

JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES

Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8



Jesus traveled from town to town, telling people the good news about God's kingdom. Everywhere He went, crowds gathered to listen. One day, Jesus was sitting by the Sea of Galilee. So many people gathered around Him that He got into a boat, sat down, and taught while the crowd stood on the shore. Jesus often taught using parables—short stories with a special meaning—to help people understand what God's kingdom is like. This time, He told a story about a man planting seeds.

"Listen!" Jesus began. "A sower went out to plant seeds in his field. As he scattered them, some seeds fell on a hard path. Birds swooped down and ate the seeds. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where there wasn't much dirt. They sprouted quickly, but the soil was too shallow for roots to grow. When the sun got hot, the plants dried up and died.

"Some seeds fell among thorny ground. The thorns grew up and choked the plants so they couldn't grow strong. But some seeds fell on good soil. These seeds grew into healthy plants and made more grain than the farmer had planted—many times more!" Later, Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Why do You tell stories like this instead of just saying things plainly?"

Jesus replied, "Not everyone is ready to understand the truth about God's kingdom. I

speak in parables so that those who are ready will understand, but others will not—just as the prophet Isaiah said long ago. But you, My disciples, are blessed. God has opened your eyes and ears so you can understand."

Then Jesus explained the story. He said, "The seeds on the path are like people who hear the truth but don't understand it. The evil one snatches away what was planted in their hearts.

"The seeds on rocky ground are like people who hear the truth and are happy to believe at first, but when it becomes hard to follow God's Word, they quickly give up. The seeds among the thorns are like people who hear the truth, but their hearts are crowded with worries and the love of money. They do not give God's Word room to grow in their hearts.

"But the seeds in the good soil are like people who hear the truth and welcome it. They understand the gospel and let it change their lives. They grow in faith and share the good news with others—producing much more than was planted!"

Christ Connection: Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don't understand the gospel, and some people care more about the things of this world than they do God's kingdom. But people who believe in Jesus and follow Him will grow to be like Him and will share His good news so others can believe too.



1 WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

• **What is your favorite story? What makes it your favorite story? Is it the characters, the plot, or maybe where it takes place?**

2 SESSION STARTER

☐ OPTION 1: CHOOSE AND MOVE



Explain that you will be playing a game about choices. Begin by calling out different scenarios. Designate a motion for each option. Some examples could be: Would you rather be able to sink every basketball shot you take (ball-throwing motion) or ace every test (hand-writing motion)?; Would you rather be able to play video games all weekend (pretend to use a controller) or take a hike in the woods (walking motion)? The kids must show their choice by performing the motion. The last kid to make a choice must sit down. Continue playing until one kid remains standing.

SAY “ We are all faced with choices every day. Today we will read about how Jesus called people to make a choice about the truth He shared. He taught that **PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD’S KINGDOM.** ”

☐ OPTION 2: SCOOPING SEEDS



Group the kids into two teams. Have the teams line up on one side of the room. Give each team a small, empty cup and a bucket full of popcorn kernels. Place one empty bucket for each team on the opposite side of the room. The first kid in line will fill the cup with kernels, walk across the room, dump them in his or her team’s bucket, and run back. They will then pass the cup to the next kid in line, who will repeat this. Spilled kernels must be added back to the bucket at the starting line. The first team to move all their kernels to the other bucket wins.

SAY “ You had to be careful as you moved the popcorn kernels across the room! In today’s story, we’ll see the importance of being careful with our choices. Jesus taught that **PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD’S KINGDOM.** ”



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about how Jesus taught in parables. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8.

•What does this story teach us about God?

Jesus used parables to teach about God's kingdom. Not everyone in the crowd was ready to understand the truth Jesus was sharing. Jesus taught that the seed is God's Word. Satan doesn't want us to believe what we hear about God's kingdom. **PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD'S KINGDOM.**

•Why should we allow God's Word to be the most important voice in our lives?

When we allow God's Word to become the most important voice in our lives, we grow strong in our faith and seek to share it with others! Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don't understand the gospel, and some people care more about the things of this world than they do God's kingdom. But people who believe in Jesus and follow Him will grow to be like Him and will share His good news so others can believe, too.

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

2 MISSIONS MOMENT

Share that John W. (J.W.) Michaels, a man who was deaf, helped Deaf people know about Jesus. J.W. was responsible for about 100 Deaf ministries while he served in his position for Deaf ministry at the North American Mission Board.

J.W. Michaels was born in 1850, near Richmond, Virginia. He became deaf when he was seven years old because of an illness. J.W. attended the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Staunton, Virginia, graduated from college, and became a successful businessman. Later, he taught at the Arkansas School for the Deaf before becoming the principal of the school in 1882. J.W. also began to teach some Deaf men in a Bible study. The Bible study group grew and became a strong witness among the Deaf population in Little Rock, Arkansas. J.W. spent his summers traveling to nearby towns to teach and preach about Jesus. He became one of the first missionaries to the Deaf in the United States.

Pray, thanking God for the work of J.W. Michaels and missionaries telling Deaf people about Jesus.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

Jesus came to reveal God's kingdom and invite us into it through salvation. By dying on the cross, Jesus made the way for our sins to be forgiven. Those who repent of their sin and trust in Jesus as Lord are promised life in God's kingdom forever! To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can see one of your parents or a church leader.

4 PRAY

God, we praise You because Your Word is true and everlasting! We trust that we can lean on Your Word during good times and difficult times. Remind us that You are with us as we share the joy of Your Word with others this week. Amen.

THE GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news—the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.

				
GOD RULES	WE SINNED	GOD PROVIDED	JESUS GIVES	WE RESPOND
Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.	Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.	Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.	Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.	Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- How can you encourage your friends to believe in Jesus?
- Have you responded to the good news of the gospel?

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Matthew 13. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 13:13-15.

Explain that Jesus shared the parable in today's story while sitting beside the Sea of Galilee. Teaching while sitting was a common posture in biblical times. Share that the shape of the cove would have also allowed Jesus' voice to be heard by the large crowd.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 13:13-15 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. How do we enter into God's kingdom?

Lead kids to discuss how God forgives sinners through Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus shared that we must be born again to see God's kingdom. Explain that everyone is offered the gift of salvation, but only those who trust in Jesus as Lord will receive it. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 3:3-5.)

2. Does God know who will accept or reject Him?

Explain that God is sovereign, which means He is in control of everything, and omniscient, which means He knows everything. However, God has also given people the choice of whether to follow Him or not. Share that God uses His disciples as a way to bring people to know Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 6:44.)

3. How does planting God's Word in our heart help us endure when things get hard?

Challenge kids to consider the importance of reading and studying God's Word every day. When we read our Bible, we are helping ourselves remember Scripture for the future. When the truth of God's Word is within us, the Holy Spirit will use those words to encourage us to stand firm through any difficulty. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Psalm 1:1-3.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

Is the Bible true?
Yes, the Bible is true and has no error.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Isaiah 40:8. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Share that God's Word is true and will never fade.

Provide the kids with magazines and scissors. Write the words of the key passage on poster paper, leaving space above each word. Assign each kid a word. Encourage the kids to cut out pictures, words, or letters from the magazines that represent his or her assigned word from the key passage. Instruct them to take turns taping or gluing the photos to the poster above the corresponding word to make a collage.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, praising God for His greatness and goodness, knowing He is Creator and King.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

GOD'S KINGDOM

Lead kids to get into small groups of three or four and give each group a Bible and something to write with. Assign each group a verse about God's kingdom. Some examples include: Matthew 6:33; Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; or Matthew 6:10. Encourage groups to look up their verse and then discuss what it teaches us about the kingdom of God. After several minutes, give them an opportunity to share their verses and findings with the larger group.

Explain that it can be exciting to learn about God's kingdom, but not everyone will have the same response to hearing about God's kingdom. We want to be faithful to have soft hearts for the seeds of God's Word to be planted in, while also being faithful to share the good news of the gospel with others.