

Mustard Seeds and Matryoshka Dolls



Teaching Jesus' parables to three and four year olds is challenging. [Pre-schoolers](#) struggle understanding abstract concepts. The figurative nature of the parables will largely pass them by because they usually think in more literal terms.

This morning the class I was teaching tackled the [Parable of the Mustard Seed](#). Jesus told a story about a farmer planting a tiny little seed. The seed sprouted and grew into the tallest of trees.

We began the class by sorting seeds. The children pulled the tiny mustard seeds from the pile and we marveled that such a tiny seed could grow into a large tree.

The three little boys I was teaching are also very small. They dream of the day when they can be big and strong like their dads. Great men begin as little boys.

Sometimes hands-on activities are helpful in helping pre-schoolers understand concepts. I chose a couple of these to stress the point about growth.

- First, I placed a tiny little paper circle on the table. Then, one at a time, I revealed a set of circles of ever increasing size. The children loved stretching their vocabulary to describe the sizes. Tiny, little, small, medium, bigger, enormous, giant and finally, super super huge.
- Secondly, I was able to make use of some Matryoshka (nesting) dolls that I had on hand. Seeing the sizes displayed in doll

form helped the children relate to how they themselves are in the process of growing.

All in all it was a great class.

Sometimes my efforts in teaching seem extremely small. What difference will my teaching make in the bigger picture? This parable reminds me that God does great things from small beginnings.

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Crayon Resist- Using Art for Teaching

Español 



You will prepare a white paper before class by drawing or writing something on it with a white crayon. Nothing is visible to the children at first but your hidden drawing will begin to appear when you apply paint to the white paper.

This is a simple idea for teaching or artwork and it can be adapted to any lesson or subject.

MATERIALS:

- White paper
- White crayon (or a white candle will work too).
- Paint (Use water based paint. Tempera paint works well with children because it is washable, but any water-based paint like acrylic will do.)
- Paint brush or sponge to apply the paint.
- Tissue to wipe away excess paint.

PREPARATION:

1. Plan the picture or writing.
2. Before class, use the white crayon or candle to draw a picture or words on the white paper. Because this is white crayon on white paper, the paper will look blank.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Have the children use a paint brush or sponge to apply the paint to the white paper.
2. The paint will soak into the paper but not into the parts covered in wax. Whatever you have drawn with the white crayon will “appear” as you apply the paint.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- You can use a black pen to do the writing or drawing first and then place the blank white paper over it and trace it.
- Prepare this in sunlight or near a lamp. The wax reflects in the light, so you can see the drawing more easily.
- Apply the paint to some blank areas before you reveal the picture. Kids love surprises, so draw out the suspense a little.
- Experiment with the paint beforehand so it won't be too thick or too thin.

ADAPTATIONS:

- Use this idea to tell the [Parable of the Hidden Treasure and Valuable Pearl](#). Use brown paint to depict the treasure being found when the man was digging in the dirt. On another paper draw lots of little pearls and one huge one.
- Write a memory verse or important word from a story and let the children guess what it is before you apply the paint.
- Use a black pen to draw part of a picture but leave parts blank. The missing parts will appear as you tell the story.
- Help the children create their own crayon resist pictures for review purposes.

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