



**NIV Adult Guide
for VeBS[®] 2005**

Good News Clues™

***“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”***

—Revelation 3:20

A Bible Study for Adults
to be used in conjunction with *Good News Clues™* VeBS®.

Written by Diana Stucky

Excerpts taken from Cook’s curriculum for adults.

Good News Clues™: Searching for New Life in Jesus

Very exciting Bible School® Curriculum

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Good News Clues™ Adult Guide

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THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching *Good News Clues*[™]: *Searching for New Life in Jesus*

Designed to correlate and run concurrently with *Good News Clues*[™]: *Searching for New Life in Jesus* VeBS[®], this Bible study will give your adults an opportunity to learn along with the children of your church or community, as they study several stories from the Bible.

The sessions follow three simple steps: Getting Started, Digging In, and Taking It Home. Getting Started will create interest and focus your group's attention on the session topic. Digging In dynamically involves your group so that they can discover God's truth and its implications for their lives. Taking It Home helps group members apply God's truth to their lives.

In addition, remember you will also find important notes concerning Bible commentary, the lesson focus, a list of supplies needed, the preparation you will need to do, and an assignment for the next session. You'll also find tips on how you can connect with the children in the children's material. Some of the Bible material comes from lessons in *Adult Teacher's Guide*, from the Bible-in-Life curriculum series.

As you lead this study, begin each session with prayer, depending on the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to give understanding so that the truth will be applied. Try to involve everyone in your group; group involvement is a key to learning. Arrange your chairs in a circle or semicircle. This promotes eye contact among members and encourages more dynamic discussion. As the leader, address people by name to help others get acquainted. And remember—have a good time!

SESSION ONE

Site

The Garden

Bible Story

Creation of humankind, entrance of sin into the world

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-3:23

Theme

Though we are all sinners, God provides a way we can be forgiven

Key Verse

Romans 3:23

Supplies

Bibles, pens or pencils, Response Sheet 1

Preparation

Read story in Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-3:23, and key verse Romans 3:23

Make copies of Response Sheet 1

Getting Started

To help your group start to know each other better as they study these sessions together, ask a few icebreaker questions such as these:

- If you could be one TV character for a day, who would it be, and why?
- What is the best thing that happened to you in elementary school? the worst thing?
- Finish this sentence: "More people need to _____ every day because _____"

_____ (for example, "exercise" and "it's good for their health").

Explain to your group that you are beginning a study of five sessions on what it means to find new life in Christ

Eve's Role

It is true that Eve was created to be Adam's "helper" (*Gen. 2:18, 20, NIV*), but there is nothing in the language to suggest that this made her in some way less than Adam. On the contrary, the same word is used elsewhere to refer to the kind of help God provides (*Ps 30:10; 121:2*).

Eve's names also reflect her equality with Adam. The name Eve was given to her by Adam after the Fall and signified her role as "the mother of all the living" (*Gen. 3:20*). Initially, however, she was given the same name as Adam. Genesis 1:27 uses the term "man" in a generic sense and explains, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Eve's third name, translated "woman," is simply the feminine form of the Hebrew term for "man."

Eve differed from Adam, but she was not less than Adam was. She was his feminine counterpart and collaborator.

and to live as He wants us to live. The children will be studying the same Bible story each day, so encourage your adults to ask their kids what they are learning in each session.

The theme of this first session is that though we are all sinners, God has provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sins. The first part of the story happens in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve sin, which creates a separation

The Garden

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between the Creator and His creation. Ask them to think of their ideal place to be. Perhaps it's on a tropical island, or on an ocean cruise, or climbing a mountain, or even being in the midst of a large city. What makes that place ideal? Also ask them what place they would see as least ideal. For example, if someone loves water, they would hate to be in a place that was far from any lakes, streams, or coastline.

Human history began in an ideal place, in a garden, with everything that Adam and Eve needed to make them happy forever. Not only was it a beautiful place, but they also had daily fellowship with God Himself. They knew who they were and why they had been created: they had been created "in the image of God" as the crowning achievement of His creation of the universe.

Adam and Eve were given only one thing *not* to do—eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was in the center of the garden. The story of what happened to them is the story of all of us. We have all been told not to do something because it would hurt us, which made us want to do that one thing all the more. Like Adam and Eve, none of us is perfect, as Romans 3:23 reminds us. We are separated from a perfect and holy God by our sinfulness, which dates back to the time in the garden. Without God giving His Son as a sacrifice to bridge that separation, we would remain forever separate from God. We'll study more about that in the next lesson.

Right now we're going to look at the story of the first sin and notice how much like our ancestors we still are today.

Marriage God's Way

Genesis 2:24 was quoted both by Jesus (*Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9*) and by the apostle Paul (*Eph. 5:31*) as a description of what marriage should be like. What is unusual about this verse is what it says in relation to the culture in which it was written.

In biblical times a wife was often not considered as a helper with her husband but one of his possessions. But this verse places the emphasis on the man leaving his parents to join with his wife, not the woman leaving her parents to become something the man owns. Such an emphasis is unique in ancient Near Eastern literature.

Digging In

Hand out Response Sheet 1 and ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:4–3:23. Encourage them to follow along in their own Bibles as the story is read. Also encourage everyone to listen carefully to the story all the way through before they start answering any of the questions on the Response Sheet.

After reading, ask the class the questions from the sheet. The questions and some possible answers are given below.

What set man and woman apart from the rest of God's creation?

God made man and woman in His own image—that is, with certain of His characteristics. These may include the things we know about God from the

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Bible, such as that He has emotions, chooses, appreciates beauty, demonstrates creativity, distinguishes between right and wrong, and loves others.

Why were man and woman created?

God said that the man and the woman were to be “fruitful and increase in number” (*Gen. 1:28*), as well as “rule” over God’s creation. God gave all of the plants and trees to provide food for men and women. All of God’s intentions for humans were good.

What were Adam and Eve not supposed to do? Why?

God told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was in the middle of the garden. If they did, God said they would die.

What was Adam’s job in the garden?

Adam was to be the caretaker of the garden (*2:15*). This means that work was not originally created as a curse to human beings. Work was meant to be good, and still can be, when we do work that God calls us to do.

Why was Eve created?

Eve was created to be Adam’s companion so he would not be alone. Without female companionship and a partner in reproduction, the man could not fully realize his humanity. Eve, being the first female, completed the first human pair. One thing Eve is best known for is being the mother of the human race.

What was the first marriage like?

Adam and Eve became “one flesh”; that is, they were united together as co-heirs to God’s creation and all He had to offer. Though they had no mother and father to leave, today we would see that a man and a woman leave their ties to their families of origin and unite with each other to form a new family.

How was the serpent (Satan) able to influence the destruction of the relationship between God and Adam and Eve?

Satan tempted Eve to eat some of the forbidden fruit and said she would not die, but instead be wise, like God Himself. The fruit was “pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom” (*3:6*), so she ate some and gave some to Adam, “who was with her.”

In what ways is the original sin of Adam and Eve like the sins we still commit today?

When we sin today, we still may not believe that it will be harmful to us, and we sin because in some way we want to “be like God”—such as, misuse of our time or money. The activity or item to purchase may not have any bad connotation, but if it keeps us from doing what God wants, then it is harmful, and we sin. And sin is still pleasurable (“*pleasing to the eye*”) to us in some way (*at least for a time*) or we would not be interested in doing it. Also, the two of them blamed others for their sin—Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed Eve, just as today we try to get out of blame for our sin by saying “Someone/something else made me do it.”

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What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin?

There were several consequences. The immediate consequence was that they were banished from the garden forever, but there was also the pain of childbearing put on women and the increased work and resistance to productivity given to men as they now had to toil. The worst consequence was the introduction of death into life, not just physical death, but the spiritual death that comes with separation from God. Sin blocked access to fellowship with God.

Can you think of any public figures who have committed a sin? What were some of the consequences they had to deal with, and how did they handle them?

Some public figures that could come to mind are well-known politicians and evangelists who have committed sexual sins. They could also think of one of the presidents of major corporations that were stealing from their own companies and lying about the company's profits. In each case the sin was made public and they had to face the press, family, friends, and employees. Each did apologize for their sin, but the consequences did not go away. In all cases, they are still dealing with the effects of their sin today.

Taking It Home

The Bible story and the discussion should have led your class to think about how their personal sin has had consequences just like Adam and Eve's sin did. They should also be thinking about the

separation that sin brings to their relationship with God and others.

Encourage them to start a journal for the week's lessons today. Have them record new insights into why they sin, and how their sins have affected others. In closing, have them write a prayer to God. This prayer could include confession and seeking forgiveness. They can also share their thankfulness for a God that loves us in spite of our failures.

Assignment

Before next session, ask your class to read Matthew 21:1-11; 26:17-29; 26:47-28:10, as well as the Key Verse, Romans 5:8. Tell them you may ask them to share what significance the Lord's Supper has for them personally.

Also have them think of sacrifices they have made in their own lives for their families or friends, such as changing or not changing jobs, giving up a favorite activity to accommodate a spouse, or setting aside some time each week for a friend in need.

Kids' Connection

Your kids studied the same story that you did today. Discuss what they learned about Adam and Eve in the Garden, and how that relates to them. Ask them if they learned anything about how their sin affects others. This could lead you to a discussion on how it hurts you when they disobey or lie about something they have done. As a family, you can discuss how the consequences of one person's actions affects everyone.

The Garden

RESPONSE SHEET 1

Read Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:4–3:23, then answer these questions:

1. What set man and woman apart from the rest of God's creation?

2. Why were man and woman created?

3. What were Adam and Eve not supposed to do? Why?

4. What was Adam's job in the garden?

5. Why was Eve created?

6. What was the first marriage like?

7. How was the serpent (Satan) able to influence the destruction of the relationship between God and Adam and Eve?

8. What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin?

9. In what ways is the original sin of Adam and Eve like the sins we still commit today?

10. Can you think of any public figures who have committed a sin? What were some of the consequences they had to deal with, and how did they handle them?

The Garden

SESSION TWO

Site

Dining Room

Bible Story

Passion Week; Last Supper
Matthew 21:1-11; 26:17-29; 26:47-28:10

Theme

Salvation comes through Jesus Christ

Key Verse

Romans 5:8

Supplies

Bibles, pens or pencils, Response Sheet 2, a box wrapped with pretty paper and ribbon

Preparation

Read the story in Matthew 21:1-11; 26:17-29; 26:47-28:10, and the Key Verse—Romans 5:8. Make copies of Response Sheet 2.

Getting Started

Thank your students for coming to this second session, then ask them if they have any stories to share about the importance the Last Supper has for them and what the term “Passion Week” means to them. This session will help your adults to think about what Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection mean to all of us.

Some of your adults may have seen the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. While the movie just covered the last hours of Passion Week, this lesson begins with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover, and ends with the Resurrection on Easter morning a week later. The events are so important that all the Gospels record what happened, though each one supplies us with some different details of what happened. The story is so

They Don’t Know What They Are Saying

Those who mocked Jesus on the cross said much more than they knew they were saying as they “hurled insults at him” (*Matt. 27:39*). Ironically, they called Him everything He was—Son of God (*vss. 40, 43*), the Savior, and the true King of Israel (*vs. 42*).

It is even more ironic that the “chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders” (*vs. 41*), Jesus’ bitterest enemies, said at the cross that “he saved others” (*vs. 42*)—since during Jesus’ ministry they had told Him that He had no power to forgive sins and save anyone (*9:1-7*).

crucial to the Gospel of Mark that it takes up almost a third of that short book.

Our lesson looks at Passion Week through the eyes of Matthew, who was very interested in showing his readers how Jesus was the Messiah they had all been looking for—but not the *kind* of Messiah they expected. Matthew quotes such Old Testament passages as Zechariah 9:9, which talks about the Messiah riding into Jerusalem humbly, on a donkey, rather than on a white horse, as a conquering Roman general would. Jesus was showing the people that the Messiah would not be a king who would lead an army to drive out the Roman occupiers of Israel. The later parts of the story we are reading reinforce that fact, as Jesus shares a last supper with His

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disciples and talks about His body being given for them and His blood being shed for them. Then Jesus is arrested and crucified, much to the shock and horror of His followers, but it is all part of God's plan for the salvation of all humanity through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for the remission of our sin.

If you have students who are not Christians, this may all seem confusing to them. Pay special attention to their questions as they struggle to understand why Jesus had to die and how that relates to their need for salvation. This may be a good time to talk about what kinds of sacrifices people make for each other and why (*for example, a father who risks his own life diving into a lake to save his son who is drowning*). You might ask who they would be willing to give their lives for (*their children, close friends, etc.*). These kinds of sacrifices resemble in some ways what God did for us through Jesus' sacrifice, but God's sacrifice was on such a greater scale.

Digging In

Hand out Response Sheet 2 and ask a volunteer to read Matthew 21:1-11; 26:17-29; 26:47–28:10. Encourage them to follow along in their own Bibles as the story is read. Also encourage everyone to listen carefully to the story all the way through before they start answering any of the questions on the Response Sheet.

After reading, ask the class the questions from the sheet. The questions and some possible answers are given below.

Why did the people welcome Jesus with such a celebration on Palm Sunday?

The people thought Jesus would be their

The Final Sacrifice

The Book of Leviticus describes an elaborate system of sacrifices that began with God's covenant with His people on Mount Sinai. In the Jerusalem temple, animals without blemish were sacrificed to atone for a person's knowing or unknowing commission of sin, for violations of the purity laws, and as part of the repayment of someone who had been wronged. Every morning and evening at the temple, a lamb was sacrificed to atone for the sins of the people and as an act of worship to God. Two additional lambs for this offering were sacrificed every Sabbath day.

But the system was incomplete. As the writer of Hebrews points out, the old system had not been able to cleanse the human conscience (*Heb. 9:8-10*). And only the high priest, once a year, could actually enter God's presence when he went behind the veil that separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple. Therefore, access to God was limited. Rituals and sacrifices alone could not unite people with God. They were merely "external regulations" that had to be followed until Christ's death (*vs. 10*).

Something more was needed—the blood of Christ. The high priest had to have sacrifices made for himself before he could enter the Most Holy Place. But Jesus did not. He offered His own blood as the sacrifice for sin (*vs. 12*). The Old Testament sacrifices of animals had covered sins outwardly, but the New Testament sacrifice through Jesus Christ cleansed sin inwardly.

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new king, one who would bring them their freedom by driving out the occupying Roman army. They shouted “Hosanna in the highest!” to Him and called Him “the Son of David” (*Matt. 21:9*), both of which point to His being the long-awaited Messiah. He had just raised Lazarus from the dead (*John 11*); anyone with that kind of power must certainly be the Messiah.

What didn't the crowd understand about who Jesus was?

Even after several years of ministry, the Savior's identity and mission were still not clear to the people (*or even to His disciples*). They saw Him as a prophet (*Matt. 21:11*) and even as a king to deliver them from the Romans, but not as the kind of sacrificial Messiah He really was.

Why did Jesus and His disciples gather for a meal together?

It was Passover Week, the time when Jews would gather to celebrate their escape from Egypt and slavery with a special meal. The foods eaten at that meal symbolized the events that occurred in Egypt—for example, they ate unleavened bread, just as their ancestors did because they had no time to let their dough rise to make bread loaves.

What shocking news did Jesus give to His disciples when they gathered for their last supper together?

Jesus told His disciples that one of them would betray Him—that is, hand Him over to the authorities, who wanted to kill Him. This was inconceivable for the disciples, who were Jesus' closest friends. How could one friend betray another?

What did Jesus say the bread and the cup at the supper symbolized?

Jesus said as He broke the thin, unleavened bread that this symbolized His body that would be sacrificed at the crucifixion. The cup would symbolize His blood, which would be “poured out” on the cross “for the forgiveness of sins” (*Matt. 26:28*).

Why is the Last Supper still important to us today?

The Last Supper helps remind us of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us at His crucifixion, so that we do not forget how much He suffered for our sakes (*see Luke 22:19*). The Supper also foreshadows the “last supper” Jesus' followers will have with Him in heaven (*Matt. 26:29; Luke 14:15-24*).

Why did the religious leaders take Jesus to Pilate for trial?

While the Jewish religious court, the Sanhedrin, condemned Jesus for blasphemy against God (*Matt. 26:57-68*), they could not crucify Him; only the Romans could do that (*John 18:31*). By crucifying Jesus, the religious leaders would disgrace Him as a common criminal who could not possibly be the Messiah.

How did the religious leaders, the criminals who were crucified with Jesus, and the Roman soldiers react to Jesus' crucifixion?

The religious leaders and the criminals both mock Jesus and tell Him to save Himself as He saved others (*Matt. 27:38-44*). However, one of the criminals later decides that Jesus is who He says He is

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(*Luke 23:40-43*), and the centurion in charge of the soldiers comes to believe that Jesus is “the son of God” (*Matt. 27:54*).

What is important about the curtain tearing in two in the temple at the time of Jesus’ death?

Only the high priest was allowed once a year to go behind the temple curtain to the Most Holy Place to be in God’s presence. The torn curtain symbolized that all obstacles between God and His people had been removed. Through His death on the cross, Jesus made God accessible to everyone who believes in Him (*Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22*).

What did the women expect to find on Easter morning? What did they find instead?

They went expecting to find a dead body that they were going to anoint with spices and ointments to complete Jesus’ burial. Instead, they found an empty tomb and a risen Savior who had conquered death for all of time and eternity. Eternal life is found in a place that symbolizes eternal death.

Taking It Home

Your students who are Christians may have heard the story of Jesus’ Passion Week so many times that the story has lost its impact. Those students who are not Christians may be struggling with what the story means to them. Both groups need to be reminded of last session’s story of Adam and Eve and their original sin. That sin created a barrier between God and the people He created, a barrier that needed to be “split in two,”

just as the curtain in the temple was torn at Jesus’ death. Point out that just like Adam and Eve (*and everyone who has lived since them*), we are not perfect, and we cannot live in the presence of a holy God who is perfect. Therefore, Jesus, the perfect One, sacrificed Himself and took the weight of our sins upon Himself on the cross (*2 Cor. 5:21*). Because He did that, we can ask for forgiveness of our sins in His name (*Matt. 26:28; Rom. 10:9-10*) and “cross over” the barrier between ourselves and God; we can have a relationship with Him, both now and throughout eternity. Recognizing what Jesus did and accepting what He did is the first step to new life through Him.

Point to the wrapped box you brought. If that was a birthday present someone gave you, would you just set it on a shelf to look at, or would you accept it and open it? In much the same way, God’s gift of salvation and eternal life is offered to us. He has done all He needed to do through Jesus’ death and resurrection to give you the present of abundant and eternal life. Now you have to decide if you are going to accept and open the gift. That’s the message both of Romans 5:8, today’s Key Verse, and Romans 6:23: Christ died for us while we were still sinners, and we deserve to die as sinners, but His gift to us, if we accept it, is eternal life.

If any of your students is ready to make a decision to follow Christ by the end of this class, encourage them to stay and talk with you or direct them to your pastor or another church leader to discuss more what this decision means to their life. There is no more important decision they will ever make.

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Encourage your class to write in their journals tonight on the impact this gift from God has had on their lives, or will have on their lives. Have them include what they want to do as a result of this gift, such as wanting to tell others, recommitting their life to Christ, or getting rid of a habit they know God does not want them to have.

Assignment

Before next session, ask your class to read Luke 15:11-32 and John 3:16. Ask them to be thinking about the last person they forgave and why they forgave the person. They can also be thinking about the last time someone forgave them and why.

Kids' Connection

Your children studied the same story that you did today. Discuss what they learned about Jesus, His sacrifice on the cross, and His resurrection. Point out that we all need the salvation that Jesus offers. They might not be able to totally understand the story at this point in their lives, but talking about it will help them to think through what Jesus did for us. The symbol of the wrapped gift may help you explain the free gift of salvation as well.

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RESPONSE SHEET 2

Read Matthew 21:1-11; 26:17-29; 26:47–28:10, then answer these questions:

1. Why did the people welcome Jesus with such a celebration on Palm Sunday?

2. What didn't the crowd understand about who Jesus was?

3. Why did Jesus and His disciples gather for a meal together?

4. What shocking news did Jesus give to His disciples when they gathered for their last supper together?

5. What did Jesus say the bread and the cup at the supper symbolized?

6. Why is the Last Supper still important to us today?

7. Why did the religious leaders take Jesus to Pilate for trial?

8. How did the religious leaders, the criminals who were crucified with Jesus, and the Roman soldiers react to Jesus' crucifixion?

9. What is important about the curtain tearing in two in the temple at the time of Jesus' death?

10. What did the women expect to find on Easter morning? What did they find instead?

The Dining Room

SESSION THREE

Site

Family Room

Bible Story

Prodigal Son
Luke 15:11-32

Theme

The love and forgiveness of Jesus

Key Verse

John 3:16

Supplies

Bibles, pens or pencils, Response Sheet 3

Preparation

Read the story in Luke 15:11-32, and the Key Verse, John 3:16. Make copies of Response Sheet 3.

Getting Started

To begin this session, ask your adults if they have been thinking about the last time someone forgave them for something they did, or the last time they forgave a person for something that person did. For example, they may have recently forgiven one of their children for lying to them, or hitting one of their siblings. They themselves might have asked someone they were angry with to forgive them. In the case of someone forgiving us, we may have anxiously wondered if that person would forgive us. Did we do something so “unforgivable” that our relationship with that person would be permanently damaged? In the case of our children, could they do something so “awful” that we would never forgive them and risk destroying our relationship with them?

The same kinds of questions often come up in our relationship with God. Perhaps

A Picture of Grace

When the young man returned to his father’s house, he was hoping he could be a servant, having given up his rights as a son. The father’s reaction was not what he expected or perhaps deserved. The father called for the best robe, a ring, and shoes for his son’s feet, as well as a celebration. The father restored the son by clothing him and feeding him, not just meeting his barest necessities, but lavishly restoring the son to his position.

Though Jesus never used the word “grace” in the four Gospel accounts, parables such as these show the meaning of grace as it is taught in the New Testament. Grace means God giving us what we don’t deserve. This is perhaps the opposite of worldly thinking, but by grace, God justifies the sinful but penitent (*Rom. 4:5*).

you have students who have wanted to make a commitment to Christ (*even at your last session*), but feel they have done things so awful in their lives that He could not love them and accept them as one of His followers. Of course, you have already discussed how Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross broke down the barrier between people and God—He gave His life on the cross so that all people could find forgiveness of their sins through Him. That’s the message of today’s Key Verse, John 3:16. However, sometimes knowing that fact with your mind is not the same thing as accepting it with your heart.

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Even if we have made a commitment to Christ, we may “hold on” to sins in our lives that we do not ask Him to forgive. Sometimes we too act like He is not capable of forgiving some of our sins. We allow our relationship with Him to suffer because, deep down, we don’t think He completely loves and forgives us. We cannot forgive ourselves, so we cannot accept His forgiveness.

That is one reason Jesus told the story we are reading today. The religious leaders were accusing Jesus of spending His time with the worst kind of people (*Luke 15:1-2*). Those people, such as tax collectors, had committed sins the religious leaders had decided were “unforgivable.” “Good” people were told to shun undesirable people like that, so they too would not become polluted by sin themselves. But Jesus spent time with such “sinners” because, as He said, God wants people to realize their sin, repent of it, accept His forgiveness, and become part of His family (*vss. 3-10*). God is waiting for humanity to turn to Him and accept His love, even when we feel like we don’t deserve it.

Digging In

Hand out Response Sheet 3 and ask a volunteer to read *Luke 15:11-32*. Encourage them to follow along in their own Bibles as the story is read. Also encourage everyone to listen carefully to the story all the way through before they start answering any of the questions on the Response Sheet.

After reading, ask the class the questions from the sheet. Following are the questions and some possible answers.

The Setting of the Story

One of the religious leaders’ constant criticisms of Jesus was that He associated with “sinners” or Gentiles, who were ritually unclean or considered unfit for God’s kingdom. In *Luke 15*, however, Jesus illustrates how much God is interested in the supposed “sinners” and outcasts of society.

On this occasion, Jesus told the religious leaders three parables to show them how repentant sinners will be welcomed in the kingdom of heaven, while self-righteous religious people will not be. The first two parables, the lost sheep (*Luke 15:4-7*) and the lost coin (*vss. 8-10*), teach that sinners are so important to God that heaven rejoices when even one sinner comes to repentance. The third parable, usually called the parable of the prodigal son, is really a story about two sons and the father’s love that is wide enough to encompass both of them. The father loves both the younger, returning son (*sinners and Gentiles*) and the older, residing son (*the religious leaders*).

The parable ends unresolved, so our Lord leaves the religious leaders to decide if they will be a part of the Kingdom or remain aloof and (*forever*) separate from it.

What was the younger son’s request of his father, and why was it unusual?

The son wanted his father to give him his

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inheritance before his father was dead. Normally, an estate in Jesus' time was not divided until the father's death or when the father himself relinquished control to his sons. The son was presuming on the father and was also angering his older brother, who legally received twice as much of the estate (see *Deut. 21:17*).

How did the son use his inheritance?

The son spent all of his inheritance on "wild living" in "a distant country" (*Luke 15:13*), away from his father and his family, with no thought of his future.

What is the significance of the younger son "[coming] to his senses" (vs. 17)?

The younger son realized he had sinned and saw his need. He had sunk so low that he was feeding pigs, which are unclean animals in Jewish law (*Lev. 11:7*). Perhaps even worse, he was so hungry that he wanted to eat the carob tree pods the pigs ate. That led to his turnaround and willingness to return home. He decided he was not too proud to go home and ask for his father's forgiveness for what he had done.

What is the father's attitude toward the son when he sees him?

The father was moved by compassion as he saw his son returning. He had never given up on his son, but was still watching and hoping that his son would come home. He did not even allow his son to complete his speech of repentance, but began to immediately celebrate his son's return. This mirrors God's attitude toward our repentance,

and how he welcomes those who come to Him with a repentant heart.

What attitudes can we see in the younger son?

First, the son realized his sinful condition. He realized that his life was much worse without his father than it was with his father. He did not try to blame others for what he had done or excuse his behavior in any way, but instead freely admitted his guilt and threw himself on the mercy of his father. He did not assume his father owed him anything just because he was his son, or even that his father would forgive him.

How does the older son react to his brother's return? Why?

The older brother is furious that his father is celebrating his brother's return. The older son has always faithfully served his father and yet his father has never celebrated that fact with a feast. The older son could be compared to some of the religious leaders of Jesus' day (or even to faithful Christians today) who did not see how God could forgive such waywardness and not more fully reward their loyalty.

What does this story tell us about our relationship with God?

The story mirrors God's forgiveness of everyone who repents and returns to Him. In a sense we have all been wayward children who at one time or another have turned away from the Father and His goodness to instead do what we want. The details in the story show how much God wants to forgive and accept us. The robe the son receives denotes honor, the ring represents the

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SESSION THREE

father's authority, and the sandals announce that the wayward son is a part of the family, not a servant (*who would go barefooted*). God does not halfheartedly accept our repentance—He includes us in His family as if we had never left.

Taking It Home

The Bible story and the discussion of it should have led your class to think more about just how much God loves us and how He wants to forgive us of any and all of our sins.

After they have finished the questions on the Response Sheet, challenge them in this last part of the session to finish at least three of these four sentences at home in the journals they have been writing in for the last two sessions.

One sin I have had trouble forgiving myself for is:

I will see God as the father in Jesus' story, and He wants to tell me this about my sin:

I remember one time when I was like the older brother in this story—I wanted God to punish _____ for that person's sin rather than accept the person and offer love and forgiveness.

When I think about just how much God has forgiven me for and how much He loves me, I want to:

When they have finished their answers and insights, encourage them to close their time with God in prayer.

Assignment

Before next session, ask your class to read the parables of the mustard seed and yeast in Matthew 13:31-33. Ask them to think about what kinds of things it takes to make plants grow, and if they have had any success growing plants of some kind themselves.

Kids' Connection

Your children studied the same story that you did today. Discuss with them the importance of understanding how much God loves them and how He wants them to be part of His family. This is a good opportunity to draw parallels between how much you love your child and how much more God loves them, much like the father in the story does. All of us have done things we should not have done, but when we admit that to God, He is ready to forgive us and love us unconditionally.

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RESPONSE SHEET 3

Read Luke 15:11-32, then answer these questions:

1. What was the younger son's request of his father, and why was it unusual?

2. How did the son use his inheritance?

3. What is the significance of the younger son "[coming] to his senses" (vs. 17)?

4. What is the father's attitude toward the son when he sees him?

5. What attitudes can we see in the younger son?

6. How does the older son react to his brother's return? Why?

7. What does this story tell us about our relationship with God?

8. Read the following situation and answer the questions after it:

Tim was not happy in his current job, but he was dependent on the salary he received. He did not like everything his job description told him to do, and he found it difficult to work with others if

they did not agree with him. Though the supervisor, Eric, had tried to talk with Tim and help him adjust to the job, Tim refused to accept any fault in the situation, and would never show his true feelings to Eric. He would even assure Eric that things were just fine. Instead, how Tim handled his emotions was by degrading Eric behind his back to other employees and "stretching" the truth to make himself look good.

Because of the tension in the office, Tim found himself being asked to resign. Eric had finally lost patience with Tim's inability to accept responsibility for his actions. However, being a Christian, Eric was ready to forgive Tim if he would have been forthcoming and honest.

1. Who needs to ask for forgiveness in this situation and why?

2. What sins keep people from asking for forgiveness?

3. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you needed to ask for forgiveness, but didn't? If you feel comfortable doing so, please share your experience with the group, and what you learned from it.

4. Read 1 John 1:8-9. What do these verses tell us about our need for forgiveness, and about how God forgives us?

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Bible Story

Parables of Mustard Seed and the Yeast
Matthew 13:31-33

Theme

Growing in the Christian life

Key Verse

2 Peter 3:18

Supplies

A healthy plant of some kind in a pot, some examples of both small (*such as radish*) and large (*such as green bean*) seeds, a board or sheet of newsprint to write on, Bibles, pens or pencils, Response Sheet 4

Preparation

Read the story in Matthew 13:31-33, and the Key Verse, 2 Peter 3:18. Make copies of Response Sheet 4.

Getting Started

If you have a healthy potted plant you can bring to this session, do so. The plant will help illustrate the theme of this lesson, which is growing in the Christian life. Start by looking at the plant and asking your adults if they have had any success growing plants of some kind themselves. Next, ask them to think about what kinds of things it takes to make plants grow. Make a list of what they tell you on a white board or sheet of newsprint. They could suggest such things as air, good soil, enough water, sunshine, nutrients, tender care, the right temperatures, and no weeds to choke out the plant as it is growing. List these things down one side of the board or sheet.

Now that you have that list to refer to,

Parables

The first three Gospels say that Jesus told His audiences many things in “parables.” While we may think of parables as mostly short stories (“*an earthly story with a heavenly meaning*”), the word in the New Testament can stand for many things, such as proverbs, short sayings, similes, allegories, and comparisons. Parables are most always a form of figurative language—that is, language that illustrates something with a “picture” or comparison. Many times Jesus introduces His parables with such phrases as, “The kingdom of heaven (*or God*) is like . . .” and then He finishes that statement with a comparison: it’s like a sower sowing seed in different soils, or a man who had two sons, or fishermen’s nets, or a field of growing grain. Sometimes the things compared seem totally opposite or incompatible, such as in this session’s parable where the kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard seed. Other times the comparison seems to neatly “fit,” as in the prodigal son parable, where an earthly father acts much like the heavenly Father.

While we think of Matthew, Mark, and Luke having all of the parables, the Gospel of John is full of figurative language in which Jesus uses comparisons, not so much to explain the Kingdom as to describe who He is: He is the good shepherd, the bread of life, and the light of the world.

help them to realize that while a lack of these things (*except weeds*) will impair a

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plant's growth, some things do not matter that much, such as the size of the seeds. If you brought the seed samples with you, you can compare the size of seeds such as radishes and green beans and see that they are quite different. However, both kinds of seeds produce plants far beyond their original sizes.

The point is that if the things that make a plant grow are readily available, it doesn't matter what size of seed you start with. This is also the point of the two parables of Jesus that we'll be studying this session. The point is more obvious in the parable of the mustard seed, but it also applies to the parable of the yeast.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record many parables of Jesus. Be sure to read the sidebar material on parables to help you understand what they are and why Jesus told them. Basically, they are short stories or comparisons that illustrate one or more profound truths. Many of them deal with things that Jesus' audience saw all the time—for example, Jesus told a parable of a farmer sowing seed, something that everyone in His audience likely would have either done themselves or seen someone else do. We studied the parable of the two sons last week, an extended story that illustrates the grace and mercy of the father for his wayward son. As the father had mercy and forgiveness for his son, so the heavenly Father shows grace and forgiveness to us, for we too have all gone astray. In this lesson, the parables are just short comparisons of everyday things to Kingdom principles. The comparisons help clarify to Jesus' listeners what the

The Mustard Seed and Its Plant

In Jesus' day, to show how very small something was, it was usually compared to a mustard seed. It takes 725-760 black mustard seeds to weigh a gram (*about .03 ounces*). While wild-growing mustard was considered a weed that was almost impossible to get rid of, the mustard plant was also cultivated for the oil in its seeds and for its leaves. The Roman writer Pliny said that mustard "with its pungent taste and fiery effect is extremely beneficial for the health." A black mustard plant can grow as high as 10-15 feet, with a thick main stem and branches more than strong enough to support the birds' nests that Jesus describes. In fact, a Galilean rabbi writing in the second century A.D. claims to have climbed a mustard bush that was as tall as a fig tree.

kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom, is like and how they fit into it.

Look again at the plant you brought. Ask them, "Was it always this size? Will it stay this size?" The answer to both questions is probably "No." Like the plant, God's kingdom (*and those who are in it*) should be continually growing and changing, and what grows (*the plant*) does not look anything like what it was at first (*a seed*).

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Digging In

Hand out Response Sheet 4 and ask a volunteer to read Matthew 13:31-33 and 2 Peter 3:18. Encourage them to follow along in their own Bibles as the Scripture is read.

After reading, ask the class the questions from the sheet. The questions and some possible answers are given below.

What unusual object is the kingdom of heaven compared to in verse 31?

The kingdom is compared to a mustard seed. That does not seem a large enough or important enough object to use to describe the Kingdom. In fact, Jesus calls it "the smallest of all your seeds" (vs. 32), meaning it is one of the smallest seeds a farmer would use in planting his crops.

Why does Jesus compare the Kingdom to a mustard seed?

In spite of its small size, the mustard seed produces a huge, tree-like plant big enough for birds to build nests in. Similarly, the kingdom of God may start out small, as in one person becoming a Christian, but then it grows, as in a person growing in discipleship, until the Holy Spirit creates something far greater than the small beginning. The same thing has happened with the Kingdom as a whole, as the Spirit has quietly worked in many people's lives until a great Christian church has developed over the centuries out of very small and humble beginnings, just Jesus and His 12 disciples. There are also Old Testament references to God's expanding kingdom being like a tree that will one day fill the earth so that the

Leaven and Making Bread

While some larger cities (*such as Jerusalem*) had bakeries, most people in the time of Jesus made and baked their bread every day at home. Having "daily bread" meant first grinding the wheat into flour at a home mill (*see Matt. 24:41*) or getting the flour from a larger town mill. Making a loaf of "leavened" bread (*one that would rise while it baked*) required yeast. That was usually a piece of old dough about the size of a fist saved from the previous day. It was "mixed" (*or hidden*) with water, salt, and new flour to make dough, and then left to rise for a few hours. Next it would be shaped into flat, thin, round loaves that could be baked quickly in the family oven (*if there was one*), or in a firepot, or over coals (*see John 21:9*).

Scripture almost exclusively sees leaven as something negative, probably because the fermentation process involved a kind of corruption (*see Exod. 12:15-20; Mark 8:15; 1 Cor. 5:6-7; Gal. 5:9*). However, in this particular parable the yeast is seen as positive—it works its way almost secretly into the dough and provides the way that the bread can "grow," just as the kingdom of heaven should spread through a person's life and stimulate his or her growth.

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nations can find refuge in its “branches” (see Ezek. 17:22-24; Dan. 4:9-27).

How is the kingdom of heaven like leaven in a loaf of dough?

A loaf of bread will not rise without leaven, or yeast. The yeast is almost a “hidden” ingredient in the bread dough, yet without it the bread will not expand. The kingdom of God will permeate the world, almost unseen, until it is everywhere. The large amount of flour the woman is using for her bread (*about a half of a bushel*) emphasizes the effectiveness of the small amount of leaven in “growing” a loaf of bread. Not much is needed to transform a lump of dough into a loaf of bread.

What do the two parables tell us about the growth of a Christian’s life?

The parable of the mustard seed shows that extensive growth can come from tiny things. The change in a person’s heart toward Christ, for example, can change the direction of that person’s life forever, and that changed life affects other lives. The parable of the yeast helps explain the intensive transformation that takes place in a Kingdom person. The yeast doesn’t really grow; instead, it permeates a person and affects permanent, life-altering change in what it touches.

How does 2 Peter 3:18 relate to the two parables?

The apostle Peter also told the audience for his letter that they needed to grow in their Christian lives. That included growing in the “grace and knowledge” of Jesus Christ. Peter saw true knowledge of Christ as extremely important (see 1:2-3, 5), probably because his letter

was warning the people of false teachers and false information that was circulating (2:1). We also need to realize that if we do not grow in the knowledge of Christ we may accept false teachings ourselves, and if we do not fully understand His grace, we may cling to our burden of sin, never fully experiencing freedom in Him.

Your Response to God’s Word

(*Individual answers on the Response Sheet.*)

Taking It Home

The parables and the discussion of them should have led your class to think about how the Christian life usually begins in a small and insignificant way, yet becomes something much greater. Focus for a moment on the section “Your Response to God’s Word” at the end of Response Sheet 4. Anything that was said there in the Scriptures applies both to them and to their church. They have an individual responsibility to grow as disciples of Christ, but their church also has the responsibility to help them in that process.

Encourage your adults to read through the Scriptures at home and to pray about the changes they may need to make in their lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit. With their journals they should look specifically at each Scripture and write how they are growing or need to grow more in that area.

If you have time in class, look back at the list of things you made at the beginning of this session on what a plant needs to grow. On the board or sheet of newsprint, make a similar list from your

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students' suggestions of what a Christian needs to have to grow in his or her discipleship. They may list such things as prayer, Bible reading, fellowship with other Christians, and an openness to God's leading in their lives. Many times we know exactly where our "growing edges" are because that is where God is always trying to "push" us. For example, we may know God wants us to teach a Sunday school class, but we resist and make excuses when we really should be seeing this as an opportunity to learn more about Him and about how to make an eternal difference in people's lives.

Assignment

Tell your class to read Matthew 13:44-46 and 6:20-21 before the next session, and ask them to think about what images they have of heaven. For instance, do they see it as angels floating on clouds and lots of harp music?

Kids' Connection

Your children studied the same parables that you did today. Discuss what they learned about growing as disciples of Jesus. You can look at any plant and talk about what the plant needs to grow, and what a Christian needs to grow to be a better follower of Jesus. Be honest with the struggles you have had in growing in your Christian life, so that your children do not think that this is an easy process. Also, help them see that it is not an impossible process because the Holy Spirit wants to help us grow to be more like Christ. Ask them areas where they think God wants them to grow and change. The areas they bring up may be things you both can work on together. They may even be able to help you in the areas in your own life you discover by doing this lesson and your journal activity. Remember that children learn more from your example than your words.

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RESPONSE SHEET 4

Read Matthew 13:31-33 and 2 Peter 3:18, then answer these questions:

1. What unusual object is the kingdom of heaven compared to in verse 31?

2. Why does Jesus compare the Kingdom to a mustard seed?

3. How is the kingdom of heaven like leaven in a loaf of dough?

4. What do the two parables tell us about the growth of a Christian's life?

5. How does 2 Peter 3:18 relate to the two parables?

Your Response to God's Word

Read through the following words of Scripture and decide how well you are growing in Christ. If you have a problem in a particular area, ask for God's help in doing better:

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10)

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:17-19)

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Phil. 2:3-4)

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1:10)

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

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SESSION FIVE

Site

Living Room

Bible Story

Parables of Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

Matthew 13:44-46

Theme

Looking forward to heaven

Key Verses

Matthew 6:20-21

Supplies

Bibles, pens or pencils, Response Sheet 5

Preparation

Read the parables in Matthew 13:44-46, and the Key Verses, Matthew 6:20-21. Make copies of Response Sheet 5.

Getting Started

Most people have some kind of images in their minds when they hear the word *heaven*. Perhaps they think of angels playing harps and floating around on clouds; “pearly gates” manned by someone such as the apostle Peter, who is “checking people in”; streets of gold lined with the mansions of the righteous; and lots of music from angelic choirs.

Many people develop their ideas of heaven from pictures or videos they may have seen. All of these ideas may help stimulate your discussion.

This session will certainly not answer everyone’s questions about what heaven is like, but you will be able to introduce them to the facts of Scripture and what the believer has

Finding Treasure

In Jesus’ day there were no banks, though there were “bankers” who lent money to others and collected interest from them (see *Matt. 25:27*). Instead, people often buried their valuables in a corner of their house or in a spot in a field they owned where no one else would be likely to look. Jewish law said if a workman was digging in a field and found such a treasure and took it away, it belonged to whoever owned the field, not the workman. However, in Jesus’ parable, the workman is careful not to take the treasure he finds out of the ground until he has legally bought the field. That would make him the sole owner of the treasure, whether it was originally his or not. Such a find as the one described in the parable would be an incredibly exciting, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The “treasure” referred to in the parable is obviously a physical one, such as gold, jewels, or coins. However, Jesus was always saying to His followers that real “treasure” is not these material things, but what we do in this life that has eternal value. For example, He said “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (*Matt. 6:19-21*). Jesus further tells His disciples that such things as providing for the poor by selling one’s earthly possessions is “a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted” (*Luke 12:33*).

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to look forward to. Heaven and hell are real places, and which one we are headed for depends on our salvation in Christ.

The next question is, "In which place do you want to spend eternity, heaven or hell?" Hopefully all of your group have made commitments to Christ and are going to spend eternity in His presence. Now, the follow-up question is, "What difference does heaven make to your life here on earth?" A good answer would be that while we live our lives in this world, the next world is our home, and we are more concerned about what God wants us to do now than what the world tells us we should want or do. Like the people we read about in the two parables, we have found the "deal of a lifetime," a deal that lasts past this lifetime. People may speak about a "great deal" that they don't want to miss out on, but this great deal also demands something from us, as we will see in these stories.

Digging In

Hand out Response Sheet 5 and ask a volunteer to read the parables in Matthew 13:44-46, and the Key Verses, Matthew 6:20-21. Encourage them to follow along in their own Bibles as the verses are read.

After reading, ask the class the questions from the sheet. Following are the questions and some possible answers.

The Pearl

Genuine pearls are formed when a grain of sand or other foreign substance gets inside a pearl oyster and the oyster coats it with a covering, which is called mother of pearl. In Bible times pearls were found in good quantities in the Red Sea, but now first-rate pearls are found mostly in the Persian Gulf. A perfect, unblemished pearl such as the one in the parable is a rare find, so much so that since ancient times pearls have always been associated with things of great value, such as wise sayings. In fact, the rarity of fine pearls made them more valuable than gold.

According to the parable, why would someone sell everything he or she had just to buy a field?

The person who was digging in the field (*perhaps to plant something*) found a great treasure of some kind, and knew that the treasure was worth any amount he would spend to buy the field for himself. The value of the treasure was greater than the value of everything he already owned.

Why was the merchant interested in this particular pearl?

The merchant's business was to find and buy the best pearls. He knew what the finest pearls looked like, and this was the finest he had ever seen, and probably ever would see, since such pearls are rarer than gold. He had no problem

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investing everything he had in this priceless pearl.

How are the two parables similar?

Both parables involve sacrifice, selling everything that someone has to obtain something that is of far greater value. Each person makes the sacrifice willingly and with great joy. Each person also has no regrets about what he did; he considers his decision to be the right one. Each one seems to find that what he has gotten is all he really needs in life. Too, both of these are chance discoveries: one does not find a treasure in a field or the finest pearl every day. It is really a once-in-a-lifetime discovery in each case.

What do the two parables teach us about the kingdom of heaven?

Like the treasure and the great pearl, the Kingdom has value that exceeds everything else. It is worth sacrificing everything for, and those who make such a sacrifice will find great joy. In both parables, the people made life-altering decisions, but did not regret what they had done. Those who choose the kingdom of heaven should feel the same way. Also, sadly, a majority of people do not find the Kingdom. They search in the wrong places or do not recognize its "value" when they hear about it or see it.

What does Matthew 6:20-21 tell us about finding and keeping genuine "treasure"?

The physical treasure that we strive so hard to get and keep here on earth could either be stolen or decline in value. Even if it does not, however, that treasure cannot go with us into eternity.

Only heavenly treasure lasts, and it should be what we should concentrate most on "earning."

Where would you say that most of your personal treasure is "stored"—on earth or in heaven? Explain your answer.

(People will have individual answers to this question.)

Your Response to God's Word

(Individual answers on the Response Sheet)

Taking It Home

The parables and your discussion of them should have led your class to think about heavenly things and what kind of "treasure" they are accumulating—and where. It may have been a new concept for them to see the kingdom of heaven as worth sacrificing everything for, or that may be something they needed to be reminded of because they have lost that focus in their lives, or they have lost the joy that comes from being "kingdom-minded." It is very easy to worry more about our earthly "treasure" because we see it regularly, whereas our heavenly treasure is "on account."

As the last entry in their journals, encourage them to write about what they used to think heaven was like and what they think about it now. For example, they may have thought of it only as a spot in the clouds where you get your wings and halo, not as the place where they are storing up their treasure for eternity. They also may not have realized the relationship of heaven and earth, that

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they are part of the heavenly kingdom already and need to see what they do here as more important than just trying to exist day to day. Jesus says being in the Kingdom means sacrificing your whole life for it, but it's worth it!

Assignment

This is the last time you will be meeting together, so you may want to tell your students that you will call each of them in a few weeks so you can keep in touch and share insights and difficulties that come from living the Christian life. You might suggest also that each person find a prayer partner from someone else in the class, especially if they do not have such a person already in their life. While these sessions have hopefully been a growing and learning time for everyone, there is more growing and learning to do every day, and we all need help doing that.

Kids' Connection

Your children studied the same parables that you did today. Discuss what they learned about the kingdom of heaven. Is it what they thought it was? Do they know what it means to store up treasure for themselves in heaven, starting even at their young age? Discuss some of the ways they can do that: are they helping others? Do they help around the house? Do they sacrifice something of theirs (*for example, their time or money*) to do what God wants them to do?

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RESPONSE SHEETS

Read the parables in Matthew 13:44-46, and the Key Verses, Matthew 6:20-21, then answer these questions:

1. According to the parable, why would someone sell everything he or she had just to buy a field?

2. Why was the merchant interested in this particular pearl?

3. How are the two parables similar?

4. What do the two parables teach us about the kingdom of heaven?

5. What does Matthew 6:20-21 tell us about finding and keeping genuine "treasure"?

6. Where would you say that most of your personal treasure is "stored"—on earth or in heaven? Explain your answer.

Your Response to God's Word: Treasure Hunting

Jesus says that we need to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven because that is the treasure that lasts and the only treasure that truly brings eternal joy. He also says that we need to make great sacrifices—all that we are and all that we have—to obtain and enjoy this treasure. Respond to the following questions and statements to see how your "treasure hunting" is going.

A. Because I take Christ's call on my life seriously, I have made these sacrifices in my life to be "laying up treasure in heaven" (example: being part of a small group Bible study instead of watching TV):

B. Because I am focused more on filling a treasure chest in heaven than on earth, I am doing these things for others on a regular basis (example: taking food to a person just out of the hospital):

C. Because of what I am doing, I have these glimpses of heaven right now here on earth (example: the smile of someone I helped whose car was broken down along the road):

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