

**LESSON 4: KINGDOM JOY**

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

**1. LEADER PREPARATION****LESSON OVERVIEW**

Joy comes from discovering something of great personal worth, and joy always produces some change. That's exactly what happens in the parables Jesus shared in Matthew 13:44-46. When we understand the power and worth of God's kingdom, we'll get rid of anything that might compete with our allegiance to Christ. This concluding lesson of our series will help teenagers understand that following Jesus and living for his kingdom—when truly understood—is a thing of joy.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- 1. WHAT:** Understanding Jesus' kingdom provokes joy, and living for Jesus' kingdom produces change.
- 2. WHY:** We are all looking for something that will produce true joy; Jesus and his kingdom are the root of experiencing true joy—a vital truth for teenagers to understand.
- 3. HOW:** Students can follow a path that leads to greater understanding of God's kingdom and the joy and transformation it produces.

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 13:44-46

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURE**

Romans 14:14-19

**TEACHING PREP**

**LEADER  
TIP**

**Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.**

**Read Matthew 12:44-46.**

It seems insane: to sell everything you possess to purchase some land where you had stumbled across a precious treasure. The same could be said for the merchant who gets rid of every possession to purchase one pearl. While seemingly obsessive and monomaniacal, this is the very nature of God's kingdom.

When God's love and his kingdom's power are properly understood, we realize that they are worth more than anything else we may possess. The joy of living for him makes everything else a shadow—at least, that seems to be what Jesus is suggesting in these parables.

Bible scholar N.T. Wright has written that the ancient world saw the great philosophies and religions as “pearls.” Some people believed that one could keep a collection of these “pearls” without having to decide which to leave behind and which to keep. No need to pick one religion, just pick them all—that was the counsel of some in the ancient world. And in several respects, this reflects the worldview that many people in our world hold today, too. But Jesus’ words challenge that notion.

Here we have a merchant who, after finding a solitary pearl of great worth, sells everything to keep the one. This is the nature of the gospel of Jesus and his kingdom, and when properly understood, they provoke both joy and transformation.

Jesus desires that we experience and understand his gospel and his kingdom. If we’ve wandered away from the treasure of Jesus and forgotten his worth, then Jesus stands ready to welcome us back and share—again and again—the depth of his love and the power of his kingdom.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **TEXTS OR TWEETS**

**Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- Been searching for joy but not finding it? Come tonight and catch a vision of the source of all true joy!
- Ever been caught off guard by Jesus’ grace? You won’t want to miss the last gathering in our “Kingdom of God Is Like...” series.

### **PARENT EMAIL**

**Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

We’ve just completed our series on Jesus’ parables in Matthew 13 titled “The Kingdom of God Is Like...”—a rich, illuminating, and challenging series. Each week we’ve grown in our understanding of what Jesus’ kingdom looks like and how we can be a part of it.

In this final lesson we looked at Matthew 13:44-46. In that passage of Scripture, Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a man who finds a treasure in a field and sells all he has to possess the treasure. Jesus also compared the kingdom to a merchant who sells all he has to purchase one pearl of great value. The message is clear: When properly understood, Jesus’ kingdom and his gospel provide joy and provoke sacrifice in our lives.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking with your teenager about our lesson. You might want to use these questions during your conversation:

- What are some of the main ways people try to experience joy in life?
- How is joy connected to sacrifice?
- How is receiving or giving a gift similar to following Jesus?

I hope and pray that this series has sparked some great conversations at home. Have an amazing week!

**LESSON 4: KINGDOM JOY****2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]****LEADER  
TIP**

Before your group meets, wrap a box in birthday or Christmas wrapping paper.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, display the wrapped box, and then **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:**

*Let me begin with some bad news: There is nothing inside this box. I haven't filled it with candy or money or anything valuable. Instead, I want you to imagine that this box represents a meaningful gift that you might receive from your parents or a friend.*

Pass the box around from person to person in your group, and ask each person—while holding the box—to answer the question “For you personally, what would this box represent?” Then move into these additional questions.

**ASK:**

- *How do you respond if you receive a gift that is worth a lot to you?*
- *Why do people give costly gifts? What might provoke someone to give sacrificially?*
- *How is receiving or giving a gift similar to following Jesus?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *After receiving a gift, most of us are thankful—we're filled with joy. Sometimes, however, we can spend entire seasons of our life looking for joy but not finding it. This can be exhausting and unnerving. The good news is that Jesus Christ is always willing to walk with us into a deeper understanding of his great love for us!*

**TEACHING POINTS****LEADER  
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 13:44-46 together as a group. Because this passage is so brief, consider having students read the verses several times, from different translations of the Bible.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Let's spend a few minutes looking at these three verses. While it's only a small bit of Scripture, we can uncover some deeply vital truth in Jesus' words.*

## 1. EVERYONE IS SEARCHING FOR JOY

### ASK:

- *What is joy—and why do we all want it and need it?*
- *What are some ways people hunt for joy?*
- *What produces joy in your life?*
- *How would you explain the difference between joy and happiness?*
- *Why is it significant that Jesus describes the person in each parable as looking for something?*
- *What might cause someone to give up on the pursuit of joy?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *God has put in us a desire to find joy. However, while many seek joy apart from him, true joy is at its root found in Jesus. Jesus is always ready to show us the deepest source of true joy—himself.*

## 2. DISCOVERING JESUS' KINGDOM AND GOSPEL PRODUCES JOY

### ASK:

- *If you've ever stumbled across something of great worth, how did that discovery make you feel?*
- *Verse 44 speaks of the great excitement that the man in the first parable felt when he found the treasure. Why would understanding Jesus' kingdom and his gospel produce joy and excitement?*
- *How is discovering something of great worth connected to finding joy?*
- *When have you been filled with joy as you've come to understand Jesus' love? What was that like?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *We are all—like the man in the first parable—in the field looking for joy. The good news is that Jesus doesn't remain hidden from us. He pursues us, desiring that we would see his great love and the power of his kingdom, and wanting us to discover that in truly seeing him we might find true joy—again and again.*

## 3. UNDERSTANDING THE WORTH OF JESUS' KINGDOM PRODUCES JOYFUL SACRIFICE

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Truly understanding Jesus, his love, and his kingdom will produce more than joy. It will produce sacrifice as well. When we understand the enormity of Jesus' love for us, we're compelled to rearrange our lives to reflect Jesus' desires, not ours. But this all happens from a place of joy.*

### ASK:

- *What sacrifices have you made in your journey of following Jesus?*
- *Have you ever witnessed a person discover the great worth of Jesus' love? How did it change him or her?*
- *Why do you think both of the men in the parables sell everything they own?*
- *What does it mean for sacrifice to be provoked by joy?*
- *Where do you see sacrifice provoked by joy in your life currently—or how are you seeking a clearer understanding of the worth of God's kingdom?*

## EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.



### ASK:

- *Have you ever received something that didn't look like it was worth much, but to you it was? What was it? Why did it have worth?*
- *Read Romans 14:14-19, where Paul talked about Jesus' kingdom. What do you think of when you hear "living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"? What does "a life of goodness" mean to you? How about "peace"? And "joy in the Holy Spirit"?*
- *Paul described not just an individual person's life, but also the life of a culture. Why might this be a culture you'd like to be a part of?*
- *How could you help facilitate this culture, this kingdom, in the places you hang out and live and spend your time?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

## LIVING IT OUT

### ASK:

- *What do you most need from Jesus right now?*
- *How do you need to discover or rediscover Jesus' love in your life?*
- *What things could you do or what habits could you pursue to reach a place of better understanding the great worth of Jesus' kingdom and his love?*
- *What idea or thought from this series on Jesus' parables has made the greatest impact on you, and why?*

## SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

## FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

*"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field" (Matthew 13:44).*