



Parable of a Sower and Seeds



Scripture Reference:
[Matthew 13:1-9,18-23](#)

Suggested Emphasis:

Have the kind of heart that understands and accepts God's teachings.

Memory Verse: "Open my eyes to see the wonderful things in your teachings." [Psalm 119:18, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

Jesus told a parable about a farmer who planted seeds in four different types of soil. Only one of the soils produced a good crop. Jesus explained that the soils represented people's hearts. When the word of God is planted in a good heart, good things will be produced in that person's life.

Background Study:

The word "parable" comes from the Greek word: *parabole*. It literally means "a placing beside". This refers to how a parable places two meanings side by side.

In today's parable, Jesus tells the parable ([Matthew 13:1-9](#)) and then goes on to explain the meaning ([Matthew 13:18-23](#)). Jesus explains that the seeds represent his teachings about the kingdom of God. The soils represent four different ways that his word is received in the hearts of men.

In the verses in between ([Matthew 13:10-17](#)), we find an explanation of why Jesus taught in parables. Some people would only hear one meaning of a parable. Followers of Jesus would understand the second meaning.

Jesus was at the Sea of Galilee when he taught this parable. Instead of standing among the crowd, he gets into a boat

and speaks from there. By changing the speaking arrangement this way, everyone would have heard Jesus.

This is a good reminder to us that we should consider the teaching environment when we teach. Everyone should be able to hear the teacher and participate. Even changing the arrangement of furniture now and again will help students listen better. Consider sitting on cushions on the floor and telling today's story in a different part of the classroom.

The parable Jesus told was about farming. Most people listening to Jesus would have been familiar with planting seeds. If a field had been recently used, a farmer would have to plough it twice. Oxen pulling a plough helped the process. After first breaking up the soil, the farmer carried a basket full of seeds and used his hands to scatter the seeds. Wheat and barley were sown in late fall. Then, the field was ploughed again to cover the seed. Finally, the farmer often used a stick to smooth and flatten the soil.

Paths were formed when people walked often in the same place. The soil was packed down so seeds falling on a path could not germinate. You can imagine birds keeping an eye out for just such an opportunity! Since it was totally exposed, the seed was quickly eaten. This soil represents someone who hears God's word but does not understand. The message does not even take root before Satan snatches it away. Satan waits around for that opportunity, as well.

Although the soil around Palestine appeared to be good, it was often only a thin layer of soil. When the farmer dug through the soil, he would quickly hit a layer of rock. Plants quickly sprout but die when the roots have no place to flourish. This soil represents the person who readily and genuinely accepts the word of God but then quickly falls away. Nothing develops under the surface.

The third situation involves seed sprouting and growing among thorns. The plants grow, but the thorns and weeds take all of the nourishment, and the plant barely hangs on. The plant is worthless because it never bears any fruit. This soil represents people who become Christians but are over-influenced by the world. Worry and wealth deny them the spiritual nutrition they need. They may attend church and live moral lives, but they never really mature to the point that they teach others and become truly Christ-like.

Luke's account of this parable can be found in [Luke 8:4-15](#).



Way to Introduce the Story:

Pupils will need four small plastic containers (ice cream containers, margarine tubs, etc.), soil, small rocks, some weeds, fast-growing seeds (beans are good), water, and newspapers to protect the working area. Direct the class in preparing samples of the four soils mentioned in the lesson today: Soil #1 should be packed down very hard. Soil #2 should have a thin layer of soil covering rocks. Soil #3 should have weeds (thorns) in it. Finally, Soil #4 should be a sample of good soil- loose, free of rocks and weeds. When the samples are ready, the students can add seeds to the soil samples. "What do you think will happen to our seeds in each of these soils? (Guide discussion.) Jesus told a parable about soil. He told a simple story about seeds growing in different kinds of soil. That simple story helped people understand something about different kinds of hearts."

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The Story:

One day Jesus was sitting on the shore of a lake. He began teaching the people on the shore. More people came to hear what Jesus was saying. Soon the beach was filled with people. There were so many that Jesus decided to get in a boat and float it out from the beach. Then he could speak loudly, and everyone could hear him without being so crowded.

Jesus told the crowd many parables. Do you remember what a parable is? A parable is an easy-to-understand story that helps people understand something very hard to understand. One of the parables that Jesus told from the boat was a story about a farmer who planted some seeds.

Farmers in those times did not plant seeds using tractors. The farmer would take a handful of seeds and carefully toss them onto the soil. After he was finished, he would cover the seeds with soil and then wait for the plants to grow. Planting seeds is called “sowing”. Jesus’ story is called the Parable of the Sower and the Seed.

In the parable, the farmer sowed seeds, and the seeds fell into four different kinds of soil. The first seed fell onto a path where people walked. The soil on the path was hard because it was packed down. The seed that fell on the path just rolled on top of it. Soon a bird came along and gobbled the seed up.

The next seed fell on some rocky soil. The seed sprouted very quickly and had leaves and roots in a few days. But soon, the plant was dead. That was because the roots could not grow in rocks. When the roots died, the plant died.

The third seed fell on soil that was full of weeds and thorns. The plant sprouted and began to grow, but it never got very big. The weeds choked the plant and kept taking all of the sun and the best soil. The plant never produced any grain.

The last seed fell on very good soil. Soon, the plant sprouted, and leaves began to appear. The roots were healthy, and the plant grew bigger every day. Grain began to appear on the stalk, and when the right time came, the farmer picked the grain to sell it or crush it to make flour for bread.

The people asked Jesus what the parable meant. He told him that the seed was like the things he was trying to teach them about the kingdom of God. Jesus taught many people that God is the King over the world in the same way that the farmer planted lots of seeds. Not all of the farmer’s seeds grew, and not everyone who heard Jesus believed what he said. Different people have different kinds of hearts. There are different kinds of hearts, just like there are different kinds of soils.

The hard soil of the path was like the hard hearts of people who heard Jesus’ teaching but did not even understand or care what it meant. When people have hard hearts, then they do not want to follow God. They go away from God like the birds took the seed.

The seed that fell on the rocky soil was like someone who heard about God and became a Christian. They are so happy to find God, but then they change their minds and turn away from him. That is like a plant whose roots die.

Remember the seed that fell on the soil with weeds and thorns? That plant never got big. That is like people who listen to the Word of God but then get so busy making money and having fun that they don’t have time to worship him. Too much money and too much fun keep them from being strong and healthy Christians, just like the weeds that choked the plant.

Finally, Jesus explained what good soil meant. The good soil was the kind of heart that we should all have. Good soil is a heart that listens to God’s word and tries to obey him. Just like the seed grows in good soil, the words of Jesus grow in good hearts. The person whose heart is like the good soil always wants to listen to God and to make him happy by obeying him.

Do you have a good heart? Does God’s word go into your heart? Are you growing up to be a good Christian?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#)

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. What are the four types of soils in Jesus' parable of the Sower and the Seeds? Path (hard, packed soil), rocky soil, thorny soil (full of weeds), and good soil.
2. What does the seed represent in the Sower and the Seed Parable? The word of God
3. What does the good soil represent in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed? Those with good hearts who hear and understand the word and try to obey it.

Song Suggestions:

- [I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Song](#)
- [JOY Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Since wheat and barley were the most common kinds of seeds planted in Palestine, try to find grainy bread that contain these. Let the children taste the bread.
- Bring seed packets or a gardening guide to class and let children read about the care required for plants.
- Bring various types of fruit to class for a snack and look at the seeds.
- Relate different situations and let students decide which type of soil that situation falls under. Example: "Suzy listens to the sermon at church about not swearing. She even takes notes and writes down scriptures. She says she will never swear again. After church she forgets all about the lesson and starts swearing as soon as she is back with her friends. What kind of soil is Suzy? Rocky." For more active participation, you can let children hold seeds and plant them in the rocky soil when they answer the question.
- For review, draw a big heart on the chalk/whiteboard and put a cross inside it to divide it into four parts. Each section will represent one of the four types of hearts. Ask the children to help you think of words that go in each section. For example, the first section might contain words such as path, birds, hard, eaten, heart, message, kingdom, sown and seeds. At the end, write the children's names in the section where the good soil is. Remind them that God wants us to have good hearts that love and obey him.
- Learn the first phrase in next week's memory verse (Luke 10:27) "Love the Lord your God with all your heart."

Crafts:



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets about the parable of the sower \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and worksheets about parables in general \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Parable of the Four Kinds of Soils Slideshow with narration \(Yodtube\) 2 minutes and 17 seconds.](#)
- [Craft: Instructions to make a mosaic using seeds \(firstpalette.com\)](#)
- [Craft: Printable envelope and verses about the heart \(thecraftyclassroom.com\)](#)
- [Sower and the Seeds anagrams/word scrambles \(dltk-bible.com\)](#)

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