

Supplies: TV or laptop to show video clip; video clip from "Hood" (link available on rfour.org website); two dolls or pictures representing present day images of "groom" and "bridegroom"

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Here's the opening question: What's something that you are excited about happening?
- (go around the circle)
- During this summer, we're going to be talking about parables. Parables are stories that can help us better understand an idea. For instance, I could tell you that you have to just try harder. Or, I could tell you the story of the "little engine that could" that shows us what trying harder might look like.
- Before we hear the parable for today, though, there's some things we need to know first:

TELL "Things we need to know first" (get ready to use dolls/pictures as you talk)

- We're going to read a parable about a wedding.
- The custom at that time did not have a wedding ceremony like we have now.
- Instead, the groom (the soon-to-be husband) [show a doll or picture] would go to the parent's house of the bride (the soon-to-be-wife) [show corresponding doll or picture] to pick her up [move groom over to bride] and bring her back to his home [have the two dolls/pictures "walk" back to where the groom started from].
- Together, they would return to the groom's house where all the guests would be waiting for the couple to have a big party.
- Now, remember, there was no electricity. So at night, there were no night lights, and there were no flashlights.
- Since there were no street lights, the main duty of the bridesmaids (which was considered a great honor) was to light the way of the bridal party to the celebrations with lamps.
- They did this by using lamps. The lamps needed oil in order for the flame to stay lit.
- This means that once you ran out of oil for your lamp, you had no more light.
- So if you knew oil was very important to make sure the lamp was lit, what would you make sure you had a lot of?
- Let's listen to what happens in the parable Jesus tells:

READ Matthew 25:1-13: Bridesmaids and lamp oil

1 "Then the kingdom of God is like this. Ten bridesmaids (women who are part of the wedding) took their lamps and went to meet the groom (the soon-to-be-husband). 2 Five of the bridesmaids were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no extra oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of extra oil with their lamps. 5 As the groom (the soon-to-be-husband) was delayed, all of the bridesmaids became drowsy and slept. While they slept, their lamps burned all the oil. 6 At midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the groom! Come out to meet him." 7 Then all those bridesmaids woke up and had to relight their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps have no more." 9 But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the stores and buy some for yourselves." 10 And while the five foolish bridesmaids went to buy oil, the bride and groom came, and those who were ready went with them into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." 12 He replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you."

ASK

- How many bridesmaids were there? (10)
- And as they waited, what happened? (they fell asleep)
- What happened to their lamps as they slept? (the oil burned out)
- When the bridesmaids woke up, did they all have extra oil? (No)
- The ones who did not have extra oil, what did they miss? (the bride and groom)

TELL

- This parable that Jesus tells is a story about being prepared or ready for an event.
- We're going to watch a brief video clip about being prepared.
- It's from the movie "Hoodwinked."
- The whole clip is a song...sung by a GOAT! – so listen carefully.

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK

- So what was the goat singing about? (being prepared)
- What different things did he use to be prepared with? (different horns for his head)
- At the end of the clip, what kind of horn was he using? (a helicopter horn)
- What would have happened to the singing goat if he had NOT been prepared (he would have gone "splat.")

TELL

- What Jesus is telling us with the parable is that preparation for entering the kingdom of God means following Jesus without interruption.
- Just like the goat isn't going to let anything stop him from getting to the end of his trip, so, too, is Jesus telling us that we can't let anything stop us from traveling with him to the kingdom of God.
- Now the kingdom of God is not a place we go to when we die. The kingdom of God is wherever we let God be king.
- In order to let God be king in our lives in the here and now, we have to keep following Jesus, that's how we enter the kingdom of God.

EXPLAIN PREPARATION Activity

- Ok, we're going to do an activity now that helps us to see how being prepared can change our actions and the outcomes we experience.
- So first what we're going to do is play a game.
- This game is called odds or evens.
- Two of you will join up and just like rock, paper, scissors, you'll put one hand as fist into the other hand and you'll say "One, two, THREE!" Each time you say a number hit your hand with the bottom of your fist.
- On Three, with your fist hand, you'll either show one finger or two fingers.
- The object of the game is to be the first person to be able to say correctly if the fingers that are pointing out when totaled together is an even or odd number.
- So some of us may not know what odd or even are, so I'll help you out.
 - If you both throw one finger, that's 2 fingers total. 2 is an even number
 - If you throw 1 finger and the other throws 2 fingers, that is 3 fingers total. 3 is an odd number
 - If you both throw 2 fingers, that's 4 fingers total. 4 is an even number.
- Any questions?
- OK! Let's play!

DO FIRST ROUND

- OK, well done.
- Who thinks they didn't do very well? (pick some of them and then pick one or two people who didn't raise their hands)
- Tell the rest of the class: Excuse me for a moment, while I tell these individuals a way to better prepare for the game.
- Tell just to the ones you selected:
 - Always throw one finger. Always.
 - If the other person throws the same as you, say "EVEN" as fast as possible.
 - If they throw different than you, say "ODD" as fast as possible. Any questions?
- Tell to the whole group: OK, let's play!

DO SECOND ROUND

- OK well done.
- Those who I talked to earlier, do you think you did better?
- Now, I'm going to tell everyone what I told just some of you before this last round.
 - Always throw one finger. Always.
 - If the other person throws the same as you, say "EVEN" as fast as possible.
 - If they throw different than you, say "ODD" as fast as possible.
- Any questions
- Let's see what happens now
- Let's play!

DO THIRD ROUND

TELL

- So do you think by the end of the last round you were faster at figuring out odds and evens than you were at the beginning of the game?
- You were faster because in the last round, you were prepared to throw a certain number and you had a strategy on how to count faster.
- When you go home today, teach this game to your parents, but don't tell them the part about always throwing one finger.
- I betcha you'll win!
- Being prepared helps us to better do what we want to do.
- In the parable that we heard today, that's what Jesus is reminding us about as well: If we want to be part of the party that is the Kingdom of God, then preparing to follow Jesus helps us to better enter the Kingdom of God.
- And the kingdom of God is where? (Wherever God is king)

CLOSING PRAYER

[END OF LESSON]

Understandings that the lesson is built around:

What event is Jesus saying is like the wedding? The kingdom of God, right? Note that the kingdom of God is not where we go when we die. Instead, it is wherever we let God be king. The kingdom of God is therefore available in the here and now. However, letting God be king is not so easy in our own personal lives. There are ways of living that we have to "enter into" that allow/let God be king in our lives. Jesus shows us how to live these ways that allow God to be king in our lives.

So in the parable, Jesus is saying that getting into the kingdom is like escorting the bride/Jesus to the wedding/kingdom. And it is by following him that he leads us to and into the destination. Following Jesus requires some preparation, though. We can't leave the procession and then come back. Because then we miss things. We have to be prepared to follow the whole time, the whole way.