

Use Week of:

## 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.

#### INTRODUCE THE STORY

(10–15 MINUTES)

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#### TEACH THE STORY

(25–30 MINUTES)

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#### APPLY THE STORY

(25–30 MINUTES)

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## LEADER Bible Study

The Gospels record dozens of Jesus' parables. A *parable* is a simple story Jesus told to help people understand the kingdom of God. Each parable taught a lesson and revealed deep and often mysterious truths about God's kingdom for those who would understand. (See Matt. 13:10-15.)

In Matthew 13:31-33, Jesus tells two stories about the kingdom of God. In the first, He compares God's kingdom to a mustard seed. In those days, the mustard seed was the smallest seed planted in the region. Despite its size, the seed yielded a tall, tree-like bush with branches for birds to nest in. Jesus was teaching that although God's kingdom started out small—with Jesus and a few disciples—it grows and spreads. We still witness this growth today.

Then Jesus compares God's kingdom to leaven, or yeast, that is mixed into flour. In time, yeast causes a dense ball of dough to grow and rise. God's kingdom grows in a similar way, moving throughout the world and changing lives.

Then, in the parables of the hidden treasure and the priceless pearl, Jesus taught about the value of God's kingdom. A man came across a treasure buried in a field and sold all he had to buy the field. A merchant, finding a priceless pearl, sold all he had to buy it. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is so valuable, we would be wise to give up everything in order to have it. Jesus emphasized this truth in His encounter with the rich young ruler. (See Matt. 19:16-22.)

As you teach kids, help them begin to grasp the truth about God's kingdom. 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.

# The BIBLE Story

## Kingdom Parables

*Matthew 13*

One day, Jesus went out and sat by the sea. Large crowds of people gathered around Him, so He got into a boat and sat down. All the people stood on the shore. Then **Jesus told the people parables**, or stories, **to teach them about the kingdom of God.**

Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Why do you teach in parables?"

Jesus answered, "Not everyone will understand the hidden truths about the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus reminded them about some of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah. Some people look, but they do not see. They hear, but they do not listen or understand. Jesus made these prophecies come true. Jesus said, "You are blessed because you do understand."

**Jesus told a parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it grows taller than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, and the birds come and build nests in its branches."**

Jesus continued, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, or yeast, that a woman mixed into fifty pounds of flour. The leaven makes the dough rise."



Jesus told another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, buried in a field, that a man found. He reburied it, and then he joyfully sold everything he had and bought that field.”

Then Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.”

When Jesus finished teaching the crowds, He left that place and went to Nazareth.

*Christ Connection: 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.*

### **Bible Storytelling Tips**

- **Display props:**  
Display or pass around props as you describe each parable (a jar of mustard seed, a jar of yeast or loaf of bread, a treasure box or plastic jewel, an artificial pearl).
- **Move around:**  
To help kids distinguish between the four kingdom comparisons, stand in a different place as you tell each parable.

# INTRODUCE the Story



**SESSION TITLE:** 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.

## Welcome time

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

## Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Growing Up" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Growing Up" activity page. Instruct the kids to assign each picture a number and a letter. Kids will assign *A* to the plant, *B* to the person, *C* to the duck, and *D* to the butterfly. Then kids will use numbers to indicate the order the stages should be in. For example, the egg will be labeled *C1*, as it is the youngest stage of the duck's growth.

**SAY** • Good job putting those different creatures in the order they'd grow up. Today we will learn about God's kingdom. It is always growing.

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Seed, seed, tree

Instruct the kids to sit in a circle. Select a volunteer to be the “gardener” who will walk around the outside of the circle, gently patting kids’ heads, saying “seed” each time. She will select a kid and say “tree” when she pats him. He must stand and chase her around the circle. If he tags her, she must stand in the center of the circle and be the “shrub.” If the gardener reaches the tree’s seat before he tags her, she is safe. Either way, he will be the new gardener.

**SAY** • When Jesus taught about God’s kingdom, He used *metaphors*—word pictures that help us imagine something unfamiliar by comparing it to something familiar. Some of Jesus’ metaphors involved plants, specifically small seeds growing into huge trees.

### OPTION 2: Find the treasure

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 take turns sifting through the beans to find the treasure hidden within. You may wish to prepare a tub for every two or three kids so that all kids may play at the same time.

**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!

- plastic tubs, 1 per two or three kids
- dry beans or play sand, enough to fill the tub(s)
- plastic gems or plastic coins, 5-10 per tub

## Transition to teach the story

# TEACH the Story



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**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.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

**Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Decorate the room to look like an antique shop. Arrange old toys on shelves and hang vintage posters around the room. Place a table on the stage with a cash register prop. Use foam board to make props that look like old furniture.

## Countdown

- countdown video

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

## Introduce the session (3 minutes)

*[Leader enters wearing casual clothing, carrying a dusty jewelry box filled with costume jewelry.]*

- leader attire
- dusty jewelry box
- costume jewelry

**LEADER** • Well hey there, everyone! Welcome to my shop, Relics Redeemed. We specialize in selling old items that have been lost. We carry all kinds of old furniture, toys, dishware, and collectibles. Check out what I have here!

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

My neighbor was cleaning out his old storage space and found this box hidden away. He didn't have the key for it and offered to sell it to me at a great price, as long as I agreed to return anything valuable that might be trapped inside. I finally got the lock picked,

but I haven't peeked inside yet. Would you all like to see what's hidden in this old box? [*Allow responses.*]

[*Open box for kids to see.*] Wow! Look at that. It's like a treasure trove! I am so excited to call my friend and let him know what I have found. I almost wish I had paid more for the box and received permission to keep everything inside. But these pieces of jewelry likely belonged to his grandmother or someone, so they'll mean more to him than they would to me.

You know, finding a hidden treasure reminds me of a Bible story. Did you know that Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a lost treasure? He sure did. Let me tell you all about it!

### **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.

### **Giant timeline (1 minute)**

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

**LEADER** • In the beginning, there was nothing. Then God created everything! Everything God created was good until Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God's perfect rule. Their sin caused everything to fall apart.

Thankfully, nothing happens apart from God's plan, so He promised to send a Rescuer to fix what sin had broken. Thousands of years passed, and God's people had many ups and downs in their struggle to obey God. Eventually, God kept His promise. Jesus was born and grew up. Jesus never sinned, and He traveled Israel teaching people and working miracles. One of the things He spoke about often was the kingdom of God and the ways it would come into the world. Our story today is called "Kingdom Parables" because Jesus used *parables*—stories with deeper meaning—to help people understand what the kingdom of God is like.

### **Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)**

Open your Bible to Matthew 13. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or 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

- Bibles
- "Kingdom Parables" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

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.

## Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 25, Session 1" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about where God's kingdom is. Guide them to discuss what things will be like when Jesus returns.

• "Unit 25, Session 1" Questions from Kids video



## Missions moment (3 minutes)

Play the "A Vision for More" missions video. Ask kids to listen for ways that Luis Soto is helping God's kingdom grow. After the video, ask a volunteer to find Utah on a map of the United States.

• "A Vision for More" missions video  
• map of the United States

**LEADER • God’s growing kingdom is more valuable than anything.** That’s why missionaries dedicate their whole lives to telling others about Him. Luis Soto lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the United States. He works hard to be a part of God’s kingdom growth. Close in prayer, thanking God for Luis Soto and his work in Salt Lake City. Pray also for any missionaries your church supports.

### **Key passage (5 minutes)**

• Key Passage Poster  
• “Kingdom of the Son  
(Colossians 1:13-14)”  
song

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.

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

• “Jesus, Our Savior”  
song

**LEADER •** Jesus is our perfect King, and He deserves all our praise. Let’s sing to Him together. Sing together “Jesus, Our Savior.”

### **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.

### **Dismiss to apply the story**

## 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.

# APPLY the Story



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**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.

## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Instruct the kids to form a circle and squat down low to the ground. 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)

• Bibles, 1 per kid  
• Story Point Poster  
• Small Group Timeline and Map Set  
(005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Matthew 13. 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.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

## LOW PREP

- pennies, 1 per kid
- lidded jar

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

### Activity choice (10 minutes)



**OPTION 1:** Small pennies, big noise

Distribute a penny to each kid in your group. Put one penny in a lidded jar and shake the jar. Then pass the jar around, asking each kid to add her penny to the jar, close the lid, and shake it.

**SAY** • No amount is too small to give to offerings. When we all bring gifts, they can add up to a big impact! That's a big part of why we give to missions. Churches all over the United States give to a missions offering that helps Luis and other missionaries start churches. When we give to missions, we are a part of helping God's kingdom to grow.

Close by telling your kids a little about the missions offering your church participates in and which ministries or missionaries that money goes to support.

**OPTION 2:** Kingdom trees

Distribute a sheet of 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

- paper
- markers or crayons
- green construction paper
- glue

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?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.