

## Parable of the Sower

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**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

**MAIN POINT:** Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.

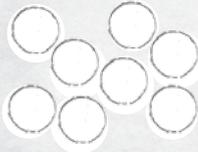
**KEY PASSAGE:** Mark 6:34

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.

**SMALL GROUP OPENING**

(15–20 MINUTES)

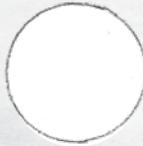
**PAGE 10**



**LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY**

(10–15 MINUTES)

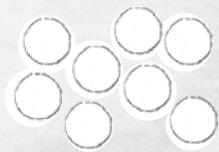
**PAGE 12**



**SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES**

(20–25 MINUTES)

**PAGE 14**



## Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Gospels record dozens of Jesus' parables. A parable is a story Jesus told to help people understand the kingdom of God. Each parable taught a lesson and revealed secrets of God's kingdom for those who would understand. (See Matt. 13:10-13.)

The parable of the sower would have resonated with those listening because they would have been familiar with the practice of sowing or planting seed. But the parable had a deeper meaning. It contained a lesson about God's Word and the responses of those who hear it.

In the parable, a sower's seeds fell in four different places.

Some of the seeds fell along the path, where they were eaten by birds. Other seeds fell on rocky ground. Those seeds had no roots, so they withered in the sun. Other seeds fell among thorns, and they were choked out. Other seeds fell on good soil, and they produced a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was planted.

After Jesus told the parable, He explained it to His disciples. The soil represents people's hearts, and the seed is the word about God's kingdom. The person whose heart is like the hard soil hears the good news about God, but he does not understand it or he rejects it. The person whose heart is like the rocky soil is quick to receive the truth, but when life gets hard, he falls away. The person whose heart is like the thorny soil cares more about the things of the world than the good news about God, and the seed cannot grow. The person whose heart is like the good soil hears the good news about God and receives it. He bears fruit, more than what was planted. In the life of a believer, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is evident.

Still today, people respond to the gospel in various ways. As you prepare to teach the parable of the sower, pray for the preschoolers you lead. Pray that God will give them receptive hearts so that they will hear, understand, and be changed by the good news about Jesus.



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training made simple

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# The BIBLE STORY

## Bible Storytelling Tips

## Parable of the Sower

*Matthew 13:1-9,18-23*

• **Act it out:** Lead children to act out being a healthy plant, starting off as a small seed (curled up) and growing into a large plant (stretched up tall on tippy toes with arms and fingers spread wide).

• **Use visuals:**

Assemble four bins to represent the four types of soil.

*Hard soil:* Line the bottom of the bin with brown paper.

*Rocky soil:* Place rocks along the bottom of the bin and scatter some potting soil between them.

*Thorny soil:* Gather vines to fill the bin. If you use vines with thorns, be sure to clip off the sharp points for safety.

*Good soil:* Fill the bottom of the bin with a good layer of potting soil. Scatter seeds in each bin as you come to that type of soil in the Bible story.

God sent Jesus to earth to save people from their sin. Jesus also came to teach people about God and His kingdom. Jesus traveled from town to town and told people the good news about God's kingdom. Crowds of people came to listen to Him.

One day, Jesus was sitting by the sea. Lots of people came to hear Jesus, so He sat in a boat to teach. The people listened from the shore. **Jesus told a story, or parable, to teach the people about sharing the good news about God with others.**

**Jesus said, "Think about this story. A farmer went out to plant seeds in the ground. He tossed the seeds back and forth. Some of the seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and ate up the seeds. Those seeds did not grow. Other seeds fell on rocky ground. The seeds sprouted quickly, but they did not have any roots because the soil was shallow. When the sun came out, the plants dried up.**

**"Other seeds fell among the thorns. The thorns grew and kept the seeds from growing. But some of the seeds fell on good ground. Those seeds grew up strong and healthy. These plants made grain, much more than what was planted!"**

**Then Jesus told His friends what the story about the seeds really meant. Jesus said, "Remember the seeds that fell on the path? Some people hear what is true about God's kingdom, but they do not understand. God's enemy takes the truth they heard away from them.**

**"Remember the seeds that fell on the rocky ground?"**

Some people hear what is true about God’s kingdom and they are happy. But when hard times come, they do not believe.

“Remember the seeds that fell among the thorns?

Some people hear what is true about God’s kingdom, but they worry about life on earth and they love money more than God.

“But some people hear what is true about God’s kingdom, and they understand it. They believe the truth, and it changes them. Those people are like the seeds that fell on good ground.”

*Christ Connection: Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don’t understand Jesus or they think they are happy without Him. People who hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe in Him will be blessed.*



**WANT TO  
DISCOVER  
GOD’S WORD?  
GET  
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that Jesus taught that not everyone who hears the gospel believes it. But anyone who does believe in the Lord Jesus will be saved. (Acts 16:31) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out [www.lifeway.com/devotionals](http://www.lifeway.com/devotionals).

# Small Group OPENING

**SESSION TITLE:** Parable of the Sower

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

**MAIN POINT:** Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Mark 6:34

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.

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## Welcome time

- “Kingdom Kid” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

## Activity page

- “Four Soils” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Guide preschoolers to count the total plants.

**SAY** • You can see that the most plants grew in the best ground. Plants cannot grow on a path, and plants cannot grow well in rocky soil or soil full of thorns. In today’s Bible story, Jesus told a story about sowing, or planting, seed.

## Tell stories in a “boat”



- painter’s or masking tape

Use tape to create the outline of a boat on the floor. Invite preschoolers to sit in the boat while you tell them a story. You may tell stories about your life as a child, what the world was like when you were a child, how you learned an important lesson, something you like to do and how you learned to do it, and so forth.

**SAY** • Our Bible stories for the next several weeks are about

stories that Jesus told. Jesus told stories to teach people about God and His kingdom. In today's Bible story, Jesus sat in a boat to tell a story while the people listened from the shore.

## Play a “seed” sowing game

Tear or cut paper into small pieces to make “seeds.” Give each child a handful of seeds. Explain that when you call “Scatter!” preschoolers should “sow” the seeds by tossing them back and forth on the floor. When you call out “Gather!” preschoolers should pick up all the seeds. Be sure to finish the game on “Gather.”

**SAY** • In today's Bible story, Jesus told a story about a farmer who went out to plant seeds in the ground. He tossed the seeds back and forth. Some seeds fell on good soil and grew, but others did not. Listen closely to today's Bible story to hear what the story about the seeds really meant.



- paper
- scissors (optional)

## Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to play out tossing seeds back and forth as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

# Large Group LEADER

**SESSION TITLE:** Parable of the Sower

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## Introduce the Bible story

• seeds

Display seeds for preschoolers to examine.

**SAY** • In today's Bible story, Jesus told a *parable*, or a story, to help people understand what God's kingdom is like. Jesus' story is about seeds and soil. Listen to hear what happened to the seeds in the Bible story.

## Watch or tell the Bible story

• Bible  
• bookmark  
• "Parable of the Sower" video  
• Bible Story Picture Poster

Place a bookmark at Matthew 13 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

**SAY** • There is no book greater than the Bible because the Bible is the only book that has God's very own words in it! Today's Bible story is from the Book of Mark.

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

## Talk about the Bible story

• Main Point Poster  
• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

**SAY** • **Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.** Some people just do not understand how much Jesus loves them. Other people believe, but then when times are hard, they stop trusting Jesus. Some people want things in the world more than

they want Jesus. But some people believe the truth about Jesus and follow Him. Those are the people we want to be!

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. What do we call a story that Jesus used to teach people about God's kingdom? (*a parable*)
2. How many types of soil did Jesus talk about? (*four*)
3. Who did Jesus tell what the story about the seeds really meant? (*Jesus' friends*)
4. What did the seeds in the story represent? (*the good news about God's kingdom*)
5. What did the soils in the story represent? (*people's hearts*)

## Learn the big picture question

**SAY** • Our big picture question is, *Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.* Life in God's kingdom is different than life on earth. Jesus used stories about things on earth that we already know about to help us understand things about His kingdom that we do not know about.

• Big Picture Question Poster

## Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Mark 6:34. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, "Huge, Huge Crowd."

• Key Passage Poster  
• "Huge, Huge Crowd" song

**SAY** • Our key passage tells us that Jesus saw all the people and cared about them. He wanted to help them, so He taught them about God and God's kingdom.

## Transition to small groups

# Small Group ACTIVITIES

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## Tell the good news

Play a game of “Telephone.” Lead preschoolers to sit on the floor in a circle. Whisper some good news such as “Jesus loves you,” “Jesus rescues people from sin,” or “God sent Jesus to save us” to a preschooler. That preschooler must whisper the good news to the child next to him, and she will whisper the good news she heard to the child next to her. Continue passing along the good news until the last child shares the message, which will most likely not be exactly what you said. Tell preschoolers the good news you shared. Then choose another preschooler to whisper good news to and play again.

**SAY** • I whispered good news to our friends, but you may not have understood what your friend said to you. Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don’t understand Jesus, or they think they are happy without Him. **Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him**, but people who hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe in Him will be blessed.

- plastic tub
- bird seed
- people figures
- plastic garden tools
- Allergy Alert download

## Dig in seeds

Fill a plastic tub with a several inches of bird seed. Hide

plastic people figures among the seeds. Provide plastic garden tools for preschoolers to dig for the people.

**SAY** • The parable Jesus told about seeds and soil was really about people and how they respond to the truth about God’s kingdom. **Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.** Some people don’t understand Jesus, or they think they are happy without Him. People who hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe in Him will be blessed.

## Look at books about farming or gardening

Set out books about farming or gardening for preschoolers to browse. Using books intended for adults is fine as long as there are plenty of pictures to engage a preschooler’s interest. Consider checking out books from your local library if you do not have any on hand.

**SAY** • Jesus told a story, or parable, about a farmer scattering seeds to teach about sharing the good news about God with others. **Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.** Some people don’t understand Jesus, or they think they are happy without Him. People who hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe in Him will be blessed.

## Plant seeds

Before the session, cut cardboard tubes into 2½-inch lengths. Cut four equally spaced ½-inch slits on one end of the tube. Fold the flaps over one at a time to close the end. Make one for each preschooler.

Cover a table. Place some potting soil in a bowl. Invite

• books about farming or gardening

• plastic tablecloth  
• cardboard tubes  
• scissors (adult use)  
• potting soil  
• seeds  
• bowl  
• plastic spoons  
• craft sticks  
• spray bottle

Tip: Let parents know these pots can be planted directly in the ground.

a preschooler to spoon potting soil into his tube and use a craft stick to plant his seed according to the package directions. Invite him to use a spray bottle of water to gently water his seed.

**SAY** • We planted our seeds in good soil so they will grow into healthy plants. In the parable Jesus told, the people who hear what is true about God’s kingdom and believe it are like the seeds that fell on good ground. **Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.** People who hear the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and believe in Him will be blessed.

## Make a mobile

- “Four Soils” printable
- heavyweight paper
- markers or crayons
- blunt-tipped scissors
- yarn
- hole punch
- construction paper
- adhesive dots or liquid glue
- seeds
- paper towel tubes

Print a copy of the “Four Soils” printable on heavyweight paper for each preschooler. Invite her to color the images and cut them out. Review what the four soils represent as preschoolers work. Tie a length of yarn to each image by punching a hole through the top. Write the main point on a piece of construction paper and use it to cover a paper towel tube. Invite the preschooler to use adhesive dots to decorate the tube with seeds. Hang each image from the paper towel tube by tying the yarn around the tube. (Older preschoolers who can tie knots may do this. Assist as needed.) Then run yarn through the length of the paper towel tube. Tie the ends together to form a hanging string.

**SAY** • The four soils remind us of four kinds of hearts.

**Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him.** Some people don’t understand Jesus or they think they are happy without Him. Let’s ask Jesus to give us hearts like the good soil. We want to understand the good news about Jesus, believe it, and let it change us.

## Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Guide preschoolers to make chia seed “pudding” for snack. Give each child  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of chocolate milk. Then scoop  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of chia seeds in a preschoolers cup. Show her how to gently stir with a plastic spoon and watch the mixture thicken as the chia seeds absorb the milk. Remind preschoolers that **Jesus taught that not all people will believe in Him**. But people who hear what is true about God’s kingdom and believe it are like the seeds in the story that fell on good ground.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

## Transition

When a child finishes his snack, guide him to throw away any trash. He may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of four people. Remind preschoolers that the four soils in the story are like different people’s hearts. Pray for the children.

**SAY** • God, give us hearts to hear the gospel—the good news about Your Son—and to believe in Him. Help us to share the good news about Jesus with others too. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers