

The Parable of the Sower

PreK-
K

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

As kids learn about the seeds that are planted in bad types of soil, be careful they don't take it to mean bad types of people. A bad choice of behavior is not the same as being a bad person. God's love makes our hearts fertile soil.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Construction paper (2 colors; precut into 3½-in. circles and 2½-in. hearts; 1 heart and 1 circle per kid)
- Clear tape
- Crayons

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Seeds (pumpkin and sunflower)
- Chenille stems

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Set out two colors of construction paper and a mixture of sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Have kids sort the pumpkin seeds onto one color of paper and the sunflower seeds onto the other. **Seeds grow into plants. How tall do you think these seeds could grow if planted?**

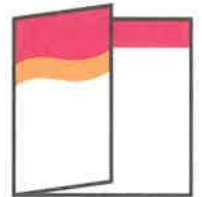
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

There are lots of different types of stories—fairy tales, chapter stories, family stories, and more. **What’s your favorite kind of story? Jesus told stories called *parables*. A parable is a special kind of story to teach people about God. We’re going to learn a parable today. This parable teaches about being the kind of people who hear and follow God’s ways. Let’s get our ears ready to hear the story.** Have kids rub their ears, then cup their ears as if listening.

Pray together: **Dear God, our ears are ready to hear your word today. Thank you for parables that teach us about your love. Help us listen for what you want to teach us. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and crayons.

Today we see pictures of how a seed grows into a sunflower. **But the pictures are out of order. Which picture goes first? Where are seeds planted? What comes next? After the seeds are planted and watered, what happens? Last, the seedlings turn into beautiful sunflowers.** Have kids write a numeral 1 near the picture of the soil and write a numeral 2. **What comes next?** Have kids find the picture of the seeds and write a numeral 2. **After the seeds are planted and watered, what happens?** Have kids write a numeral 3 by the picture of the seedlings. **Last, the seedlings turn into beautiful sunflowers.** Have kids write a numeral 4 by the picture of the sunflowers. Invite kids to point to the pictures, saying together, **“One, two, three, four.”** Collect their leaflets until Respond.



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

In the video today, one of the Whirl kids learns that she didn’t understand the real reason Jesus told his followers parables. As you watch, listen for how she discovers why Jesus taught in parables.

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

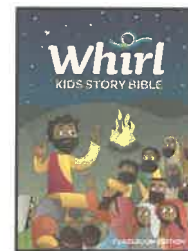
Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What kind of experiment is Ada doing?**
- **Where did the seeds grow the best?**
- **Where have you planted seeds? What happened to them?**
- **Who tells Ada what Jesus’ parables are really about?**
- **Why do you think Jesus told parables?**



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 the seeds and plants in Jesus' parable.



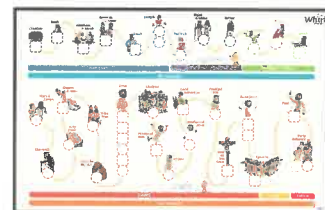
Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **What was Jesus' parable about?**
- **In Jesus' story, where did the sower throw the seeds?**
- **What kind of seeds or plants have you planted?**
- **Fill in the blank: Jesus told the people that the seeds are like God's _____.**
- **Who tells you about God's love?**

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

Point out the Testament (New) and character image (Jesus). **Today's Bible story told a kind of story called a *parable* about seeds planted in different types of soil. Let's add a sticker to remind us of the seeds that fell on the 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!

Let's pretend to be seeds planted by the sower! At each transition of the story, have kids gather together, then scatter like the seeds thrown by the sower. Invite kids to crouch down like seeds after they've scattered. **The first seeds in Jesus' parable fell on the path and were gobbled up by birds.** Have kids pretend to be carried off by birds. **The next seeds fell on rocks, and the plants became burned by the sun.** Have kids pretend to grow, but stop when the sun comes out. **The next seeds fell among weeds.** Have kids begin to grow, but stop when the weeds stop them. **The last seeds fell on good soil and grew big and strong.** Have kids grow into big and strong plants. **God scatters love everywhere.**

BIBLE BIT

Jesus taught this parable from a boat, when crowds gathered at the lakeside where he was sitting. The water would have acted as a natural amplifier for Jesus' voice.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, pause the video when Ada is confused about the meaning of Jesus' parable, and have the kids explain it to her.

OUR CHURCH

Ask the kids what part of your church's weekly gathering catches their attention. Why? That's good soil! Explain how that is part of the way that God sows love in our hearts.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets, chenille stems, construction paper circles and hearts, and clear tape.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

- 1. Find the seed on your leaflet. Seeds grow into all sorts of plants, like vegetables, trees, and flowers.**
- 2. Let's make flowers to grow from the seed on your leaflet.** Show kids how to make a paper flower. First poke one construction paper circle onto the chenille stem. Then poke one construction paper heart onto the same chenille stem. Help kids who need assistance threading the paper onto the stems.
- 3. Your flowers have heart centers. The hearts remind us of God's love.**
4. Help kids tape the bottom of the chenille stem to the seed on the leaflet. To secure the stem, use two pieces of tape in an X-shape approximately 2 inches from the end of the stem.
- 5. What makes plants grow?** Have kids pretend to water their flowers.
- 6. What makes our hearts grow?** Have kids hug themselves like they're getting a hug from God.
- 7. It's time to make our flowers grow!** Show kids how to bend the stem by holding the taped end to the leaflet and bending the stem so it grows upward. The flower will be perpendicular to the leaflet.
- 8. Seeds planted in good soil grow into beautiful things. When God's love is planted in our hearts, it grows too.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Today we learned a special kind of story called a *parable*. Jesus told parables to his followers. In this parable, a sower threw seeds everywhere. God's love is like the seeds. It is everywhere! You can share God's love too. Where can you throw some of God's love seeds today? Take time to hear kids' responses.

Pass out leaflet panels, seeds, and clear tape.

As Jesus taught the people, he was planting God's love in their hearts. Invite kids to tape pumpkin and sunflower seeds to the people in the picture. **God's love is like the seeds in the parable. It's everywhere!**

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.