

SERIES: PARABLES OF JESUS
LESSON 4—THE GREATEST TREASURE

Bible References: Matthew 13:44-46

Key Verse: Matthew 6:33a—“But seek first God’s Kingdom, and his righteousness...”

SCHEDULE

- Opening Review
- Bible Lesson
- Key Verse
- Small Group Activities
- Prayer Part

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Craft items such as toilet paper rolls, Styrofoam balls, cloth, yarn, small dowel sticks, etc., with which your students can make stick puppets
- 1 bowl of syrup with today’s key verse hidden inside

OPENING REVIEW

SAY: Every time today I say, “First,” I want you to say, “First!” Let’s practice.

SAY: Today is the last day of our series on Parables—not the FIRST, so we’re going to begin by looking back at the stories we’ve had. FIRST, I have a question for you.

ASK: **What is a parable?** (A parable is a story that teaches a life lesson. Jesus taught many truths through parables.)

ASK: **Who remembers the parables we’ve looked at the past few weeks?** (Take a few moments to take their responses to and to review the parables that they have already had.)

ASK: **Who remembers which book in the Bible all of these stories are from?**

ASK: **What is the book of Luke about?** (The Life of Jesus)

ASK: **What does the word Gospel mean?** (Good News)

ASK: **Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?** (Luke. All of the Gospels carry the name of the person who wrote them—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Luke was a physician who came to Christ after Jesus died and rose again. He was NOT one of the twelve disciples and he also is the only Gospel writer who was NOT a Jew!)

ASK: **What is an easy way to find the book of Luke in the Bible?**

BIBLE LESSON

(NOTE: Today we're NOT going to use signs. Just assign parts as each new person in the story is mentioned. Ask your volunteers to act out their parts also.)

SAY: Before we get to today's parable, I FIRST want to warn you that I'm not going to tell you what this story means. I FIRST want you to try and figure it out and tell me what Jesus is teaching. But even before we do that, FIRST I have a question for you.

ASK: If a flood was going to hit your house and everything was going to be swept away, what would you grab FIRST to save?

SAY: While we read these verses, I want you to think about what is important to you.

READ Matthew 13:44-46 from your Bible.

ASK: What point is Jesus making here?

ASK: What does this mean to your life?

(If they ask about the background or setting...good for them!)

ASK: What were the three things we taught you last week that will always help you to understand the Bible better?

HOLD UP THREE FINGERS: When you're reading the Bible, it helps to know to three things:
-*Hold up one finger*—Who is talking and to whom are they speaking?
-*Hold up two fingers*—What's the situation or setting? What's going on here?
-*Hold up three fingers*—What's the background? What caused this situation or created the need for what is being said?

SAY: The setting here is that Jesus had been teaching in parables about the kingdom of Heaven. After the crowds left, His disciples had questions for Him about what He had taught. So He gave an explanation for one of the parables immediately after He shared these new parables. Challenge them to read all of Matthew 13 later in the day—It will help them understand better exactly what Jesus is teaching here.

RE-READ Matthew 13:44-46 from your Bible.

SAY: In these verses Jesus is talking about what is important to a person. What is your greatest treasure? What would come FIRST before anything else? What is important to you is what you are living for. These men found what they were looking for and it was so valuable to them that they were willing to let it cost them everything. Coming to Christ and following Him is the same.

REPEAT after me: *In Christ / I find / the greatest treasure / in life.*

SAY: Knowing and following Jesus is so valuable that it would be worth trading away everything else in life to have Him. He's the greatest treasure in life. And He should always come FIRST, before everything else.

KEY VERSE

SAY: Before we hear our key verse today, FIRST I need a volunteer to help us discover what it is.

Choose 1 volunteer—

SAY: Parables have hidden meanings and today I have hidden the Scripture reference to our key verse inside a bowl of syrup.

Give your volunteer three options for how they want to retrieve the slip of paper with today's key verse on it:

- With their fingers
- With their toes
- With their mouth

After they retrieve the Scripture reference, share it with them and ask your students to use their Bibles to turn Matthew 6:33. As they turn in their Bibles, let your volunteer get cleaned up.

SAY: We're only going to read the FIRST part of this verse.

Read Matthew 6:33a from your Bible.

Have your students REPEAT the verse after you.—“*But seek FIRST / God's Kingdom, / and his righteousness... / Matthew 6:33.*”

ASK: **What does this verse mean?** (If they ask for the background or setting, Jesus is teaching His disciples and a crowd in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. During this talk Jesus shares great truths on everyday living.)

SAY: God desires to be FIRST in your life. God desires to be the most important part of your life. We would all agree that God is important but is He the most important thing to you?

Ask your students to close their eyes. Ask them to think about what really is important to them. Is God number one? Or do they have “idols”—things in their lives that are more important to them than knowing and following Jesus.

PRAY for your students that God will be number one in their lives.

Dismiss to Small Groups

SAY: Right now it is time for our small groups, so I'm going to dismiss you one row at a time.

Dismiss rows of chairs to the tables in the rooms. Give them specific directions where to go.

SMALL GROUPS

OPTION #1—Stick Puppets

Give each student items and use the steps below to make stick puppets.

STEP 1—Use a small dowel stick and poke it into a Styrofoam ball. The Styrofoam ball will be your head. Be careful NOT to poke it all the way through.

STEP 2—Put a sock over the Styrofoam ball and down the stick. The sock covers the “head” and comes down the “body.”

STEP 3—Insert a toilet paper or paper towel roll up the stick and into the sock so that the Styrofoam ball (head) rests on it. This roll gives the “body” shape.

STEP 4—Use material to put clothing on your stick puppet.

STEP 5—Add eyes, hair and any other features that you desire.

STEP 6—Have fun. Hold the stick and you will be able to make the head turn and bob up and down.

-Encourage your kids to use their puppet to share today’s Bible story with their family when they get home. Let them practice in class for this.

-Use the stick puppets to act out today’s parables or any other parables from the past. This is a great way to review both today’s lesson and other lessons from this series.

OPTION #2—Make Up More Parables

Lead your student in creating their own parables. Give them a truth, such as the ones below, and let them create a story around it. Also give opportunity to any students who created a parable during the week if you told them you would give them time to share last week.

Examples of truths around which students can create their own parables:

- Share with others
- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- Be kind
- Obey your parents
- Forgive others
- Imitate Jesus (Be like Christ)
- Other topics...

OPTION #3—Read and Discuss (for OLDER STUDENTS)

Read Matthew 13:1-9. Ask your student what it means.
Then read Jesus’ explanation in Matthew 13:18-23

Read Matthew 13:24-30. Ask your students what it means.
Then read Jesus’ explanation in Matthew 13:36-43

PRAYER TIME

Take prayer requests and pray.

SAY: Remember to keep God FIRST!

EXTRA TIME

Help your students memorize today's key verse.