



On your marks

The ways of the kingdom of God, which Jesus taught to the crowds, were so different from the ways of the world that Jesus had to use stories – parables – to help them to begin to understand. The idea that losing was in fact gaining, dying was the way to living and that to give was the only way to receive, turn all our inherited so-called wisdom upside down. This outline for a session with your children's group explores the idea that the only way to keep something is to give it away. It connects with Jesus' teaching in the parable of the great pearl as well as with what he says in his sermon on the plain in Luke's gospel (Luke 6:38). This presentation could also be used as an activity in all-age worship.

Get set

The parable of the great pearl is found in Matthew 13: 45-46.

This activity relies on the group being willing to enter into the spirit of some imaginative mime that is used here to illustrate the mystery of Jesus' teaching about gifts and giving. Depending on the group, you might need to warm them up first with some other fun miming games to create the atmosphere for what follows.

It may also help to present this with your group in a circle.

Go!

1. *Script for the presentation*

Listen; let me tell you about a most extraordinary and precious gift.

I don't know what sort of interesting gifts you have been used to, for Christmases and Birthdays.

Maybe luminous socks; maybe duck-shaped bath salts; maybe novelty egg-cosies or scented drawliners! You know... the sort of really useful presents that you sometimes get.

Well, this gift isn't like that! This is a really precious gift.

Can you imagine holding this gift?

It is something priceless; something beautiful; something delicate; something very, very special.

Go on hold it now. Admire it. Feel it. Treasure it. Have you ever seen anything so wonderful? *Encourage some fun, even exaggerated responses to this group mime*

It is the sort of present that when you first see it, you want to hold on to it forever.

Go on hold it close, keep it safe, and make it yours.



Aah! Oh no! What's happened? It's gone! It's disappeared!

I should have warned you. You see there's something about this special gift that I ought to have told you. It's what makes it so special and so precious I suppose.

You see, if you hold on to this gift too tightly and try and keep it, then you lose it.
But - and this is the really precious thing - if you find a thoughtful way of **passing it on**, then you get to keep another one just like it! Let me show you.

Would you like to keep the precious gift? Then you'll have to put your thinking caps on. You are going to have to work out a thoughtful way of passing it on to someone else in the circle. Are you thinking? Who has an idea?

Perhaps you can invite the person to a party and give them the precious gift as a leaving present?
Perhaps you can hide it in something as a surprise?
Perhaps you can make it the reward in a game?
Perhaps...

Ok, I'll start it off...

I am going to help *name of person in the group* with his/her shopping and I am going to include the precious gift in his/her bag as a cheer-up gift.

Now, how will you keep the gift by passing it on?
Encourage as many different ways of passing on and keeping the gift as possible

2. *Link to the Bible*

Jesus said that there was once a man who used to collect fine gems. He was a real expert and loved beautiful pieces of jewelry. One day he saw in a shop the most precious pearl that he had ever seen in his life. But it was very, very, VERY expensive. It would cost a fortune to buy. Straightaway he went and sold all the other pieces he had; he also sold his house; he sold his car; and he even sold his novelty egg-cosies and scented draw-liners, to get the money to buy the most precious pearl. (Matthew 13: 45-46)

I wonder what Jesus was trying to tell people with this story? What do you think it means?

3. *Jesus' amazing upside-down teaching*

Jesus also said that if we give away what we have, God will give back to us... a full measure... a generous helping... poured back into our giving hands. The way to keep what we have, is to give it away! (Luke 6:3)

If we keep God's love to ourselves we will lose it, because God's love is meant to be shared.



How strange is that!

4. *Thinking it through with your group*

What do you think this means in practice in our everyday lives?

Is it really practical?

Won't we all just be conned out of all we possess and end up in deep trouble?

Is Jesus serious about asking us to give away as much as we can to others?

Will God's promise of receiving back what we give really come true?

Has anyone ever done this for real?