

The Parable of the Sower

Grades
1-2

PARABLE

MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23

What is happening in this story?

This story takes place midway through Matthew and at a turning point in Jesus' ministry. The crowd includes people who are already following him, those trying to decide whether to follow, and those who are against Jesus entirely. This parable names all of that out loud in metaphorical fashion, forcing introspection for listeners, and revealing to everyone that Jesus is acutely aware of who is with him.

Why does this story matter for kids?

By preschool, and certainly beyond, kids have likely planted seeds, or at least have noticed how plants grow. They can picture a farmer tossing seed all around—explain that this is how planting used to be done—and can grasp that God tosses love around just as freely. Careful explanation can help kids understand how our hearts are like soil where God's love longs to take root, but that sometimes unhelpful things in the world get in the way. Even if "birds" or "thorns" block the growth of God's love in us one moment, Farmer God gives us sowing love.

Why this theme?

Parables can be confusing—just ask the disciples! However, they are meant to take ordinary objects—things we understand—and use them to describe concepts that might otherwise be difficult. Parables can be very useful in helping kids grasp the large, abstract concepts of faith.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Nature is everywhere around us, and kids will most likely be familiar with planting seeds, caring for plants, or watching something grow. Emphasize that the sower is like God, and the seeds thrown everywhere are the abundant love God gives to the whole world.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Pictures of kids doing an activity (2)
- Bowls (4)
- Craft pom-poms (1/2-in.)
- Index cards
- Spoon (1; flatware teaspoon)

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Provide two images of kids doing something together from a magazine or online source (playing in the park, putting on a puppet show, etc.). I wonder what these kids are doing. Invite kids to take turns telling a story about one of the pictures.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Share a story that you have told someone. **What are some of your favorite stories? Jesus told stories called parables and often used things in nature to teach people about God.** Invite kids to look out a window or close their eyes and imagine being outside. **Name some things you might see if we took a walk outside. Jesus told a parable about planting seeds to teach us about God's amazing love for everyone.**

Pray together: **God, thank you for helping us understand the great love you have for everyone in the whole world by telling parables about planting seeds. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and markers.

What are some things that grow? Seeds grow into plants, and they need certain things to make this happen. Point to the pictures on the leaflet and name

each one together. **Circle each picture that shows something a plant needs to grow** (water, sunshine, soil). **Why does a plant need each of these things to grow?** Allow kids time to respond. **In our Bible story, the person planting the seeds is called a sower. This sower throws seeds everywhere. I wonder if the seeds will get everything they need to grow.** Collect their leaflets until Respond.



Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Let's watch to find out why Ada is dressed like a scientist.

View Episode 3, "All Sown Up," on the Year Gold Spring PreK–Grade 2 DVD.

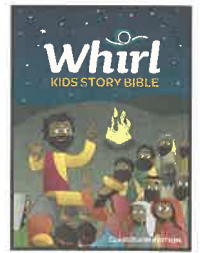
Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What is Ada doing?**
- **Where does she throw her seeds?**
- **What happens to the seeds?**
- **What message did Otto get from the parable about the sower, the person who planted the seeds?**
- **How would you explain God's love to someone who has never heard or read a Bible story?**



Open your Whirl Kids Story Bibles.

Let's find our story for today! Help kids find "The Parable of the Sower" on page 198. Before you read, invite kids to look for four different places someone might plant seeds.



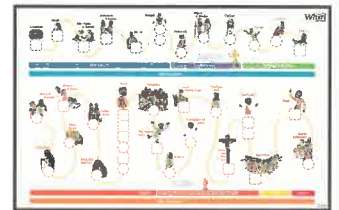
Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **Where did the sower fling the seeds?**
- **What happened to the seeds in good soil?**
- **How is the sower like God?**
- **Where do you see God's love?**
- **How can you give love to others?**

Gather near the Wall Chart to place today's sticker.

Point out the Testament (New), Bible section (Gospels), and character image (Jesus). **Today's Bible story is a parable Jesus told to help people learn about God's love for everyone. Let's add a sticker to remind us of what grows in good soil** (healthy plant). Point to the corresponding images of Jesus and the plant on page 199 in the Whirl Kids Story Bible.



Play together!

Before class, write the words *smooth path*, *rocky ground*, *thorns*, and *good soil* on index cards. Put four plastic bowls in different locations in the room with an index card by each. Place pom-poms and a spoon on a table. **Let's act out the story by being sowers who plant seeds in different places.** Point to each of the bowls. **These will be the smooth path, rocky ground, thorns, and good soil.** Point to the pom-poms on the table. **We will use these for seeds. Hold a spoon in one hand and use it to pick up some pom-poms.** Have all kids say, "A sower went out to sow some seeds." **Walk to one of the bowls and drop your seeds in it.** Choose a kid to start. **If any pom-poms fall off your spoon, a friend will help you pick them up.** Each time pom-poms are dropped in a bowl, everyone will say "We are helping to plant God's love everywhere." Kids take turns until all pom-poms have been put in the bowls. **God's love is everywhere and for everyone!**

BIBLE BIT

In the Gospels Jesus used parables that were simple, memorable stories related to something people were familiar with, such as mustard seeds or pearls.

WATCH IT AGAIN

Ask kids to pay attention to Ada's science experiment. **Why does Ada think Jesus had a green thumb?**

OUR CHURCH

Decorate clay pots and plant flower seeds in them. When sprouts begin to show, give the plants to older members of your church family.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets, glue sticks, and scissors.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square. Keep the smaller panel nearby.

1. **Where did the sower throw seeds in our Bible story?** Point to the four places on the leaflet and name each one together (path, rocky ground, thorns, good soil).
2. **We are going to glue a picture in each place that shows what happened to the seeds planted there.**
3. Direct kids to look at the pictures at the top of the panel. **Cut out the four small pictures.**
4. After all kids have cut their pictures out, ask them to hold up the picture of the bird.
5. **Where did the bird find some seeds to eat?** (smooth path) Glue the picture of the bird on the smooth path.
6. **Now choose another picture, decide where it goes, and glue it there.** Assist as needed so that each picture is put in the correct place.
7. **What happened to the seeds that landed on the rocky ground? In thorns? In good soil?**
8. **The sower who flung seeds far and wide is like God.**
9. Say together, **“God’s love is everywhere!”**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Jesus told a parable about a sower planting seeds to teach about God’s love. The sower flung seeds on a smooth path, on rocky ground, in thorns, and in good soil. The sower is like God, who gives love to the whole world. Where do you see God’s love? Take time to hear kids’ responses.

Pass out leaflet panels.

Look out a window at church or at home. What do you see? Check the box when you see anything that is the same as one of these pictures (flower, water, squirrel, tree). Jesus told parables about things in nature. Draw two other nature items that could be used to teach like a parable.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.