
THINGS HIDDEN

Lesson 1 : Hidden treasure

SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 13:44-46*

MEMORY VERSE:

Luke 9:25-What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

KEY THEMES:

- Something can be real but hidden from our sight. Because something is hidden from us, it does not mean that it does not exist.
- The kingdom of God is more valuable than all a person's possessions.

WORSHIP SONGS:

<i>Knowing You</i>	Graham Kendrick (for younger children just sing the chorus)
<i>You are My All in All</i>	Dennis Jernigan
<i>Lord You are More Precious than Silver</i>	Lynn Deshazo

VISUALS & MATERIALS:

Bible; nametags, display banner (See Resource Packet.) box with lid; any article that will fit in the box; bag of cheap gems (available in most craft stores) or costume jewelry with fake gems (you could also put the jewelry or gems in a jewelry box); a pearl; materials for chosen activities.

PREPARATION:

- Study the scripture passages carefully and prayerfully. Ask God to make them real in your own heart. Be open to what God may be teaching you in this lesson. Study the lesson well. Pray for the children in your class.
- Make nametags. You may want to make them in the shape of a treasure chest and have the children glue or color jewels onto the nametag. (See Resource Packet 1-a.) You may want to copy the nametag sheet onto heavy paper.
- Place the display banner in a prominent place. The linoleum block print picture for each lesson appears on the display banner. It can be folded to reveal each picture as that lesson is taught. The student banners contain blank squares rather than the prints so that the student can use his own creativity to draw his illustration of the parable.

INTRODUCTION

- Show the box with article inside it. Then put the lid on the box.

Can you see (article)? Why? Just because you can't see (article) doesn't mean it isn't there does it? It is hidden from your view, but the (article) is still there.

If you looked at a lake or an ocean what would you see? There are many things in a lake or an ocean that are hidden from your view – but they are there.

THEME: Something can be real but hidden from our sight. Because something is hidden from us, it does not mean that it does not exist.

If you have pictures of these things, you may want to show them as you are referring to them.

- Give some examples of "hidden things" in a lake or ocean (i.e., fish, frogs sitting in the mud at the bottom, weeds growing toward the sun, etc.) Make the point that just because something cannot be seen does not mean that it does not exist. Explain that you could dive under the water and see some of these things – or a scientist could put an underwater camera on a boat and you could see the sea creatures.

You can't see your heart – it is hidden from your view but it is pumping blood through your body. You can't see your lungs, but they are helping you to breathe.

Some things are so small you can't see them – like little creatures called mites that live in your sheets or amoebas that live in drops of pond water. You would need a special tool called a microscope to help you eyes see these little things.

Some things you cannot see because you do not have the eyes to see them – they are right in front of you but your eyes can't see them. When I talk, my words are carried to your ears on sound waves – you can look real hard but you will not be able to see the sound waves because your eyes are unable to see them.

- Make the point that hidden things exist even though we cannot see them. Some of them we just can't see because they are hidden from our eyes. Some things we will never be able to see because we just don't have the eyes to see them – our eyes can't see some things.

LESSON

- Explain that spiritual things – things about God are sometimes hidden things. Many things about God we just can't see or understand. God is so great – He can do anything, nothing is too hard for Him; God knows everything – He knows what we are thinking and what we will do tomorrow; God is everywhere all the time. Since God is so great, we can never fully know him. But some spiritual things, God helps us to see.

If you are teaching totally unchurched children, you may need to explain that God is the Maker of the whole world and everything in it. He is the Ruler of the whole earth.

Some people can't see any spiritual things – they have no understanding about God and even though they try to understand things about God, then can't. It is like their eyes are blind to spiritual things. Unless God helps them to see the hidden things, they cannot see spiritual truth- they cannot know God. They need God to be like a microscope to their eyes to help them see hidden things.

- Explain that the Bible tells some stories with a hidden meaning. They are called parables. They are stories that have a hidden spiritual meaning – they have a hidden message about God. Some people hear them and think they are just nice stories. Some people can see the hidden meaning but it doesn't make any difference to them. Other people see and understand the hidden meaning – the spiritual truth – and love God and the things of God. They are called the children of God or the people of God or believers.

- If the children you are teaching are familiar with the Bible, have a sword drill with the following verse. If they are not familiar with the Bible, just read the verse to them or have one of the children read it aloud.

See sword drill directions in the Introduction.

Matthew 13: 45-46 – Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

- Explain that a merchant is a person who buys things and then sells them for more money than he buys them for. Merchants need to know what something is worth so that they don't pay too much for something – If they pay too much for something, they won't make money on it. Give an obvious example of this.

EXAMPLE: *If I bought a (can of pop) for 25 cents from a factory and sold it in a store for 50 cents, then I made 25 cents. If I sold lots of cans of pop, I would make a good living. Would it be a good idea to buy the can of pop for 55 cents if I can only sell it for 50 cents? What would happen? How about if paid 45 cents for the pop? I wouldn't make much money and I would soon lose my store. So it is very important for a merchant to know the value of things.*

- Ask the children what the merchant in the parable knew about the value of the pearl. [It was worth more than all his possessions.] Explain that a merchant would not buy the pearl for more than it is worth, or even for what it is worth because then he couldn't make any money (profit) on the pearl.

- Show the bag of gems. Explain that they can be bought in a craft store and are quite cheap. (You may even want to show the children the price.) Then show the pearl. Explain that if it were a real pearl it would be worth lots of money.

You may want to use play money to show the comparative value of the gems and a real pearl.

- Ask a series of questions to lead the children to see that the pearl is of greater value than all the jewels.

EXAMPLE: *If you owned the gems, would you trade one gem for the pearl? How about two gems? Why? Would you trade the whole bag of gems – every single gem – for the pearl? Why?*

▪ Explain that in Bible times, pearls were especially valuable. Instead of putting money in banks, wealthy people bought pearls because they knew that pearls would stay valuable. In fact, pearls were so valuable that the Egyptians worshiped them.

▪ Refer back to the parable and ask the children what the parable is teaching. Make sure they understand the following points:

▪ The kingdom of heaven is so valuable that it is worth *more* than all a person has.

▪ It takes a person with “eyes that can see” – a merchant – to see the value of the pearl; and it takes a person with “spiritual sight” to see the value of the kingdom of heaven.

▪ A person who has understanding sees the value of the kingdom of heaven and gladly gives all he has for the kingdom of heaven, knowing he is getting something much better than he is giving.

THEME: The kingdom of God is more valuable than all a person's possessions.

▪ Tell the children that there is another parable that shows the worth of the kingdom of heaven. Read:

Matthew 13:44 – The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

▪ Ask the following questions to lead the children to understand that the kingdom of heaven is worth more than all they have:

Why did the man want to buy the field? Do you think the owner knew that the treasure was in the field? What would he have done had he known about the treasure? [put a higher price on the field; dug up the treasure first] Why was the man joyful about selling all he had?

NOTE: Burying treasure was a common practice in Israel, due to the number of raiding and warring enemies.

APPLICATION

What does it mean to see the value of the kingdom of heaven?

In a kingdom, there is a king. Who is the king in the kingdom of heaven? What is so wonderful about God? Who belongs to the kingdom of heaven? What does it mean to be a subject in the kingdom of heaven? What is so wonderful about the kingdom of heaven?

Do you think that God knows the value of the kingdom of heaven? Is all that we have worth as much as the kingdom of heaven? If the kingdom of heaven is worth more than all we have, why does God offer us this treasure? [because He is good and loving]

NOTE: Be sure the children understand that God does not offer us the kingdom of heaven because we deserve it but because He is good.

How can you measure how much you value the things of God? [by how much you are willing to part with for the kingdom] What are you willing to give up for God? How do you know? Do you love the things of God?

- You may want to end with a prayer asking for the eyes to see the value of the kingdom. Pray that love for the things of this world will be very small in comparison for love for the things of God.

■ **ACTIVITIES (Choose from among the following.)** ■

1. With invisible ink (lemon juice or white crayon: see methods below), draw a picture of one of the parables or write the word "heaven" or "kingdom of heaven". (You may want to use the enclosed worksheet in the Resource Packet 1-b.) While the children are working, emphasize the point that because something is hidden, it does not mean that it does not exist.

Method 1: Use lemon juice as invisible ink and paint with a paintbrush or a cotton swab. After the paper dries, hold the paper very close to a glowing light bulb and watch the hidden things appear.

Method 2: Use white crayon for drawing or writing. Children can then color over the page with a highlighter marker to make the hidden picture or message appear.

2. Hide a "treasure" or "pearl" and have the children look for it. Re-emphasize the point that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure or a pearl of great value. It is very valuable and worth looking for.
3. Look at some "Magic Eye" pictures. (Magic Eye picture books are available in many libraries.) Search for the hidden things. Emphasize that even though the hidden picture cannot be seen at first, it still exists. Just as "special eyes" (or focusing our eyes correctly) are needed to see the hidden picture, so we need spiritual eyes to see the things of God.
4. Children can complete the sheet titled, **CAN YOU FIND THE HIDDEN THINGS?** (See Resource Packet 1-c.) As the children are working, remind them that the kingdom of God is worth searching for.
5. If you have access to a microscope, have the children see "hidden things" through the microscope. Make the point that there are many hidden things that our eyes can't see, but they still exist. Emphasize that heaven is a real place even though we cannot see it.
6. Play a trading game. Give each child buttons, or pennies, small pieces of candy, etc. Start with objects of lesser value and have them trade their [buttons] for the objects. Increase the value of the objects so that the children are trading both buttons and objects they already possess for the new object. At the end, take out one big thing (i.e., bicycle) and ask the children what they would trade for this object. Make sure the children see that the object is worth more than everything they have. Make the point that the kingdom of heaven is worth more than all we possess.
7. Have the children decode the hidden message on the enclosed **HIDDEN MESSAGE** sheet (See Resource Packet 1-d.).
8. Children can make a border for the memory verse. (See Resource Packet 1-e.) While they are creating the border, discuss the memory verse with them.
9. Work on the kingdom banner. (See Appendix for instructions.)
10. Play a memory verse game. (See Appendix.)

NOTE: Send home the take-home sheet. (See Resource Packet 1-f.)