

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 13; MARK 4



KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 40:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is the Bible true? Yes, the Bible is true and has no error.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus is the King who came to bring God's kingdom to earth. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, He made the way for people to be part of God's kingdom. When we trust in Jesus, we are like the good seed in His field—we belong to Him, we grow in Him, and we will be with Him forever.

STORY POINT: Jesus taught what God's kingdom is like using parables.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

More than 100 years ago, a group of missionaries developed a unique way to illustrate the idea of committing everything to the kingdom of God. These Christians were known as one-way missionaries because they would buy one-way tickets to their mission destinations with no intention to return.

They were so confident they would never return to their homes that they would pack all their belongings in a coffin that would be used to “bury” them when they died on the mission field. As they traveled to the ends of the earth, they said goodbye to everyone and everything they had ever known, all for the kingdom of God.

Jesus’ parables about the hidden treasure and the priceless pearl represent an encounter that changes everything. In one, a man stumbles upon treasure buried in a field. In the other, a merchant who has searched his entire life for fine pearls suddenly discovers one so valuable nothing else compares. In both cases, these men sell everything to obtain what they’ve found.

From a worldly perspective, selling everything to obtain one thing seems reckless and unwise. And yet, the man sells all he owns “in his joy.” This isn’t about grim duty or forced giving—it’s about overwhelming delight. When you truly see the worth of the kingdom, sacrificing everything you have for it doesn’t feel like loss. Rather, it brings great gain.

Many times, we find ourselves chasing a thousand smaller treasures, such as comfort, reputation, and control. But none of those treasures ultimately satisfy. They demand more and give less. But when we encounter Jesus, the true treasure, everything else finds its proper place. Paul echoes this in Philippians 3:8: “I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

This week, lead your kids to value Jesus above all and seek their deepest joy in the one who gave everything for us.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "What's the Sauce?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ index cards



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Jesus Taught about the Kingdom" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 25, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "American Sign Language Message" printable

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ music
- ☐ bean bag or small ball
- ☐ "Forever (Isaiah 40:8)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ small pots, 1 per kid
- ☐ flower seeds
- ☐ potting soil
- ☐ water
- ☐ plastic sheet (optional)

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ pool noodle
- ☐ hula hoops

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “Other than the gospel, what is the greatest story someone has ever shared with you?” ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “What’s the Sauce?” activity page.

| **SAY** “Nice job deciphering the code to reveal the message! In today’s story, we’ll learn how Jesus told another parable to reveal what God’s kingdom is like.” ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: SILLY STORIES

Before the session, write several story elements on different index cards. This could include characters (dog, mom), settings (beach, park), or events (received a gift, went to the store). Invite the kids to sit down in a circle. Allow each kid to draw one card. Lead the kids to take turns reading what’s on their cards to the group. Encourage the group to work together to turn their cards into one big, silly story by putting the cards in a certain order and filling in the gaps with their own creative storytelling.

| **SAY** “What was your favorite part of the story? [Allow responses.] Jesus used stories when He taught, too! Today we will see how **JESUS TAUGHT WHAT GOD’S KINGDOM IS LIKE USING PARABLES.** ”

☐ OPTION 2: GUESS WHO CHARADES!



Group the kids into two teams. Pick one volunteer to go first. Have him or her stand at the front of the room and act out a mystery person without talking. Examples could include police officer, parent, and teacher. His or her teammates must attempt to guess the person. Once the team guesses correctly, the next team will take a turn. Each time the team guesses correctly, they get a point. The team with the most points wins.

| **SAY** “You guys did a great job guessing who your teammates were pretending to be. But we don’t have to guess what God’s kingdom is like! Jesus used different stories and examples to help teach the crowds. Today we will see that **JESUS TAUGHT WHAT GOD’S KINGDOM IS LIKE USING PARABLES.** ”





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Hi, there! Thanks for joining us as we learn from God’s Word together! My name is [your name], and today we will be hearing another parable that Jesus shared. Can anyone remind me what we learned last week? [Allow responses.] Jesus used parables to help people understand more about God and His kingdom. If you brought your Bible to class, go ahead and take it out now (Use this time to distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.) Our story can be found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

Let’s pray together as we open God’s Word. ‘God, thank You for showing us what it means to be part of Your kingdom. Please give us understanding as we read Your Word together. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Last week, we began studying a new big picture question: **Is the Bible true?** Do you remember the answer we learned? [Allow responses.] Let’s say the answer aloud together. [Allow responses.] **Yes, the Bible is true and has no error.** Jesus reminded people that God’s Word is true, but not everyone is ready to hear and understand it. When we build our life on the Bible, we grow in faith as we allow the gospel to change our hearts. Today, we will learn how Jesus continued to teach about the importance of God’s Word and His kingdom. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “Jesus continued to teach that God’s kingdom offers something more lasting than any of the riches or treasures of this world. Not everyone was ready to understand the truth about God’s kingdom. But Jesus reminded the disciples that God gives understanding to those who desire to know Him. When we believe God’s Word is the truth, it produces fruit in our lives! That means it changes how we live. In today’s parable, Jesus continued to explain what God’s kingdom is like. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 13; Mark 4. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Taught about the Kingdom.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE KINGDOM

“Wherever Jesus went, He **told people about God’s kingdom**. Many times, He **used parables—stories with a special meaning—to help people understand**.

One day, **Jesus told the crowd, “God’s kingdom is like a man who planted good wheat seeds in his field. But while he slept, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the plants grew, the servants saw both wheat and weeds. They asked the man if they should pull the weeds out, but the man said, ‘No. If you pull them out now, you might pull out the wheat too. Wait until harvest. Then I will have the wheat gathered into my barn, and the weeds burned.’”**

Jesus told another story. He said, “God’s kingdom is like a mustard seed—the tiniest of all seeds. But when it is planted, it grows into the largest garden plant. It becomes a tree, and birds come and rest in its branches.”

Then He said, **“God’s kingdom is like yeast. A woman mixed it into a huge bowl of flour, and soon the whole batch of dough was rising!”**

Jesus’ friends asked Him to explain the first story. **Jesus said, “The good seed are the people who belong to God. The weeds are people who reject Him. At the end of the age, God will separate those who follow Him from those who reject Him. Those who belong to Him will be with Him forever.”**

Jesus told more stories. He said, “God’s kingdom is like treasure buried in a field. A man found it, hid it again, and joyfully sold everything he had to buy that field.”

Jesus also said God’s kingdom is like a valuable pearl that a merchant was searching for. When he found the pearl, the merchant sold everything he had to buy it.

Lastly, Jesus said that God’s kingdom is like a big net cast into the sea. It catches all kinds of fish, but later the good fish are kept and the bad ones thrown away.”

Christ Connection: Jesus is the King who came to bring God’s kingdom to earth. Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, He made the way for people to be part of God’s kingdom. When we trust in Jesus, we are like the good seed in His field—we belong to Him, we grow in Him, and we will be with Him forever. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Picture it: Before you read the story, invite the kids to draw a picture of their most treasured possession. Once you read the story, have the kids share what they drew. Remind kids that God’s kingdom is more valuable than anything we own!

Use hand motions: As you read through the story, encourage the kids to listen for the words *God’s kingdom*. Each time they hear it, encourage them to place their hands above their heads to form the roof of a castle or house.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Jesus continued to point people to God’s kingdom through sharing parables. Who did the wheat and the weeds represent in the story? **[Allow responses.]** Jesus explained that the wheat are those who believe in God and the weeds are those who have rejected Him. Just like the wheat and the weeds, or the fish in the net, both believers and unbelievers live alongside each other in this world. God calls believers to share the gospel with those around them until His return!

How do you think the yeast in the story compares to the kingdom of God? **[Allow responses.]** Yeast causes bread to slowly rise, even when we can’t fully see the reaction taking place. God’s kingdom may not be visible at first, because it starts with an inward change of our hearts. But when we turn from sin and turn to Jesus, His work in our lives becomes visible as we share it with others.

Jesus also reminded the crowd that God’s kingdom requires sacrifice. What did the man do when he found the treasure in the field? **[Allow responses.]** God’s kingdom may cost us everything, but He promises that what He has to offer is far greater than anything we could give up. He offers salvation and eternal life to all who turn to Him!

Jesus is the King who came to bring God’s kingdom to earth. Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, He made the way for people to be part of God’s kingdom. When we trust in Jesus, He gives us His righteousness so that we become the good seed in His field—we belong to Him, we grow in Him, and we will be with Him forever. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ God promises that when He returns at the end of age, He will separate those who know Him from those who do not. By dying on the cross, Jesus has made the way for believers to enter God’s kingdom. But we must turn from our sin and trust in Him as Lord. To learn more about what it means to have faith in Jesus, you can see one of your parents or a church leader. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 25, Session 2” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. What if someone doesn’t hear about Jesus before they die?
2. Have you joined God’s kingdom by putting your trust in Jesus?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Prior to the session, print a copy of the “American Sign Language Message” printable for each child. Provide pencils.

SAY “ John (J.W.) Michaels was the only person traveling to different Southern cities to help churches start ministries for the Deaf until 1923, when another man who was deaf began to help him in his work. Soon, other strong leaders began to travel, encourage, and teach Deaf groups. Some leaders began speaking to hearing churches about ministries they could begin for Deaf people. ”

For nearly 40 years, J.W. played a central role for people starting Deaf ministries. J.W. helped people know that God can use anyone, hearing or deaf, to help more people know about Jesus.

At the age of 72, J.W. wrote a book called *A Handbook of the Sign Language of the Deaf* to help ministers, Sunday School workers, seminary students, and others be able to learn sign language so they could tell Deaf people about Jesus. Because of J.W.’s ministry and book, many Deaf people heard about Jesus for the first time. Much of the Deaf ministry now around the country is a result of the hard work and vision from J.W. and people working with him during these early years.

Distribute the printable and give kids time to use the American Sign Language alphabet to discover the message. Give kids time to pray. Thank God for people like J.W. Michaels who helped start Deaf ministries in many places throughout the Southern United States.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 40:8 together.

SAY “ Jesus shared that though things in this world pass away, God’s kingdom is forever. We can trust that His Word is true and will never lead us wrong. Let’s review our key passage together. ”

Instruct kids to sit in a circle. Play music. Hand a kid a bean bag or small ball. Encourage him or her to say the first word of the key passage and pass the ball to the person on his or her left. He or she must say the next word and then pass it again. Continuing passing until the music stops. Whoever is holding the ball when the music stops is out. Play until the group has recited the entire key passage.

Lead kids to sing “Forever (Isaiah 40:8).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ God, thank You for showing us that Your kingdom and Your Word are the greatest treasure we can find! Give us courage to live in obedience to Your Word in this broken world. Amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 13. Explain that the Gospel of Matthew contains 23 parables Jesus shared, with 11 of these only being found in Matthew's Gospel. While the meaning of some parables were hidden from the crowd, they revealed truth to Jesus' disciples.

Consider pointing out the location of the Sea of Galilee [D6] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 13:44-45 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY “ Have you ever given something up that was important to you? [Allow responses.] Jesus reminded His followers that being part of God's kingdom would require sacrifice. Think about what you may have to give up to follow Jesus. Being part of God's kingdom may not always look like selling all of your possessions, but it may cost you other things like popularity, comfort, and your desires. But nothing you give up compares to the value of knowing Jesus as Lord! And when we find something valuable, we shouldn't keep it hidden. God calls those in His kingdom to share the good news of the gospel with others! ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ How does God's kingdom compare to a mustard seed? ”

Discuss how a mustard seed is a very tiny seed that grows into a large plant. Explain that the coming of God's kingdom started with a small beginning. But eventually it grew to reach all people, including both Jews and Gentiles! (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Romans 1:16.)

SAY “ Will evil always exist? ”

Remind kids that Jesus shared how God will come to judge this world because of sin. God promises that He will destroy evil and make all things new again. Explain that whoever believes in Him will be with Him forever! (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Revelation 21:3-5.)

SAY “ Why will God separate those who accept Him from those who reject Him at the end of the age? ”

Encourage kids to consider God's character. Share that God gives all people the opportunity to turn to Him. Remind kids that God is holy and perfect. His judgment is the righteous and just response to those who continually reject Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Psalm 19:9.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: GROWING IN GOD'S WORD

Instruct the kids to have a seat at the table. Consider laying down plastic to protect the table. Provide each kid with a pot and a flower seed. Guide the kids in placing a little soil in the bottom of the pot. Next, help them place the flower seed in the soil and cover it with a little more on top. Once the seeds are planted, go around and pour a little water into each pot. Share that just as water and sunlight will cause a plant to grow, being in God's Word every day allows our faith to grow! Encourage kids to place their pots in a window somewhere in their home to remind them to pray and read the Bible.

SAY “ Jesus said that those who trust in Him are like the good seed. We will grow in knowledge as we read His Word and become more like Him. Those who trust in Jesus will be with Him forever. ”

☐ OPTION 2: FINDING FISH



Pick one kid to be the fisher. Instruct the other kids to go stand on one side of the room. The fisher will stand in the middle of the room with a pool noodle. The fisher can use the pool noodle to tag the fish. Set out two or three hula hoops behind the fisher as nets. Explain that the kids must cross from one side of the room to the other without getting caught. If he or she is touched by the pool noodle, they must go sit in the net. Once caught, the kids may tag others using their arms to get them out while sitting inside the net. Play until one kid remains.

SAY “ Jesus described God's kingdom as being like fish in a net. At the end of the age He will separate those who reject Him from those who know Him. When we trust in Jesus, we are promised life with Him forever! ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

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

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

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.