

The Parable of the Sower

Background Information

Jesus taught about the most important things in the world! Jesus talked about God's love, himself, eternal life, God's word, prayer and even you and me.

Jesus often taught in stories called parables. A parable is a story that teaches a lesson by comparing things. When Jesus taught, he often used stories about familiar things. These stories helped Jesus' listeners understand his message about God.

Jesus used this method of teaching because

- It gave vivid, memorial expression to his teachings
- It led those who heard to reflect on his words and bear responsibility for their decision to accept or oppose his claim
- It probably reduced specific grounds for contention by hostile listeners

The parable of the sower talks about hearing and obeying God's word.

To plant their crops, farmers in Jesus' time took handfuls of seed. Then they tossed it out on the ground. Some of the seed fell on ground the farmer prepared. But some fell on rocky places. Jesus used this familiar event to warn everyone who heard him. He told them they must not let their hearts be stubborn when they hear God's word. We need to give God's word thought, when faced with difficulty we turn to God and we're strong. We should have courage and not lose faith. We should not be lured by worldly pleasures (thistles). We who hear God's word must listen carefully. Then what God says can grow in our lives.

Nothing in Jesus' teachings is quite as literal as The Parable of the Sower. It has no deep secrets and its meaning was/is plain as day. The parable is an extremely good story & very visual. Memorization will be a breeze.

Discussion-wise, it would be easy to slip into "things on your schedule are choking off TIME SPENT at church." But that would be mistaking the larger **PRIMARY/ORIGINAL point of the parable: Why did some people follow Jesus, and others reject him?**

- WHY is some people's faith stronger than others?
- Why some kids like church and others don't?
- Why some believe in God and others say they do but don't act like it at school?

These are important questions on the minds of many younger people. The soils analogy is an excellent "explainer" even to a modern audience, but with older students you might also explore re-writing the "soils" into literal surfaces in their own lives which don't

nurture a Godly seed in you, such as, peer pressure, lack of time, and lack of seriousness/gravitas (a modern disease among many people young and old).

For some of your kids, this parable can be an affirmation and strengthening of their sense of faith. It can help them appreciate the things that have helped them be more receptive to God's word. To others, it can be an assessment of how BETTER to prepare. What "chokes off" or carries off a person's faith is a good discussion. Be concrete.

What is "the seed?" It is God's message of forgiveness/salvation/love --a relatively small set of words that can change your life once they grow inside you. Don't assume your kids will know what you mean if you say "word = seed." Spend time talking about WHAT grows inside us --this knowledge of God's great things, which he has done for us.

Caveat: Young children may have trouble with the literal meaning of this parable. They won't be able to simply understand the verbal instruction that "you are like soil." They will need to ACT OUT being the soil, plants, etc. in order to "SEE-ment" themselves in the story. They will need concrete suggestions for how to be a better listener/follower of Christ.

Older students, particularly pre-teens and teens, will be able to help you EXTEND the ANALOGY of soils and seeds. For example, when the plant grows, the sower returns to harvest more seed from particularly good plants. Strong plant roots can break up hard soil and nourish poor soil. The "AGRI-ANGLES" on this will be fun to discuss and can provide a nice SEGUE into "other problem soils" in their life that resist God's message and stunt their spiritual growth.