

# The Sower and the Seed

(Matthew 13:1-23)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

How many of you have planted a garden? What are some different types of soils? Which are the best types of soil to grow seeds in? [Teacher, have some different types of soil that the children can observe.] Farmers find the thought of good soil exciting! Good soil makes them want to get their hands in it and begin planting something! But most soil doesn't start out ready to be planted. It may be hard, or full of weeds or rocks. Usually, soil needs some work before seeds are planted.

Jesus used this familiar experience to help us understand how to receive God's Word so that we will have a fruitful life. We need to prepare our hearts to receive the lessons God wants us to learn so that God's Word will go deep into every hidden place of our lives where it can help us change into the person God wants us to be.

## Opening Prayer

Father, prepare our hearts this morning so that the seed of Your Word will take root and we may see and understand the truths that You want us to learn. We want to be open and responsive to the leading and guiding of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matthew 13:9)*

## Lesson

What is a *parable*? (A parable is a story that has a lesson to it.) The Lord Jesus used parables to illustrate truths about the kingdom of God. This week we're going to take a look at one of the parables that Jesus taught, the one about the sower and the seed.

### Matthew 13:3-4 – **Hard soil**

*He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. (4) As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a **footpath**, and the birds came and ate them.*

What does it mean that a sower went out to sow? To sow means to plant. Farmers in Jesus' day didn't have machines, so they had to do everything by hand. First, the farmer removed the rocks from his field. Then he plowed his field. Finally, he scattered the seed across his field by hand. When you scatter seed by hand, some seed always gets thrown in the wrong places and wasted.

In His story, Jesus tells about some seed that fell on the road beside the field. The road was hard so the seed just lay on top of the dirt. The birds came, picked it up, and ate it.

### Matthew 13:5-6 – **Rocky soil**

*Other seeds fell on **shallow soil with underlying rock**. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. (6) But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died.*

Jesus tells of a second situation where some of the seed was scattered on top of rocks where there wasn't much dirt between the rocks. As soon as the rains came, they got watered and began to sprout. But soon the sun came out and they got sun burned. And, because they were not rooted in deep soil that could hold the moisture, they soon dried up and withered away.

### Matthew 13:7 – **Thorny soil**

*Other seeds fell among **thorns** that grew up and choked out the tender plants.*

Jesus tells of a third situation where some of the seed was planted along the way where thorny bushes grew. The thorny bushes soon overtook the wheat seedlings, choking them to death.

### Matthew 13:8 – **Fertile soil**

*Still other seeds fell on **fertile soil**, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!*

Jesus finished his story by telling of the fourth situation where seed got planted into the field properly where the birds couldn't come and pick it up and eat it; where it could get rooted in deep enough soil to get plenty of good nourishment and protection from the sun, and where it wasn't choked out by the thorny bushes.

Next, Jesus says....

Matthew 13:9

*Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."*

What do you think Jesus was saying here? I think He was saying, "*Listen up, guys! I'm trying to make an important point.*" He was telling them to pay attention with their spiritual ears; that is, with their hearts. Jesus wanted the people to do a deeper kind of listening. The kind that gives spiritual insight and understanding.

When Jesus talked about the different soils, most people probably nodded their heads, thinking, "*Yes, that's true about farming!*" But they didn't understand why Jesus told the story.

So, Jesus tells them the meaning behind the story He just told about the sower and the seed to help them understand the deeper meaning of His story.

Matthew 13:18

*"Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds:*

[Teacher, using the *Keys To Understanding Jesus' Parables* worksheet on page 5; have the children write in the answers as you discuss the following:]

1. Who is the farmer in Jesus' story? That is, who is the one who scatters the seed? (The Lord is the farmer. He's the One spreading the Word of the kingdom.)
2. What is the seed? (God's Word, the truth about God's kingdom)

3. What is the field? Where is the seed getting sown? (In the hearts of people)
4. What are the different types of soils? (The four types of soil represent different responses people have to God's message of forgiveness of sin. People respond differently because they are in different states of openness. Some are *hard hearted*. Others are *shallow*. Others are distracted by the things of this world; that is they are "*worldly*". But, some are *receptive*.)
5. Who are the birds that came and ate the seed that fell on the wayside? (Satan, the wicked one who comes and snatches away the Word of God that was sown in someone's heart)

### **Compare People to the Soil Types**

#### 1. Hardhearted People

What kind of people are like the hard footpath?

Matthew 13:19

*The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts.*

Jesus knew that some of the people listening to His messages really didn't want to change. When they heard God's Word, their *hard-heartedness* would keep them from remembering what Jesus had said.

#### 2. Shallow People

What kind of people are like the shallow rocky soil?

Matthew 13:20-21

*The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. (21) But since they don't have deep roots,*

*they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.*

They are like some people who are very happy to hear what Jesus has to say in His Word and they think to themselves, "I'm going to live like Jesus says." But when other people make fun of them or put them down for trying to follow Jesus, they give up and do things the way they used to do before.

### 3. Worldly People

What kind of people are like the soil with thorns or weeds in it?

Matthew 13:22

*The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.*

What are the thorns? (The cares and worries of this world; the desires of our flesh; materialism)

They are like some people who at first decide to obey God's Word. But then they become so worried about taking care of themselves (making money and buying material things) that they no longer follow God's Word.

The person who hears the Good News about Jesus, but who is unwilling to give up worldly ways, is the one whose heart is full of thorns. Soon the love of things will choke out the truth about God's love and forgiveness and His gift of eternal life.

### 4. Fruitful People

What kind of people are like the good soil?

Matthew 13:23

*The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"*

They are people who hear God's Word and obey it.

Notice that when the word of truth is sown into good soil, it bears fruit and it produces more fruit. What kind of a "crop" do these good-soil type people produce? This describes a person who comes to know the truth about Jesus and shows others how to live by God's Word as well. And, then those people go and tell still more people about God's wonderful gift of forgiveness of sin and salvation.

We can choose whether or not to pay attention to God's Word. Some of you might listen to God's Word when you're at church on Sundays, but then don't think about it at all during the week. Some of you might say you want to obey God's Word, but then never read it or try to understand what it says. People who are like good soil know the value of God's Word and it helps them live in a godly way. They want to spend time reading and thinking about God's Word and asking His help in understanding and obeying it.

How has God's Word taken root in your life? What kind of soil is your heart?

## CLOSING PRAYER:

Father, we want our hearts to be fertile soil where the truth about Your plan of salvation can take root and grow. We want much fruit to come from our lives. Please help us to always be interested and excited about the deeper things of life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

### CRAFT CORNER:

Using the pattern on page 6, have the children make *Seeds of Kindness Seed Packets*. Or, let the children plant seeds in different types of soil.

**GAME CENTER**

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

**Review questions:**

1. What kind of people are like the hard footpath? (People who are hard hearted and don't want to listen to God's plan of salvation.)
2. In order not to be like the "*hard footpath*," what might a person do? (Make a plan to remember what was learned from God's Word. Pray and ask God to help you do what His Word says.)
3. What kind of people are like the "*shallow rocky soil*"? (They start out doing well, but give up and do things the way they used to do before.)
4. How can a person avoid being like "*shallow rocky soil*"? (Take time to think about and pray about what you read from God's Word. Pray, asking God to help you remember what His Word says.)
5. What kind of people are like the "*thorny soil*"? (Worldly people who are more concerned with the cares of this world than about God's plan for their lives.)
6. What are some things in our lives that are like thorny weeds — things we worry about so much that we forget to obey and love God? (Money, peer pressure)
7. What excuses do people use as reasons for not knowing and following God's Word? (Too busy, not interested, don't believe it.)
8. What would a person need to do to stop being like "*thorny soil*"? (Spend time reading and doing the things that are in God's Word.)
9. What kind of people are like the good "*fertile soil*"? (People who have tender hearts towards the things of God.)
10. What could a person do to be like good "*fertile soil*"? (Spend regular time reading God's Word and listening to teaching about God's Word. Plan ways to do what you learn in God's Word. Pray for God to help you be good soil.)
11. How can a person show they value God's Word? (Read it and try to put it into practice in their lives.)
12. What are some things you have already done to be like the good soil? What are some other things you can do?
13. How can you help someone else be like the good soil? (Share God's Word)
14. What is the result of being the good fertile soil Jesus was talking about? (Fruit-bearing)
15. Which of the ways of being like good soil can you be this week?

# Keys to Understanding Jesus' Parables

Jesus told many stories using everyday things to help us discover truth about His kingdom. Here is the key to understanding Jesus' parables:

1. Who is the **farmer**? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the **seed**? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the **field**? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are the 4 types of **soils**:

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who are the **birds**? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are the **thorns**? \_\_\_\_\_

