

The Parable of the Sower

Grades
3-4

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

Parables rely heavily on metaphor. This may be a somewhat new concept to third and fourth graders, although they are likely familiar with stories that use metaphor. Be patient if kids need time to grasp this lesson.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- White paper
- Markers
- Pens

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Flower sticky notes
- Seeds (various kinds)

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Set out markers, paper, and a variety of seeds. Invite kids to choose a seed and draw what they guess it might grow into.

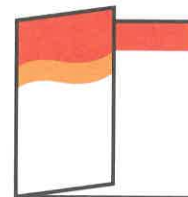
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

What is your favorite way to learn? How do you go about discovering new things? Let a few kids share. Some people learn best by seeing, some by hearing, some by doing. **We're all different people—it makes sense that we might learn things differently or respond differently to new ideas. Today we're talking about parables. A parable is a simple story that helps explain a more complicated idea or truth. Jesus used everyday objects and situations to help people understand God and how we should live our lives.**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for all of the parables Jesus told. Help us to understand Jesus' stories and use their messages to share your love with the world. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pens.

What makes a good story? On the open book on your leaflet, write all the elements of a story that you can think of. Kids this age may not have the technical language down, but they may name elements such as a beginning, end, plot, characters, and so forth. **How can you tell when you're hearing a good story? What holds your interest? When have you *learned* something from a story? It's usually easier to remember a story than a list of ideas. That's why Jesus used parables to teach people.**



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

In today's video, Gabe is preparing a presentation of the parable of the sower. In this parable, a sower is someone who plants, or sows, seeds. It's spelled s-o-w-e-r. It's not a person who sews fabric. That kind of sewer is spelled s-e-w-e-r!

View Episode 3, "Seeds to Heed," on the Year Gold Spring Grades 3–6 DVD.

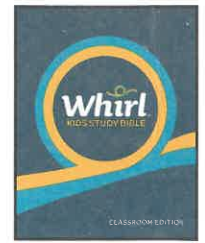
Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What did Gabe get wrong about the parable of the sower?**
- **Why, according to Ruby, did Jesus use a story about seeds to help his listeners understand more about God?**
- **How did Ruby make sense—in a modern way—out of the story that Gabe was trying to tell?**
- **If you were going to try to get a message out to a bunch of people, how would you go about it?**
- **Where did Gabe eventually find the real meaning of the parable?**



Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is from the book of Matthew. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. Invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1156.



The video gave us a little introduction to the parable of the sower. In this story, Jesus uses the example of planting seeds to explain how different people may hear and respond to the good news of God's love. As we read, listen to how he describes people hearing him.

Help kids find Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 and read it in this creative way together: **Let's sit in a circle. We'll go around the circle reading one verse each. When it's your turn to read, turn to the person on your left and read directly to them—like you're sharing a parable with just that person.**

Invite kids to check out what Ruby says about Matthew 13:4-8.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **The ground in this story represents different types of people who hear God's word. What are the different kinds of ground described in the parable?**
- **What does the seed represent in this story? (God's word.)**
- **What is supposed to happen when a seed is placed in the ground? Why does that sometimes not happen?**
- **When you hear a story, do you usually get the meaning the first time? Why do we sometimes need to hear things again to understand the meaning?**
- **What questions do you have about this parable?**

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Parable*. Parables are stories Jesus told to help us learn about God. Let's draw a speech bubble around the box by *Parable*. Then let's decide on a common line in stories, such as "Once upon a time," and write that line in the bubble.



BIBLE BIT

After sharing a parable, Jesus sometimes would explain the parable to listeners. In verses 18-23 he explains the parable of the sower.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, try to identify what kinds of hearers Ruby describes while talking about social media.

OUR CHURCH

Do a little landscaping! Find out if there's a flowerbed or other area of the church grounds where your group can plant some seeds to watch things grow.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out flower sticky notes and pens.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **God created each of us, and God places seeds in our hearts that make us who we are. You might be great at basketball or awesome at baking cookies. You might be a good listener or the class clown. All of these are seeds from God, and you can nurture and share those seeds with others.**
2. **On flower sticky notes, write down things that are unique about who you are—activities you do well in and personality traits that make you special. Place the sticky notes on the good soil on your leaflet.** Give kids time to write. Encourage each kid to share one or two of their ideas with the group.
3. **How can you nurture those seeds and help them grow?** Help kids think of ways they could nurture those talents, gifts, abilities, and personality characteristics by sharing them with others.
4. **How might you share your seeds with others in our class? If you're a good listener, you could offer to listen to someone's problem. If you're great at making others laugh, you could cheer up someone who is sad.** Give kids time to brainstorm ideas.
5. **On two of the flower sticky notes, add a way you could share that seed with someone in our class. Then give those sticky notes away.** Make sure that all kids receive at least one new sticky note for their leaflet.
6. **We can nurture the seeds God gives us by sharing our gifts with others.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

What new thing did you learn about parables today? Take time to hear kids' responses. **Today's parable was about listening to God's word. All of Jesus' parables are great for learning truth about God and ourselves. It's important to share that truth with others!**

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out markers.

Write something you learned today on the light blue outside quarters of the panel, then fold it light blue into an airplane and toss it toward the door! All our stories go different places! Where can you share yours?

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.