



SESSION 1 of 4

The pearl

MEETING AIM

To think about how precious it is to be with God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:45-46.

BACKGROUND

The kingdom of heaven is a difficult concept for young minds to get their heads around. Younger children who think more literally will struggle with the abstract nature of what Jesus is saying. Before the session, think and pray carefully about how you will talk about the kingdom of heaven with the children. What does it mean to you? What about them? It might be helpful to think about it as a place where we can be with Jesus and where God's way is always the most important thing. That place is precious and can be with us now!

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome each child by name, and invite them to join your circle and share in the snacks you have brought. Chat together about what has happened since you last met. Ask the children if anyone has ever done anything surprising or special for them. Perhaps they had a treat or went to a birthday party. If possible, share an appropriate example from your own life.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a sand tray (or a large container such as a storage tub containing shredded paper or straw); small toys (such as cars or play figures); wrapped sweets; plastic coins

Before the session, put the toys, sweets and plastic money in the sand (or paper or straw).

Encourage the children to rummage around looking for 'treasure'. As they find things, talk to them about what makes something valuable or special. Can they put the things they find into an order of most valuable to least? (It doesn't matter what order the children put them in; the key is to think about value).

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: lots of costume jewellery and a box to put it in; a small pearl

Before the session, hide the small pearl in the box of jewellery.

Explain to the group that Jesus was trying to tell the people what the kingdom of heaven was like. He did so using stories about things people knew to help them understand. The following story tells us how special the kingdom is.

Once upon a time, there was a merchant who bought and sold precious jewels. *Take out your box of costume jewellery. Hold up some of the jewellery so the children can see it.*

All day long he looked at sparkly, shiny, beautiful jewels. He sorted them and sold them to people. *Hand out some of the jewellery for the children to try on.*

One day he saw a pearl that was beautiful, marvellous, special; the most perfect pearl he had ever seen. *Take out the pearl and hold it up. Look at it in wonder.*

He went and sold everything he had – every single thing – to have the money to buy this one pearl. *Hand out the rest of the jewellery until the box is empty.* He sold all the jewels he had bought. He sold his furniture. He sold his bed. He sold his clothes. He sold everything!

This pearl was so amazing that he was prepared to give up everything he owned to have it.

If the children have enjoyed the story, help them retell it themselves using the jewellery and pearl as they do so.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Chat about the Bible story using these questions. Try to involve all the children in your discussion:

- What is your favourite part of this story?
- How did the man feel when he found the pearl?
- How do you think he felt when he finally bought the pearl?
- What is precious and valuable to you?
- Are you friends with Jesus? What is it like to have Jesus as a friend?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper; art materials; cover-up and clean-up equipment

If you're using paint or other messy materials, make sure your space and the children are sufficiently covered up. Give out the paper and art materials, and encourage the children to draw what they think heaven might be like. As they are drawing, help them think about what might be so special they would give up everything else for it.

When everyone has finished, encourage the children to share what they have created and why. Let them lead the discussion without putting your own ideas in their minds. This could be a very powerful moment for you all as a group!

5 PRAYER

You will need: pictures from 'Creative response'; drawing pins or Blu Tack

Put everyone's pictures up on the wall or board. Stand back and admire them together. Go on to pray together, using this prayer or one in your own words:

"Thank you, God, that the kingdom of heaven is so amazing it's even better than the most wonderful place we could dream up. Thank you that you sent Jesus to earth so we can live with you in heaven for ever. Amen."

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