



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Matthew 13:1-23

1 Corinthians 3:4-9

Session Theme:

Adversity

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Planting and Sowing

Bring a packet of seeds to class with you, or better yet, several different packets with seeds of different sizes. Pour out the different seeds and ask kids how they would suggest planting each type.

Would they dig a little hole, or a furrow, to plant them? Would they just throw them and scatter them over a field? What do they think would work best to help the seeds grow? Has anyone planted a garden before?

In today's lesson, Jesus tells a parable about a farmer who scatters seeds as he plants them. The seeds fall on all sorts of different ground. Why did Jesus tell this story? What could seeds possibly have to do with faith? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Gracious Lord, open our hearts so we may hear and believe your Word. Make us like the good soil, where faith can grow and bear good fruit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Lord, Let My Heart be Good Soil" (hymn)
- "We Plow the Fields and Scatter" (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Parables

Wherever Jesus went, crowds would follow. Jesus taught the people as they gathered, often using simple picture-stories called parables. Jesus used simple, everyday examples to explain to his disciples the secrets of the Kingdom of God.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level:

Children: Read aloud the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read aloud Scripture from the Bible

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Pre-Readers: Coloring Page and Activity

Elementary: Children's Pages (Worksheet and Drama)

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Pre-Readers: Teacher leads a simple prayer

Children: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Matthew 13:1-23

1. What is a "sower"? What does it mean to "sow" seeds? According to verses 18-23, what deeper meaning does the metaphor of sowing seeds represent in our lives? Who does God get to sow his seeds?

A sower is someone who plants seeds. To sow (pronounced like the word "so") refers to planting them in the soil. In this parable, the method of planting seeds was to scatter them over the ground rather than carefully planting each seed in the soil. This "broad-cast" method of sowing seeds represents the preaching and teaching of God's Word to a wide audience. God uses all those who share the gospel with others to sow the seed of his Word.

2. In the real world, when people hear God's Word what are the different kind of results that Jesus says we can expect? List the four examples he gives:
 - a. Some will hear the gospel and reject it outright, without ever believing in Jesus.
 - b. Some will hear the gospel and eagerly believe it, but they never really study the Word, so they are easily discouraged when persecution comes.
 - c. Some will hear the gospel and believe, but they neglect the study of the Word and gathering for worship, so the cares of their lives overtake them and they let their faith die.
 - d. Some will hear the gospel and believe, and they will cling to it with all their strength. They will study the Word and gather with the Church in worship, so their faith will bear fruit.
3. What is a "parable"? Why do you think Jesus used parables to teach and answer people's questions? What were Jesus' followers given that the crowds were not (v. 11)?

A parable is a story or an illustration which uses something the hearer understands to help explain the nature of God and his kingdom. Jesus used parables for two reasons; sometimes to make it easier for his hearers to understand what he was teaching, and sometimes make it more difficult for them. However, even when Jesus spoke parables hid his meaning from the crowd, He explained the parables to His disciples in private. "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known" (Luke 12:2).

4. Martin Luther wrote: "God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live a godly life now and in eternity." In what way are we already part of God's Kingdom by faith in his Word?

The "Kingdom of God" is Jesus' way of talking about the "rulership" of God in our lives through faith. By faith our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the down payment of our entrance into the kingdom of God. We have eternal life through faith; as Jesus says, "and this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

5. What does Jesus tell his disciples in verses 16-17? Do you count yourself fortunate to be able to hear and study the Word of God?

Jesus tells his disciples that they are blessed to see and hear him, and to be given the understanding of what he said, for many had longed for his day. We too are very fortunate (or perhaps more accurately, blessed), to hear and study the Word of God. There are many in the world who have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ and many who reject the opportunity to hear it when they are offered it.

6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:4-9. If the growth referred to here is growth in *faith*, how does Jesus' parable show that God is the true giver of faith?

Though God calls us to sow his Word, Jesus' parable shows that we are not the ones who determine the outcome. We are not the ones who bring bring the Word to fruition in faith. In Corinth, Paul planted the seeds of faith by bringing the gospel to them; Apollos watered their faith by further teaching after their church had been established. But it was God who was the one that created their faith and made it grow.

7. In what ways does God use us as his "tools" to plant and water the seed of his Word? Do we always know what positive effect our faith may have on the faith of others? What is God's promise to us in all this?

Every opportunity we have to share the Word of God and his love with others is either planting new seeds or watering the seeds others have planted. We might never know the effect that our faith has had on the faith of others (although we can pray that in heaven we will meet all those whom we served in this way). God's promise in all of this is that he is the one who is working to create faith and make it grow; we do not have to worry about our own abilities.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

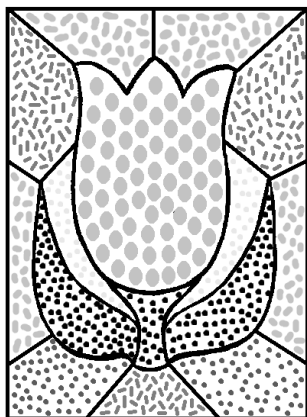
Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: "Seed Mosaic" Pictures

(for all children)

Materials Needed:

- Small bowls
- Plastic spoons
- Seeds and beans of different colors (sunflower seeds, popcorn, rice, red lentils, green and yellow split peas, dried black beans)
- Small card stock squares or rectangles.
- Pencils, permanent markers
- Tacky glue



Instructions:

Give each person a card stock square or rectangle, a pencil, a permanent marker, and access to tacky glue. Next, set out small bowls and fill each one with a different kinds of seeds or dried beans. Place a spoon in each bowl so kids can easily scoop out seeds/beans.

Invite kids to draw a pattern on their card stock in pencil. At the center can be an outline of a flower, plant, or tree. Kids can draw lines going out from the central image, to create a stained glass design. Make sure the central picture is big enough to fill with seeds so the picture can emerge. The lines surrounding the picture will be like the panels of glass in the stained glass window. Trace over this with permanent marker.

Fill the design with tacky glue; then press seeds inside the design. Glue may need to be reapplied periodically. When the mosaic is filled, let it air dry, flat.

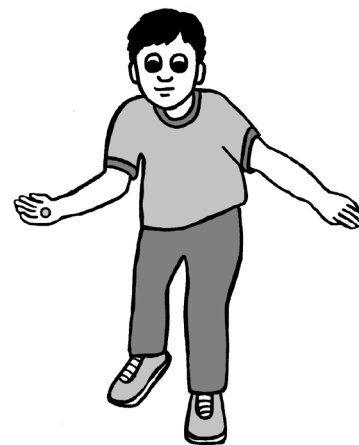
The farmer in today's story scattered seeds far and wide. When they landed in good soil, they were able to grow into something useful and beautiful, like the plant or flower or tree you made in your mosaic. Good soil grows good things. Lord, let our hearts be good soil!

Activity 2: "Scatter the Seeds" Activity

(for all children)

Materials Needed:

- Pennies or other small, weighted objects
- 6 Jars or heavy cups
- Masking tape
- White board and marker (optional)
- Timer (optional)



Instructions:

Using masking tape, make a starting line at one end of the classroom. Set 3 jars about two feet away from the starting line; 2 jars three feet away; and 1 jar four feet away. (If your class is younger, the jars could be closer to the starting line.) The farthest jar is the thorny ground, and so on.

Invite the class to line up behind the starting line. Give the first person in line 6 pennies. Explain that these are "seeds" that need to be "planted." Just like the farmer in the story, they will be planting these seeds by tossing them. The object is to see if they can toss one penny in each jar.

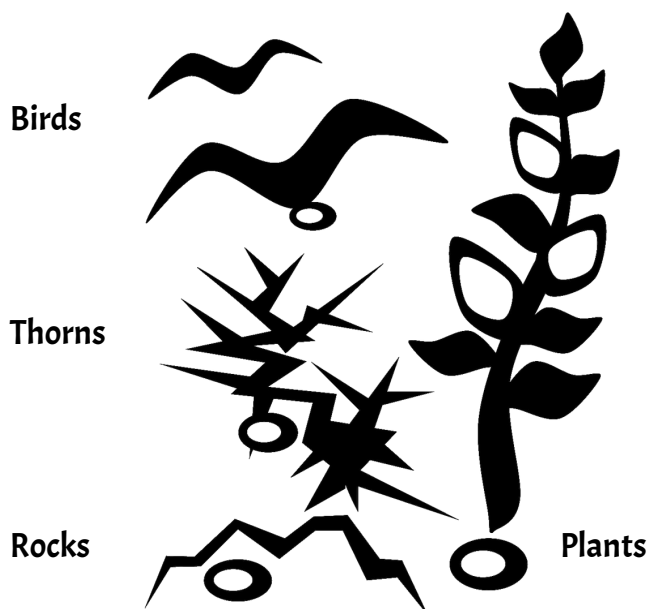
Different ways to play:

- To emphasize teamwork, challenge the class to work together and "plant" a certain amount of "seeds." Add up the total amount of pennies they get in the jars as a class. If they are able to reach the number you predicted within a certain amount of time (or after each person has had a turn), they "beat the game."
- To play more competitively, write each student's name on the board and keep track of how many pennies each person lands in a jar. Whoever gets the most, wins the game. If there is a tie, those players go head-to-head in a round two.

It wasn't easy to get these pennies into the jars, and it would have been challenging for the farmer to toss all his seeds where he wanted them to go as well. The seeds are like God's Word. We can share it with everyone. Some won't listen or care; but others will receive it well and believe!

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:



Reflection for the Week Ahead

The Parable of the Seeds and Soils is one that may sound very simple at first hearing. Yet beneath it is a deeper truth: God generously scatters his Word in much the same way as the farmer scatters seed. Some receive it, others don't. At times even our own hearts are like rocky soil or hot, barren land. Nothing can grow there.

What then? Is that the end of the story? The good news is that the farmer continues to plant. God continues to reach out to us too.

Sometimes, after a season of barrenness, adversity actually works like a plow in our lives. How? A plow knocks down the stubble and tears opens the soil. It isn't a comfortable experience, but it prepares the soil for growth. Our hearts can be softened in much the same way. Then, like an unexpected gift, God's Word lands and begins to bear fruit.

Discuss the following this week: Tell about a time when hardship opened your heart to faith. How did that happen?

Map Answers (from the youth pages)



The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer giving thanks to God for all the people in your life who care for you. Ask God to help you be aware of someone who could use a friend, so you can reach out and make a difference.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.

A: _____

D: _____

T: _____

R: _____

C: _____