

Review the last stories a bit, focusing more on the most recent story, Jesus & the Pharisees.

- What patterns do you notice about God in these stories?
- Up until now, what similarities do you see between Jesus and God?
- What message did God share with everyone about Jesus when Jesus was baptized?
- What seemed to be Jesus' main message to the Pharisees?

## Tell the Story *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

### SCENE 1: Kingdom Message

Jesus continued to teach people, "The Kingdom of God has come—turn from your sins and turn to God!"

One day he climbed up a hill with a group of his closest followers. They sat down together and Jesus began to teach them about God's Kingdom.

He said, "God blesses those who realize their need for him; the humble and poor, the gentle and merciful—the Kingdom of God belongs to them. God blesses the pure in heart and those who hunger and thirst to be with Him. You'll be blessed when you are hated, mocked and excluded because you are my followers. Be happy about it—you will get great rewards in heaven!"

Then Jesus went on to teach about God's laws that were given to Moses. Jesus said, "Don't think I came to get rid of the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets. I have come to fulfill them! God's laws are alive and will last forever—live by them and show others the way. That's how you'll find honor in the Kingdom."

Then he went on to teach, "The laws and commands tell you not to murder, but I say if you hate someone or insult them you are just as guilty as a murderer. Your words and actions bring judgment on you. The laws also tell us to never have sex with someone else's spouse. But I say anyone who even looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart."

He also taught them, "If someone steals your shirt from you, offer them your coat too. Live generously! Love your enemies. Anyone can love their friends—but you are to love the unlovable. You must live differently, doing what is good, right and perfect—just like God your Father."

The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching; He had real power and authority—unlike their teachers of the law.

Later the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When is this 'Kingdom' that you are teaching about going to come?"

Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God is not something you can predict. People will not say, 'here it is,' or 'there it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you."

## Retell the Scene

This may seem redundant, but it helps you remember and own the story.

## Dialogue

These questions are a good start to draw out observations about the story.

- **What do we learn about the Kingdom of God from this scene?**
- **What does the Kingdom look like? Where is it?**

- **In your own words, what is Jesus teaching his followers in this scene?**
  - » The Pharisees had created a way for humans to be accepted by God by their actions.
  - » Jesus took the commands and laws that God gave Moses and revealed the inner attitudes behind the actions—showing that outward actions are not enough. Our heart is more important than our actions to God.
  
- **In this story, Jesus shows people how to live in God's ways. Where in the other stories before this have we seen God do the same thing?**
  - » Adam & Eve (God walked with them teaching them how to live closely to him), Cain—"if you do what is right",
  - » Noah—"life is in the blood", Moses—laws & commands, Prophets—God spoke through them to remind people of how to live in his ways.
  
- **How are Jesus' Kingdom teachings similar to what God taught them in the past stories?**
  - » Since the beginning of creation God has been showing people how to live closely with him and live in his ways—the ways of his Kingdom. Jesus continues to show us how to live in these ways through his teaching and through living out the Kingdom perfectly with his life.
  
- **What do you think Jesus meant by saying "I have come to fulfill the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets?"**
  
- **What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?**

#### SCENE 2: Parables of the Kingdom

Jesus continued to teach about the Kingdom of God using short stories that had powerful meanings, called parables.

He said, "The Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed that is planted in a field. This seed may be small at first but it grows into a large tree where birds can come and find shelter."

Jesus told dozens of stories like this to the crowds.

He said the Kingdom is...

Like a hidden treasure buried in a field — worth diligently searching for,

Like yeast spread in a large ball of dough — just a little will change a lot,

Like a precious pearl — worth trading everything for,

Like a great feast—where the poor and the outcast all get invited, and on and on...

People were amazed at Jesus' teaching and wisdom. They understood some of these pictures, but others remained a mystery to them.

A young man came up to Jesus and asked, "What good things must I do to get into the Kingdom?"

Jesus replied, "God is the only one who is good. Follow his commandments."

The man said, "I have obeyed his commands, what else must I do?"

"Go and sell everything you have and give the money to the poor. Then come and follow me."

When the man heard this he went away very sad because he didn't want give up his great wealth and the things he owned.

Then Jesus told his disciples, "It's very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God—it's easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle!"

"Then who in the world can enter the Kingdom?" asked his disciples.

Jesus replied, "If you try on your own you won't make it. But if you rely on God, everything is possible!"

The entrance to the Kingdom of God is narrow, only a few will find it. But the road that leads to destruction is very wide, many will chose this way and live only for themselves."

After spending an entire night in prayer, Jesus chose twelve men out of all of his followers to be his apprentices, calling them apostles. They traveled with Jesus wherever he went as he taught them to live in the ways of God. He sent the apostles out to heal the sick, teach others what they had learned and to share the message of the Kingdom of God.

## Retell the Scene

This may seem redundant, but it helps you remember and own the story.

## Dialogue

These questions are a good start to draw out observations about the story.

- **Why do you think Jesus taught in parables?**
- **What do you think the Kingdom of God is? Why is it so hard to describe?**
- **What kind of King / Kingdom do you think the Jewish people were hoping for?**
- **What did they want to conquer (win)?**
- **What kind of Kingdom was Jesus setting up?**
- **What do you think he was he looking to conquer?**
- **Why do you think Jesus chose 12 to be his apostles? What did he send them to do?**

SCENE 3: Jesus and Nicodemus

One night a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you were sent by God to teach us. Your miracles haven proven to us that God is with you."

Jesus replied, "You're right—but unless someone is born a second time they will never understand God's Kingdom."

"What do you mean?" Nicodemus questioned, "How can someone who is fully grown climb back inside their mother and be born a second time?"

Jesus answered him, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they have been born a second time by God's Spirit. Humans can only give human life, but God's Spirit gives new life in the Kingdom."

"How can this happen!?" Nicodemus asked.

Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, but you don't know this simple truth? If you won't believe me when I teach you about everyday things, how will you believe me when I tell you about God's Kingdom?"

"What I am telling you is true. God showed his great love for people by sending me—his only son—to this world. Anyone who believes in me and lives in my ways will find life that is complete and eternal! He sent me here to save people—not to judge them. Those who want to live in sin and darkness will reject me and bring God's judgment on themselves. But those who want to live in God's ways will trust me and live forever!"

## Retell the Scene

This may seem redundant, but it helps you remember and own the story.

## Dialogue

These questions are a good start to draw out observations about the story.

- **Why do you think what Jesus was teaching was hard for Nicodemus (or anyone) to understand?**
- **How does someone “enter the Kingdom” according to this scene? According to all three scenes?**
- **What do we learn about Jesus from this story?**
- **What do you think is the connection between living in God’s ways and believing in Jesus?**

## Application (Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)

- What questions do you have about the story? What do you wonder about?
- What will you remember most about this story?
- How does this story make a difference in your life?
- What do you think it means for YOU to live in the Kingdom of God? What are some specific ways you can do that?
- What does it mean to “believe” in Jesus? How is someone who does this different from others?

## Scripture Memory Verses

And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18: 3

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. Matthew 20: 26

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6: 35-36

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3: 16