

Introduction

My daughter Ashley was first diagnosed with colon cancer in the spring of 2012. When the cancer returned in the spring of 2014, Ashley's fight became daily—her fight for life and her fight for faith. So, I prayed like I had never prayed before. In the spring of 2018, the need to focus on heaven became my source of hope.

My most comfortable spot to be learning about Jesus is with “the gang,” (a group that I lead made up of adults affected by disabilities). So the lessons in this book come from the longing to know more about those “secrets” of heaven.

God used our weekly Bible study—learning those secrets with the gang—to prepare me to say “good bye, I love you” to Ashley. They also gave me the assurance that, in the realm of eternity, I would be seeing her momentarily. . . to be with her and our amazing Jesus for eternity. . . the place that we were created to call home. Heaven is what is before us. . . Ashley just beat me to it.

Hallelujah!
Jill Miller

Special Thanks

I want to thank our family and friends, who gave so *Secrets of the Kingdom* can be taught to the kids Ashley loved so well:

Paul Ash; Justin and Gretchen Barry; Paul, Linda, and Kari Beck; Sandy and Joe Bisulca; Carren, Gerard, and Luke Bynon; Scott and Torrie Christy; Beth Cinberg; James and Ruth Correnti; Julie Courtney; Richard and Marion Crozier; Chris and Jane French; Amy and Brian Gill; Robert, Lynn, and Russell Gallo; Mike and Keila Goshow; John and Jane Hebden; Steve and Claudia Kirsch; Bill and B.J. Krewson; Kim Lister; Bob Loker; Ron and Sue Lutz; Andrew and Natasha Miller; John and Pam Miller; Alastair and Beverly Nisbet; Bob Olson; Linda Ruth Paskell; Nan Powlison; Blake and Emily Price; Joe and Terry Rakszawski; Courtney and Ian Sneed; Maggie Snyder; Nicholas and Georgette Stilwell; Timo and Tina Strawbridge; Judy Yoon; Michael and Hyelee Yoon; and Dennis, Dawn, and Peter Zucca.

Contents

Quick Start Guide	7
Lesson 1: Do You Want to Hear a Secret?	17
Lesson 2: “Baaaaa”	25
Lesson 3: Light the Lamp and Look for the Money!	35
Lesson 4: Let’s Party!	45
Lesson 5: “You’ve Got Talent!”	57
Lesson 6: Forgive...from Your Heart	67
Lesson 7: The Good Stranger	77
Lesson 8: The Treasure Is Mine!	87
Lesson 9: I’ll Buy That Pearl!	95
Lesson 10: One...Two...Three...Push!	103
Lesson 11: Grow. Grow. Grow.	111
Lesson 12: Keep Knocking!	121
Lesson 13: Heaven...The Great Reversal!	129
Lesson 14: The Invite to the Big Bash	137
Lesson 15: He’s Coming!	147
Lesson 16: The Resurrection Parade	159
Vault of Secrets	165
Memories of Ashley	167

Luke 8:17 (The Message):
“We’re not keeping secrets; we’re telling them. We’re not hiding things; we’re bringing everything out into the open.”



Lesson 1

Do You Want to Hear a Secret?

Materials:

1. Scriptures: Matthew 13:11, Luke 8:10, Mark 4:11, Revelation 3:20, Revelation 21-22
2. Photo of image of heaven
3. Flip chart with Scripture written in same colors as in student manual.
4. YouTube video clips or use these search words: “Searching for the Garden” and “Lucy Discovers Namia”
 - a. “Searching for the Garden,” a clip from *The Secret Garden*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVRPMleD1SI>
 - b. “Lucy Discovers Namia,” a clip from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O8v1yFoAwo>
5. Student manual, one for each student
6. Reminder Sheet
7. The prop: a large key



Teaching Note: Every lesson has a prop, a visualization of the story being taught. These props should be collected in a box. The purpose of a prop is to help the gang remember the lesson by using all of their senses. Some props make sounds. Some props have a smell. Touch and sight are always involved. Good teaching uses all senses, and that is what the props do. They help students learn and remember the lesson.

Having the props together in one box can be a way to review past lessons. This can turn into a game as a student who is blindfolded picks out a prop and then asks the class, “Who remembers what story this prop reminds us of?” Then, if time allows, questions can be asked to see if the gang has applied this story to their daily lives.

For example, in Lesson 12, “Keep Knocking,” the prop is a door knocker. When seeing the door knocker, maybe one of the kids will answer, “That’s the story of the mean judge!” Yes! They remembered! Then you can ask them about the woman who went to the judge: “Why did she go? Did she ask once? Are you still asking God for something and waiting for him to answer?”

Using the props should be FUN—light and fun! There isn’t any special way to use them...just be creative! Enjoy the gang. 😊

Goals:

Love: God has a secret that he wants to tell you!

Faith: All of God's secrets prove true!

The Secret: Heaven is a real place, and it is amazing!



Kim's World: Kim loves stories. So does Jesus. As a matter of fact, Jesus uses stories to help us understand his amazing secret. Stories and secrets! How fun! 😊

Ashley's Legacy: Ashley was all about telling people about Jesus. One day Ashley was walking her pug, Daisy, in the neighborhood. Ash noticed a mom who had just moved into the community, and she went over and introduced herself. At the same time, Ashley told Judy about a Bible study at her local church. Judy kind of dismissed Ashley's invitation, only to be told the next time she met Ashley that Ash had gone ahead and signed her up for the study and to make sure that she was in her group!

😊 Now Judy is a lover of Jesus! Ashley was an evangelist...like her grandfather!

I. Preview the Story

10 minutes

Summing It Up: God has a wonderful secret!

Q. If I told you I had a secret to tell you, how would that make you feel? (Ooooh! I like secrets! It makes me really curious. I want to find out about the secret NOW!)

Yes, I agree. There is something about secrets that really perk up our ears.

Now, some secrets can be bad secrets, but the secrets we are talking about today are good.

Really good.

Choose one student to tell your "secret."

Example: I have a spot in my attic where I have hidden old stamps.

As you tell the secret to the selected student, notice the posture of the other students leaning forward and trying to hear what you're saying!

Ask the student who heard the secret.

Q. How does it make you feel that I chose you to hear the secret and not any other students? (I felt good that I heard the secret. Great!)

Ask the rest of the class.

Q. How did it make you feel that I didn't tell you the secret? (Sad. Mad. Why did you tell him or her the secret and not me?)

Q. So raise your hand if you know the secret.

One person raises his or her hand.

Q. Raise your hand if you don't know the secret.

Everybody else raises their hands.

Now, I noticed when I was telling the secret to _____ that some of you were leaning forward, straining to hear what I was saying!

Q. Raise your hand if you, too, want to hear what the secret is.

They all raise their hands.

Okay. So let's have the student who knows the secret tell it to the class.

"Jill has a spot in her attic where she has old stamps hidden." (This will be your own secret you told the one person.)

Q. Now tell each other my secret.

The class tells each other about my hiding spot in the attic for my stamps, or whatever your secret was.

We all want to hear secrets! That's why we lean forward. We get super curious, don't we? We are going to look at two movie clips about secret places.

Watch "Searching for the Garden," a clip from *The Secret Garden*.

Q. Where was the girl trying to get to? (A garden.)

Q. What was she looking for? (A way into the garden.)

Q. Did she find a way into the garden? Who showed her? (A bird.)

Watch "Lucy Discovers Narnia," a clip from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Q. What did Lucy find? (A secret way to get to a secret place.)

Lucy walked into a wardrobe.

Q. What's a wardrobe? (A closet.)

Q. Do you remember the name of the place Lucy found as she walked through the wardrobe? (Narnia.)

Q. How did Lucy get to Narnia? (Through the closet.)

Even the wardrobe was hidden by the sheet. Everything was a secret!

Q. Do you know God has wonderful secrets? (Answers may vary.)

2. Experience the Story

15 minutes

Summing It Up: *You are very important to Jesus!*

Yes! God has a secret, a wonderful secret. And he tells us about this secret in the Bible.

Read Matthew 13:11

Students who are comfortable reading aloud may each read one colored verse or section until they finish the passage. Adapt for slower readers by assisting them and/or giving them shorter portions to read. Some students may feel more comfortable using a pointer while another student reads.

Matthew 13:11

Jesus replied, "You have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. It has not been given to outsiders."

Read Luke 8:17

"We're not keeping secrets; we're telling them. We're not hiding things; we're bringing everything out into the open."

Q. The secrets Jesus tells us are about what? (Heaven.)

Refer to Matthew 13:11.

There is a real place called heaven.



Teaching Note: Begin a page on the flip chart for the secrets that will be revealed week-to-week. At the top, write the verse mentioned earlier from Luke 8:17 (The Message): "We're not keeping secrets; we're telling them. We're not hiding things; we're bringing everything out into the open."

(Add the first secret:)

Heaven is a real place, and it is amazing!

Q. What do you know about heaven? (We go there after we die.)

Write the students' responses on the left side of the flip chart, but don't take too much time.

In the Bible, it tells us what heaven is like:

Refer to Revelation 21 and 22 and John 14 as you make your list for the students.

Write this on the flip chart.

- God lives with us (21:3).
- No more death (21:4).
- No more sadness (21:4).
- No more crying (21:4).

- No more pain (21:4).
- Everything will be new (21:5).
- It glows like diamonds (21:11).
- It has high walls around it with huge pearls as the gates. Each gate is a single pearl (21:21).
- The streets are made of gold (21:21).
- No need of the sun because the glow from God is all we need (21:23, 22:5).
- The gates are never shut (21:25).
- There are mansions (John 14:2).
- Jesus has been getting ready for us to come for 2,000 years! (John 14:2).

We read in Revelation 21:19 about the foundation of the city walls.

Q. Do you know what a foundation is? (It is under buildings.)

I looked up the definition of a foundation, and this is the summary of it:

A foundation is the lower portion of the building, usually located below ground level, which supports a super structure and the dirt around it.

A basement is the foundation of a house. Foundations are under the ground.

Q. Do you have a basement? (Answers vary.)

Q. What does your basement look like? (Answers vary.)

Revelation 21:19 tells us about heaven's foundation. There are twelve layers to heaven's foundation. Each layer is made up of a special jewel.

Show picture of heaven.

Now think about this.

Q. Is your basement the best part of your house? (No!)

I don't think this foundation is the best part of heaven either. But even the part that is under the ground and hidden in heaven is beautiful!

Q. So what do you think the parts of heaven will look like that aren't hidden in the ground? (Crazy shiny!)

And God wants us in on his secrets about this place called heaven! He wants us to lean forward and be curious about heaven, just like you leaned forward and were curious about my secret!

But God's secrets about heaven are amazing. It says in Luke 8:17:

"We're not keeping secrets; we're telling them. We're not hiding things; we're bringing everything out into the open."

3. What about Me?

10 minutes

Summing It Up: *If we believe in Jesus, we will go to this secret, special place called heaven.*

Just like there was a way to the garden and there was a way to get to Narnia, there is a way to get to heaven.

Q. How do you get into your house? (With a key.)

Show the key, the prop for this lesson.

We don't need a key to get into heaven, but we need something else.

Q. Do you know what that is? (Jesus!)

It says in Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in. I will eat with that person, and they will eat with me."

It also says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Jesus is the way we get into heaven. We have to walk with Jesus to get into heaven. But there's not a door in heaven. Remember when we talked about huge gates that were made from one single pearl? There's actually not just one gate, but twelve! There are twelve huge pearls that open into heaven!

Illustrate this by going outside of your classroom door with a student. The student cannot enter the door on his own but must enter with the teacher leading him or putting her arm around the student and walking with him. You must go through the door together. Be sure to connect this with Jesus opening the way for us to enter heaven.

Jesus is giving you an invitation to heaven: "Whoever believes in my name will live forever in heaven."

Q. What do you think about this? (Answers vary.)

Wait for students to respond.

Q. Do any of you believe in Jesus?

Wait for students to respond.

4. Journal Question

Write down something new this week in your student manual that you learned about Jesus. Jesus wants us to "imitate" or copy him. How can you "imitate" Jesus with what you've just learned?

5. Reminder Sheet

This lesson's reminder sheet is in the Student Manual also.



Dillon's World: "These are x-ray vision glasses and when you look through them, you can see heaven. You can see the love (heart), the light (sun), the throne, fountain, and columns."

6. Close in Prayer

Praying to God is talking to God. Just as you would talk to a friend, that is how you talk to God.

Dear God, thank you that you have shared with us your very special secret of heaven. Thank you that you have invited us to go to this special place and that Jesus has made the way for us to get there! Amen.

