

The vision for small group content this semester is for small groups to process, expand on, and apply the message from large group. This method will hopefully bring more continuity between small groups and large group, allow those who don't attend large group to learn about the parables, and make a space for real discussion of how these parables should shape our lives at Rice.

Each week, a resource and small group leaders will have a sheet like this one with some information pulled from commentaries, a brief outline from large group, and some potential questions to ask. In resource, we'll take this information and form a small group lesson together.

We suggest using this small group format from last semester as a starting place:

- **Common Ground** - An opening question or ice breaker that gets everyone talking. This question should lead into the known truth and the topic of the lesson. (e.g. What's the most expensive thing you've bought?)
- **Known Truth** - A premise that everyone can relate to and agree with. This truth should illustrate the significance of the lesson. (e.g. Great value obligates a response.)
- **Bible Study** - What is the meaning of the parable? What's its context? Some of this may come from the large group message.
- **Application** - How can we live out the parable? How should this new truth shape our lives?

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Parable of the Hidden Treasure

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

"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 13:44-46

Context

- In the ancient world, there weren't banks that ordinary people could use. Instead, it was common practice to hide money in the ground for safe keeping. To the original audience, finding treasure buried in a field would be plausible.
- In this time, pearls were seen as some of the most beautiful objects.
- In the first parable, the man finds the treasure by chance while in the second parable, the merchant finds the pearl after searching for it. People may find the kingdom of heaven in different ways.

Large Group Notes

1. God is most valuable and worth giving up everything else in order to have.
2. God is available. He has made it possible for us to know him (John 3:16) .
3. God fulfills our longing for being fully known and fully loved. Conclusion: Because God is most valuable, most available, and meets our greatest need, we are filled with joy at the possibility of knowing Him. It is not fear, threat or duty that drives us to search for God. The great motivator is joy.

Potential Questions

- Why does the man sell everything he has?
- What is the main point of the parable? Why was this parable spoken?
- What would it look like for us to sell everything, with joy, for the treasure of the kingdom? How can we cultivate this joyful, sacrificial attitude?
- Why don't we see people sacrificing everything for the kingdom?