

The pearl

MEETING AIM

To explore how precious the kingdom of heaven is.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:45-46.

KEY VERSE

“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” (Matthew 13:45-46).

10 PRAYER AND WORSHIP

OPTION 1

You will need: permission to take photographs; camera / phone and a way of printing photos; A5 card; felt-tip pens

If possible, dress your welcome team in official-looking uniforms. As people arrive, welcome them to the ‘new kingdom’. Explain that for customs purposes they will need their photos taken. Take the photos and print them out. Give each person an A5 sheet of card together with their photo. (If people don’t want to have their photo taken, encourage them to draw a self-portrait.) Ask if they have anything to declare, such as food, plants, animals or items of great value.

Ask the congregation to fold their A5 sheet in half and write ‘Passport’ on the front. Encourage them to decorate the front cover. As they work, ask everyone to think about how entering church is a little like entering a country with different rules and regulations.

OPTION 2

Use the following items and questions for a quiz and discussion on price and value. Encourage discussion and interaction throughout the activity. You can have the items to show or use images of them.

Bottle of water versus a gold bar

What costs more to buy? Obviously, a gold bar. Which is more valuable? If no one mentions it, ask which is more valuable to someone who is thirsty, with no access to water, for example in a desert?

Neymar Jr versus Ronaldo

Which player cost more to buy? Neymar! But who is more valuable? Encourage debate. You could use other sport celebrities, as they often divide opinion.

Ferrari versus Land Rover

Ferraris have a higher price tag, but four-wheel drives are more valuable if you are stuck in mud!

Gucci handbag versus basic rucksack

The handbag will cost more, but which can carry the most? Isn’t being able to carry more valuable at times?

15 STORY

You will need: laptop; projector; screen; paper and marker pens; prize (optional)

Before the meeting choose three to five objects from an online store. Put pictures of the items on PowerPoint and make a note of all the prices. Put a picture of a pearl on the final slide and find out how much an average pearl costs.

Choose three or four people to be the contestants in a version of *The Price Is Right*. Give everyone paper and a marker pen. Show the first image. Ask each person to write down how much they think the item costs. Once all the contestants have written a price ask them to reveal what they have written. The winner is the person who guessed the nearest price.

Do the same for the other items. After all the items have been shown the winner is the one who guessed closest for the most items. You might want to offer a prize.

Now show the pearl and ask the congregation how much they think it would cost. Ask someone to read out Matthew 13:45-46. Explain that this is just one of the ways Jesus described the kingdom of heaven.

Point out that this is a simile. Ask if anyone knows what a simile is, and preferably get a younger member of the group to answer. Explain that a simile compares something with something else using the word ‘like’. It is not a literal description.

Although Matthew uses the words ‘kingdom of heaven’, he probably means the same thing as Mark and Luke when they say ‘kingdom of God’. The kingdom is obviously something or somewhere important and valuable. Ask the congregation what they would do in order to own something important and valuable. Would they sell everything they had to get it?

10 REFLECTIVE RESPONSE

OPTION 1

You will need: paper; pens; something to represent a treasure chest (eg a box or crate)

Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to write down the most precious thing they own. Explain that we are not being asked to give away our most treasured possessions but are making a symbolic

show of how precious the kingdom of heaven is.

We are making our own similes, just as Jesus did. When they have written down the name of their item or items, ask people to bring them to the front and put them in the treasure chest as a symbolic response.

Point out that we are not giving them away but saying that we recognise God’s kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, and everything it has to offer. The grace of Jesus, the love of God and the support of the Holy Spirit are of greater value than anything we have or want.

OPTION 2

You will need: passports and photos from ‘Prayer and worship option 1’; glue sticks; felt-tip pens

Make sure everyone has their passport and photo from the start of the service. Ask them to stick their pictures on the inside back cover. They should add their names and any other personal details below. These passports are their property, so they won’t be giving them away.

Ask them to write today’s Bible verses, Matthew 13:45-46, on the inside front cover. Encourage them to write a response underneath. They entered the kingdom of heaven when they arrived at the meeting earlier and stepped through customs. Their response should focus on how they intend (if they intend) to take the kingdom of heaven with them as they leave; to take heaven’s culture into the culture of the land in which they live.

Close with this short prayer:

Dear Lord, be with me as I show the kingdom of heaven to those I meet in thought, word and deed. Amen.

10 GROUP DISCUSSION

Divide into mixed-age groups and discuss these questions:

- What do you think the man did after he had bought the pearl?
- Can you identify with anyone in this story? How so?
- What do you think this story means for your life today?
- What are you going to do differently this week because of what you’ve explored today?

DARREN HILL

tells stories at darrenhill.com.