingdom, Jesus wanted people to understand that it will expand to fill the whole earth. Just as the mustard seed which grows into a tree that provides shelter for many, God's kingdom will grow and become a shelter for everyone who has faith. **God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.**

Christ connection

LEADER • The kingdom of God is growing in the world. This kingdom is valuable and worth giving everything for. While we wait for Jesus to return and fully set up His kingdom, we carry out the mission of telling others about King Jesus, who rescues sinners. That brings us to our big picture question. *How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.* By sending Jesus to defeat sin, God was working out His plan to restore the whole earth.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Colossians 1:13-14. Then sing the key passage song.

LEADER • Before coming to faith in Jesus, all of us are trapped in darkness—spiritual darkness. We cannot see the truth of God and we cannot obey Him. When God saves us, we become citizens of Jesus' kingdom, which is a kingdom of light. In Christ, we can love and obey God.

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord, thank You for establishing a perfect kingdom. Thank You for inviting us into it. Use us in Your plans to grow Your perfect kingdom. Amen.

APPLY THE STORY

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

You will need: Key Passage Poster printable (print out if you are teaching from home)

What to do: Instruct the kids to squat down low to the ground right in front of their chair. Lead the kids to say the key passage very quietly. Then, repeat the key passage multiple times, increasing in volume and standing a bit more upright each time. When you say the passage for the last time, stand on tiptoes with arms stretched overhead and shout the verses.

SAY • Paul wrote this key passage as part of his letter to a church in Colossae. Paul explained the change faith brings. When we have faith in Jesus, we move from a kingdom of spiritual darkness—a kingdom of sin and death—to Jesus' perfect kingdom of light, love, grace, and mercy. **God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.**

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Help kids find Matthew 13 in their Bibles. You may choose a strong reader to read a selection of verses, such as Matthew 13:31-32. Remind the kids that Matthew is part of the New Testament division called the Gospels. Ask what the other gospels are and what they tell. (*Mark, Luke, John; accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy about listening and not understanding? (*those who didn't understand Jesus' parables, Matt. 13:13-14*)
2. How is the kingdom of heaven like a mustard seed? (*It looks small but grows large and provides shelter, Matt. 13:32*)
3. How is the kingdom of heaven like a buried treasure? (*It is valuable and worth giving up everything to get, Matt. 13:44*)
4. Have you ever had to give up something to follow Jesus? *Guide kids to discuss situations they may have faced where they had to choose obedience over popularity, comfort, or another thing the world can offer. Be prepared to share your own experiences too.*
5. Would you give up everything to follow Jesus? *Help the kids think through the kinds of sacrifices some believers must make, such as missionaries or those living in places hostile to Jesus. Remind them that God may not tell them to give up everything, but they are called to be ready if necessary.*
6. How can you help God's kingdom grow? *Talk through ways kids can live on mission. Help them come up with ways to show love to others and creative ways they can share the gospel with friends and loved ones. Remind them that the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and courage to know God's will and obey it.*

SAY • **God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.** We become a part of God's kingdom when we have faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. We can be a part of the kingdom's growth by living on mission to tell others about Jesus.

ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 2: Kingdom trees

You will need: • "Someone told you the gospel" paper • markers or crayons • green construction paper • glue

What to do: Distribute the "Someone told you" paper to each kid. Instruct the kids to draw a simple tree shape without leaves on the branches. Tell the kids to write their name in the middle of the tree trunk and the name of the person who first told them the gospel at the base of the tree. Then, allow the kids to tear off bits of green construction paper and write the names of people they can tell the gospel to on each "leaf" before gluing it to the bare branches of their tree.

SAY • We use the image of a tree to help us think about our families. The base of a family tree is made up by your ancestors, like great-grandparents. The branches are your brothers, sisters, and eventually your children and children's children. In a way, this is also a good way to think about God's kingdom. Someone told you the gospel, and you can tell other people the gospel. As people trust in Jesus, they become part of God's kingdom, which is also God's family! God's growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.

REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?