
Forward

This book contains lessons from Jesus' parables. Your students will learn that Jesus used parables to illustrate truths about the kingdom of God using true-to-life stories. They will discover the keys to understanding Jesus' parables. They will be encouraged to listen and think about God's Word with their hearts. This is a deeper kind of listening; the kind that gives spiritual insight.

I have designed these lessons to enable you to teach the Bible expositively. The idea is to have the kids read the passages in their own Bibles and the teacher explain the scriptures and give good practical applications that are age-appropriate. My goal is to ensure that children learn that God's Word is exciting and meaningful and that teachers teach sound doctrine!

Even though I've scripted the lessons, I don't expect teachers to read my lesson materials verbatim to the children as they teach. My lessons are meant to provide the details you need to get background information and some suggestions for child-oriented personal application. Once you know and understand the Bible lessons for yourself, you'll be ready to teach your class.

The two-column layout of this book is designed so that you can copy and cut the pages in half to fit into your Bible. When the children observe that you are teaching right out of the Bible, rather than from a

curriculum book, it validates God's Word and gives your teaching more authority.

You will discover that there is not always a Craft or Game idea suggested in each lesson. When I've had a good idea that really seems to support the lesson objectives, I've included it. But I have another handbook called *Tips and Tricks — Making Children's Bible Lessons Come to Life* that gives lots of suggestions for activities that will help reinforce your lesson and teach the memory verse. (This is available from my website:

<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com/>)

Use the Teaching Schedule to help you organize your teaching rotation.

I pray that you will use these lessons for God's glory by teaching the Bible as an entire plan by a systematic and connected study of the Word.

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:14)

Sheila Scroggins

Sheila has had over 35 years' experience in teaching children and has several other lesson series available. You may contact her by eMail at: ccuv-ChildrensMinistry@usa.net for more information.

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: The Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:1-23) -----	1
Lesson 2: The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)-----	7
Lesson 3: Various “Kingdom” Parables, Part 1 (Matthew 13)-----	11
Lesson 4: Various “Kingdom” Parables, Part 2 (Matthew 13) -----	15
Lesson 5: The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) -----	19
Lesson 6: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)-----	23

Teaching Schedule

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:1-23)	<i>He who has ears to hear, let him hear!</i> (Matthew 13:9)
		Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)	<i>Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.</i> (Matthew 7:15 –16a)
		Various "Kingdom" Parables, Part 1 (Matthew 13)	<i>I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.</i> (Matthew 13:35b)
		Various "Kingdom" Parables, Part 2 (Matthew 13)	<i>He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders,</i> (Mark 4:11)
		Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)	<i>Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?</i> (Romans 2:4)
		Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)	<i>Love knows no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.</i> (Romans 13:10) And/or <i>But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.</i> (Luke 6:35) And/or <i>Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.</i> (James 4:17)

The Sower and the Seed

(Matthew 13:1-23)

Introduction

Today we are going to start a new series of lessons on the parables of Jesus.

Ask: Does anyone know what a *parable* is?

A *parable* is a story that has a lesson to it.

Don't you love a good story? I do! Jesus told stories to teach people about the kingdom of God because it got their attention!

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*.

Ask: Who knows what the word "sow" means? [Teacher, write it on the board.]

The word "sow" means *to plant*. It sounds like "sew," but we are not talking about sewing with a needle and a thread. We are using farming terms.

Farming was something that everybody in Bible times knew about. If they weren't actually a farmer, they would most likely know farming terms because most likely everyone had a garden plot where they grew their own vegetables.

When Jesus taught people in parables, he used things that people were familiar with so they could understand the story's lesson. But sometimes this took a deeper kind of listening. The kind that gives spiritual insight and understanding.

God desires that His word takes root in our hearts where it can help us grow spiritually into the person God wants us to be so that our lives may bear fruit for His kingdom. So, let's open in prayer and ask God to prepare our hearts to receive the lesson He wants us to learn.

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

Ask: How many of you have planted a garden? What do you like to grow? Is it important to have good soil for vegetables to grow well? [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.

In the parable of the *Sower and the Seed* Jesus talks about four different types of soils. The first kind of soil is hardpack.

1. The Path / Hard Soil

Matthew 13:3-4

*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.*

Jesus starts His story of the *Sower and the Seed* by saying that one day a farmer went out to plant some seeds.

Farmers in Jesus' day didn't have machines, so they had to do everything by hand. First, the farmer had to prepare the soil. He 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.

Ask: In His story, where did Jesus say that some seed fell? (verse 4)

He says some *seeds fell along the path*. This would have been a road beside the field which would have never been ploughed. The road was as hard as cement, so the seed just lay on top of the dirt.

Ask: What happened to the seeds? Did they sprout?

No, the birds came, picked it up, and ate it.

2. Rocky Ground / Shallow Soil

Now Jesus is going to tell about a second kind of soil:

Matthew 13:5-6

*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.*

Ask: Where did the seeds fall this time? (verse 5)

He says that some seeds fell on rocky ground.

Ask: What happened to these seeds? (verse 6)

They withered away because 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.

3. Thorns

Now Jesus is going to tell about a third kind of soil:

Matthew 13:7

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

Ask: Where did these seeds fall?

He says some seeds fell among thorns.

Ask: What happened to these seeds?

They got choked out because the thorn bushes grew up and soon overtook the wheat seedlings, choking them to death.

4. Good Soil / Fertile Soil

Now Jesus is going to tell about a fourth kind of soil:

Matthew 13:8

*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!*

Ask: Where did the seeds fall this time?

He says that some seeds fell on good soil.

Ask: What happened to these seeds?

They grew up strong because they 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.

Jesus finished His story by saying....

Matthew 13:9

Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Ask: 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 think deeply enough to understand why Jesus told the story.

So, Jesus tells them the meaning behind the story He just told them 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:

Before we go on, let's make sure we understand the deeper meaning of Jesus' story so we can get spiritual insight and understanding.

[Teacher, using the *Keys To Understanding Jesus' Parables* worksheet, 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**?
 - a) The Path (Hard pack; seeds could not take root)

b) Rocky Ground (Shallow soil; seeds spouted but did not produce deep roots.)

c) Thorny (Seed got choked out)

d) Good Soil (Seeds were nourished; developed deep roots)

- 5) Who are the **birds** that came and ate the seed that fell on the footpath? (Satan, the wicked one who comes and snatches away the Word of God that was sown in someone's heart)
- 6) What are the **thorns**? (Cares of this world; love of money and things.)

Compare People to the Soil Types

The four types of soil represent different ways people respond to God's message of forgiveness of sin. People react differently because they are in different states of openness to the Gospel.

Let's compare these soil types to people's hearts.

Hardhearted People

Ask: What kind of people have hearts 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 is saying that some of the people listening to His story were hardhearted. He knew that some people really didn't want to change. Maybe they didn't think they needed to change. So, when they heard the Gospel, their *hard-heartedness* kept them from understanding the message of the cross.

Ask: What makes a person hardhearted? What are some reasons people don't want to hear and understand God's word? (Selfish, too busy, not interested, don't believe.)

Shallow People

Ask: What kind of people have hearts 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.

Jesus is saying that some of the people listening to His story were not very deep thinkers; they would not bother to think about the deep things of God. We say this kind of person is "shallow." Oh, at first, they may have been happy to hear what Jesus had to say and they may have said, "I'm going to live like Jesus wants."

When life gets hard for shallow-hearted people, they give up their interest in the things of God.

Ask: What are some hard things in life that can distract a person from listening to God's word? (Death, sickness, loss of job, etc.)

Worldly People

Ask: What kind of people have hearts 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.

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

Jesus is saying that some of the people listening to His story were allowing the cares of this world to choke out God's Word. Thorny-hearted people get distracted by the things of this world. We say they are "worldly." They are more worried about taking care of themselves (making money and buying material things) than they are about following Jesus.

Ask: What are some things of this world that can keep you from following Jesus? (desire for more things, like toys, video games, clothes, etc.)

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.

Fruitful People

Ask: What kind of people have hearts 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!"

Jesus is saying that some of the people listening to His story were very interested in the things He was teaching them about the kingdom of God. Good-soil people want to know more about God's Word; they want to live their lives in a way that pleases Him.

Notice that when the word of truth is sown into a heart of good soil, it bears fruit and it produces more fruit.

Ask: 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 all have a choice to either pay attention to God's Word, or to ignore Him. Some of you might listen to God's Word when you're at church on Sundays, but then you 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 have hearts like good soil know God's Word helps them live in a godly way. They want to spend time reading and thinking about God's Word. They want to understand and obey it.

Ask: What kind of soil is your heart? Has God's Word taken root in your life?

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:

Have the children make *Seeds of Kindness Seed Packets* using the Seed Packet Pattern found on my website. 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 is a parable? (A story that has a lesson to it.)
2. Why does it take deep thinking to understand Jesus' parables?

(Because Jesus was using common, everyday experiences to teach important spiritual truths.)

3. What happened to the seeds that fell on the path? (The seed lay on top of the hardpack and the birds came and snatched it away.)
4. What happened to the seeds that fell on the rocky ground? (Because there wasn't much soil, the seed didn't get firmly rooted so it withered away.)
5. What happened to the seeds that fell among the thorns? (The seed got choked by the thorn bushes.)
6. What happened to the seeds that fell on good soil? (The seed grew strong.)
7. What kind of people have hearts like the hard footpath? (People who are hard hearted and don't want to listen to God's plan of salvation. Hardhearted people do not care about the things of God.)
8. What excuses do people use as reasons for not wanting to listen to God's Word? (Too busy, not interested, don't believe it.)
9. What kind of people have hearts like the rocky soil? (Shallow people that don't bother to think about the deep things of God. They start out doing well, but give up when life gets hard.)
10. What kind of people have hearts like the soil with thorns or weeds in it? (Worldly people who are more concerned with the cares of this world than about God's plan for their lives.)
11. What are some things in our lives that are like thorny bushes that choke out God's Word? (Money, peer pressure.)
12. What kind of people have hearts like the good soil? (People who have tender hearts towards the things of God and want to live their lives in a way that pleases Him.)

13. What kind of a “crop” do these good-soil type people produce?
(People who come to the Lord because you shared the message of the cross with them.)
14. How can you prepare the soil of your heart so you can be a good-soil type person? (Take time to think about and pray about what you read from Gods’ Word. Plan ways to obey God’s Word.)

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]

Keys to Understanding Jesus' Parable About the Sower and the Seed

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? _____

Seeds of Kindness Seed Packet

HELP OTHERS	TELL THE TRUTH
LET OTHERS GO FIRST	BE KIND TO BROTHERS AND SISTERS
DO NOT BEG FOR THINGS	WORK HARD; DO NOT WASTE TIME
DO NOT BE GREEDY FOR MONEY	LISTEN WITH INTEREST TO OTHERS' PROBLEMS
FORGIVE OTHERS WHEN THEY ARE WRONG	PRAY FOR OTHERS
SAY "EXCUSE ME" WHEN NEEDED	DON'T BRAG OR SHOW OFF
LISTEN CAREFULLY TO OTHERS	ALWAYS BE THANKFUL

1. Color the seed packet.
2. Cut out the packet and the kindness strips.
3. Fold the strips in half.
4. Glue the tabs on the packet to form a pocket. (Leave the top one open.)
5. Put the folded strips in the packet to give to a friend.

"Lettuce" be forgiving.

"Squash" hate.

"Turnip" with a smile.

Planting Instructions:

Sow in humble, caring hearts.

Plant continually. Scatter kindness everywhere.

Water daily with fresh supply of

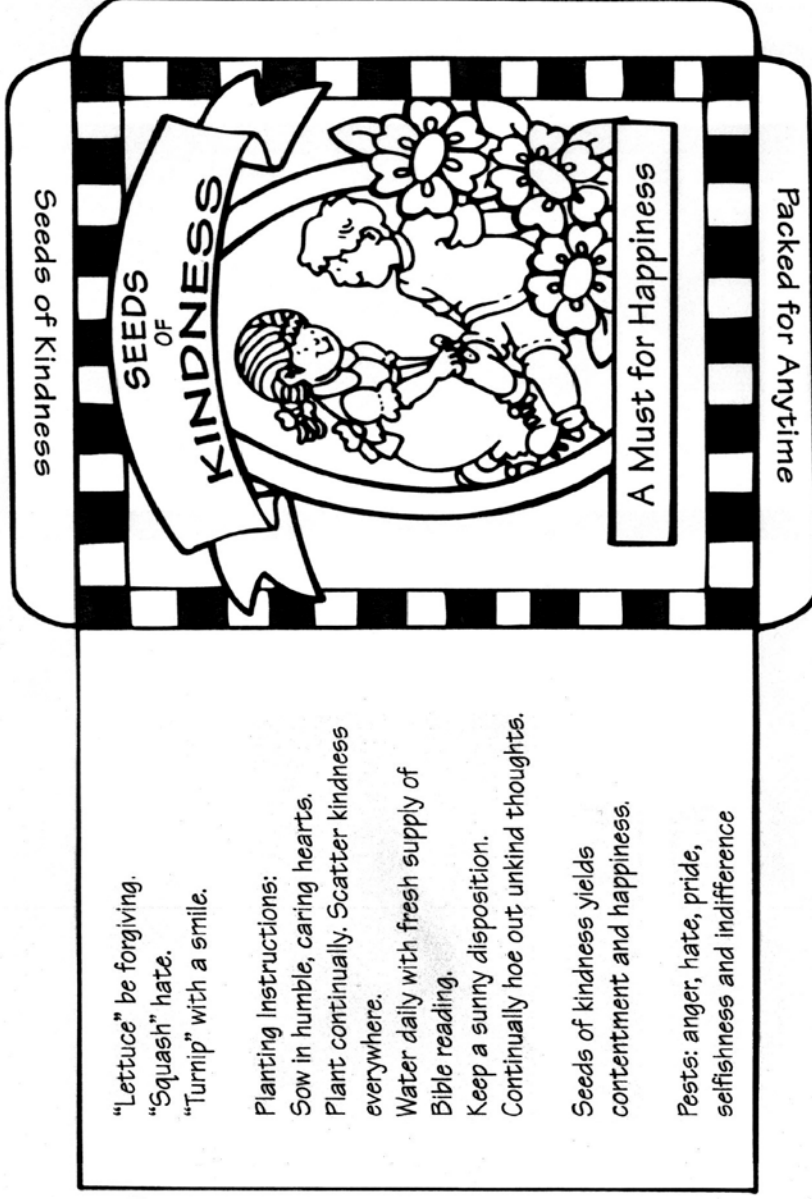
Bible reading.

Keep a sunny disposition.

Continually hoe out unkind thoughts.

Seeds of kindness yields contentment and happiness.

Pests: anger, hate, pride, selfishness and indifference



The Wheat and the Tares

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

Introduction

Last week we started a new lesson series on the parables of Jesus.

Ask: Who remembers what a parable is?

It's a true-to-life story designed to teach a spiritual truth.

Jesus taught in parables because He wanted to challenge His followers to think deeply to learn the spiritual lessons He wanted them to learn about the kingdom of heaven.

Last week we learned about the *Parable of the Sower and the Seed*.

In that story we learned that Jesus is the “farmer” spreading the seed, or the Word of God, which lands in four different types of soils. The soils represented the ways different people react to hearing the Good News that Jesus came and died for their sins. Some people had **hard hearts**, other people had **shallow hearts**, other people had **thorny hearts**. They received the word gladly, but they became entangled in the cares of this world, still other people had **good-soil hearts** that allowed the word of God to take root which caused them to grow spiritually.

This week we're going to learn another story Jesus told using farming terms. This week's parable is called *The Wheat and the Tares*. Some people call it the *Parable of the Weeds*.

Ask: How many of you get weeds in your garden? Do you like pulling them out? (No! Me either!!)

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between the plants you want growing in your garden and the weeds, isn't it?

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to learn as much as we can about Your kingdom. We love You and want to please You in everything we do. Open our

spiritual ears this morning so that we might listen with our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.
(Matthew 7:15-16a NKJ)*

Lesson

So, let's read Jesus' story about the *Wheat and the Tares*.

Matthew 13:24-25

*Here is another story Jesus told: “The **Kingdom of Heaven** is like a **farmer** who planted **good seed** in his **field**. (25) But that night as the workers slept, his **enemy** came and planted **weeds** among the wheat, then slipped away.*

Jesus told this story so that people could learn more about the kingdom of heaven. And it is written down in our bibles so that you and I can learn more about it, too.

Ask: Last week in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed...

- Who was the **farmer**? (The Lord)
- What was the **seed**? (The Word of God)
- What was the **field**? (The hearts of people)
- Who was the **enemy**? (Satan)

This week we have a few more terms to learn.

Ask: Do you know where the **Kingdom of Heaven** is – is it someplace far off?

No, it's right here among us. We joined God's kingdom the moment we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior. Jesus' kingdom is right inside of our own hearts. We believers make up the kingdom of heaven!

Another term we need to learn more about is this word “**weeds**.”

The “**weeds**” in this story are the seeds of **tares**. Tares are a type of weed that looks just like wheat.

If you were to read verse 25 in the New King James translation, it would say, “*while men slept, his enemy came and sowed **tares** among the wheat and went his way.*”

Tares are a certain type of weed that looks almost the same as wheat. While they are growing, you can barely tell the difference between wheat and tares until it’s time to harvest them and they start to bear fruit. The tares do not develop heads like wheat does. You can grind the wheat heads into flour and make bread. And, as you know, bread brings nourishment and life to people.

Tares, on the other hand, are actually poisonous. If you eat tares, it makes you sleepy, nauseous, and can cause you to go into convulsions, and even cause both man and animals to die.

So, the weeds look like good seed, but they aren’t! They are tares. And, they can be deadly!

Matthew 13:26-30

*When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. (27) “The farmer’s workers went to him and said, ‘Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?’ (28) “An **enemy** has done this!’ the farmer exclaimed. “Should we pull out the weeds?’ they asked. (29) “No,’ he replied, ‘you’ll uproot the wheat if you do. (30) Let both grow together until the **harvest**. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.”*

When Jesus told these stories to His followers, they were wondering why He was telling them stories about farming. But Jesus wanted His disciples to understand the deeper meaning of His story. So, He explained it to them.

Let’s read Jesus’ explanation of this parable...

Matthew 13:36-39 Follow along as I read...

*Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, “Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field.” (37) Jesus replied, “The Son of Man is the **farmer** who plants the good seed. (38) The **field** is the world, and the **good seed** represents the people of the Kingdom. The **weeds** are the people who belong to the evil one. (39) The **enemy** who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The **harvest** is the end of the world, and the **harvesters** are the angels.*

Some of the terms are a little different than last week so let’s go through this verse by verse:

Using the *Keys to Understanding Jesus’ Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* worksheet write in the answers as we discuss the following. Note that *the one who sows the good seeds* is the Farmer.]

- 1) Who does the “**farmer**” represent in this story? (The Son of Man; the Lord, vs 37.)
- 2) What does the “**field**” represent? (The world, the hearts of all the people in the world, vs 38.)
- 3) What do the “**good seeds**” stand for? (The sons of the kingdom; believers; the good-soil person who allowed the seed to take root in their hearts, vs 38.)
- 4) What do the “**weeds**” represent in this story? (The sons of the evil one; unbelievers, vs 38, and, those who sin and break the law, vs 41.)
- 5) Who was the “**enemy**” who sowed the weeds into the field, or world? (The devil, vs 39)
- 6) What is the “**harvest**”? (The end of the age, when Jesus comes back to judge the world, vs 39.)
- 7) Who are the “**reapers**” (or harvesters)? (Angels, vs 39.)

Matthew 13:40-43 Let's continue, follow along as I read...

"Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. (41) The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. (42) And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!"

The Spiritual Truths

Let's dive in and see what spiritual truths Jesus is trying to teach His disciples...

Ask: At the end of the age; that is at the end of time, Jesus is coming back to judge people. What's going to happen to the tares, these "good seed look-a-likes"; the sons of the evil one?

They will be gathered and burned with fire. (See verse 40.)

Ask: What's it like in the fiery furnace where the weeds get thrown?

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (See verse 42.)

Ask: What happens to the good seed; that is, "the righteous"?

Verse 43 says, they will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom; verse 30 says they will be put into the barn. Both of those verses are speaking of heaven!

Ask: Why didn't the farmer want the servants to pick the weeds?

Vs. 28-29 tells us that Jesus is going to have the angels determine who's a good seed and who's a tare. Because we can't see into other people's hearts, we can't be positive who's a true believer. Only God can judge a man's heart rightly.

Ask: The farmer wanted to wait to separate the wheat from the tares until everything was gathered in at harvest time. What does that tell you about God?

He wants all men to have every opportunity to turn to the truth about Him. This tells me He is patient.

Ask: What two types of people did you learn about in this story?

In this world there are people who are true believers and some that look just like true believers, but they're not. It's almost impossible for us to tell them apart sometimes, isn't it? Some people who look like true believers may not be.

Ask: What is one good way to tell a true believer from an unbeliever?

Only good seed produces good fruit in their lives. Those who believe become more Christ like as they mature. They bring spiritual nourishment to others by telling them the truth about God's wonderful plan of salvation. Unbelievers can bring spiritual death to people by their false teachings about God's kingdom.

Ask: When did the enemy sow the tares in among the wheat?

While his men were sleeping. (See verse 25.)

Ask: What does it mean to be spiritually asleep?

To be ignorant of the Word of God; to not understand the truth about the kingdom of God.

Ask: Why must you be spiritual awake? What can happen if you are spiritually asleep?

You need to be spiritually awake or you'll find yourself spiritually dead. If you are spiritually asleep, people who look just like Christians can come into your life and trick you into believing lies about God. You've got to know the Lord and what His Word says!

Ask: What happens when unbelievers are allowed to teach others in our churches?

They can deceive you into thinking wrong things about the Lord. (Refer to today's verse.)

If you don't know the Word of God, if you don't know the truth about God's plan of salvation, false teachers can lead you to believe lies about God's kingdom.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we want to be good seed. We want to be the kind of people that bring life to others. Help us to bend our hearts towards You, Lord, so that our lives bear fruit unto You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Have the children work on the *Getting Rid of Weeds* worksheet or send it home as a "take home" paper.

GAME CENTER

Wheat and Tare Game

Divide the children into two teams: boys against girls, for example. For every correct answer to one of the following questions, a child can pick up a playing card with a picture of wheat on the front. On the backs of some of the cards, write the word "Zonk" and on the rest of the cards, write point values. The "Zonk" cards are the "birds" and are worth nothing. Keep track of each team's points.

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

1. What is the main point of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed? (There are four different reactions people have to the Gospel.)
2. What is the main point of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares? (There is going to be a day of judgement and it will not be good for those who have not put their trust in Jesus.)
3. What two groups of people does the Parable of the Wheat and Tares tell us about? (Believers and unbelievers)
4. What is the "end of the age" referring to? (At the end of time, Jesus will judge every person that ever lived on earth.)
5. What is going to happen to the unbelievers at the end of the age? (They will be thrown into the lake of fire.)
6. Why is it important for the angels to sort out the good from the bad seed? (People can not tell the difference. Only God can see the heart of man.)
7. What does the fact that the farmer wanted to wait to separate the wheat from the tares until everything was gathered in at harvest time tell you about God? (He is gracious and long suffering. He wanted to give every unbeliever time to change their mind.)
8. What is one good way to tell a true believer from an unbeliever? (You will know them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:16a NKJ)
9. When did the enemy sow the tares in among the wheat? (While the men were sleeping.)
10. Why must you be spiritual awake? What can happen if you are spiritually asleep? (If you are spiritually asleep, people who look just like Christians can come into your life.)
11. What can happen if an unbeliever is allowed to teach in our church? (They can deceive you into thinking wrong things about the Lord.)
12. How can you be sure you are not tricked by an unbeliever into believing something false about God? (Know the Word of God; know the truth.)

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]

Getting Rid of Weeds

God, the Master Gardener, carefully considers our uniqueness and wants us to produce good fruit. He begins with a tiny seed. The seed is the Word of God.

Challenge:

Pluck the unnecessary weeds from some of the scrambled words below. Rearrange the remaining letters of all words and use them to complete Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Sower. (Some words don't have "weeds" in them.)

1. esahr	9. tsohr	17. halwte
2. enauntdrsd	10. edbtwuloeser	18. tflinuruuf
3. wwseoendns	11. oiuenspcret	19. wfeeledsl
4. edse	12. ysluwqediek	20. lsio
5. ckweoeoyds	13. owh	21. drdewcposseue
6. seamwend	14. stwoeherdns	22. gjylndei
7. vrseicee	15. dwdreowse	23. yiexwdstes
8. otwdoesre	16. erdwweoisres	24. wwdhtaese



Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone (1) _____ the message about the kingdom and does not (2) _____ it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was (3) _____ in his heart. This is the (4) _____ sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on (5) _____ places is the (6) _____ who hears the word and at once (7) _____ it with joy. But since he has no (8) _____, he lasts only a (9) _____ time. When (10) _____ or (11) _____ comes because of the word, he (12) _____ falls away. The one (13) _____ received the seed that fell among the (14) _____ is the man who hears the (15) _____, but the (16) _____ of this life and the deceitfulness of (17) _____ choke it, making it (18) _____. But the one who received the seed that (19) _____ on good (20) _____ is the man who hears the word and understands it. He (21) _____ a crop, (22) _____ a hundred, (23) _____ or thirty times (24) _____ was sown.



Keys to Understanding Jesus' Parable About the Wheat and the Tares

Who is the farmer? _____

What is the field? _____

What is the good seed? _____

What are the weeds? _____

Who is the enemy? _____

What is the harvest? _____

Who are the reapers? _____

Various “Kingdom” Parables, Part 1

(Matthew 13)

Introduction

We have been studying some of Jesus’ parables. We’ve learned that parables are simply stories that have a spiritual lesson. A parable is like a mystery story because each one has a hidden message.

In the two parables we have learned so far, Jesus gave us the hidden meaning.

The first parable was the one about the Sower and the Seed.

In that parable, Jesus is the “farmer” spreading the seed, or the Word of God, which lands in four different types of soils. The soils represented the ways different people react to hearing the Good News that Jesus came and died for their sins.

The second parable was the Wheat and the Tares.

In that parable we learned that in this world there are people who are true believers and some that look just like true believers, but they’re not. This parable taught us that there is going to be a day of judgment at the end of time and the true believers will be taken into heaven while the unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Today we’re going to look at three more parables that teach us about the kingdom of heaven, but Jesus doesn’t explain these; we’re going to have to figure out the hidden meaning. So, let’s put our heads together and see if we can find the hidden message.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, You were anxious for your true followers to know more about Your ways. We, too, want to come to a deeper understanding of how You want us to live our lives so that we can spread the Good News about You to everyone we meet. Please give us new insight into Your ways this morning. Give us a supernatural ability to understand the deeper things of You, Lord. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 13:35b)

Lesson

Right after Jesus told His followers the *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares*, He told them another parable about the kingdom of heaven.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

This parable tells how as the kingdom of heaven grows here on earth. Keep in mind that when we talk of the kingdom of heaven, we’re talking about the believers that make up our churches.

Matthew 13:31-32 (see also, Luke 19:18-19)

*Here is another illustration Jesus used: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard **seed** planted in a **field**. (32) It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and **birds** come and make nests in its branches.”*

Ask: What do you think mustard seed has to do with the kingdom of heaven?

Let’s look at some of the terms Jesus uses:

Ask: What is the **seed**? (The Word of God)

Ask: Who is **the man** doing the sowing (planting)? (The farmer; God)

Ask: What is the **field**? (The hearts of people in the world.)

Ask: Who are the **birds**? (The birds represent Satan or evil.)

Remember in the parable of the *Sower and the Seed*, the birds came in and snatched away the Word of God that was sown in someone’s hard-path heart. These birds were sent by Satan. And in the parable of the *Wheat and the Tares*, we learned in verse 25 that the enemy sowed tares in the field among the wheat. These tares looked like wheat, but they weren’t. And we learned that in the same way, people who look like true believers can come into our churches while we aren’t paying attention.

Well, in this parable, we learn that birds are moving into the mustard plants.

Let’s try to figure out Jesus’ secret message in this parable.

Remember, this parable is talking about the growth of the kingdom of heaven; that is the growth of the church.

The man (the farmer or God) is sowing the seed (the Word of God) into the field (the hearts of people). The seed is taking root in people’s hearts causing the church to grow, but something goes wrong...

Mustard seed is the smallest seed a farmer plants. Because mustard seeds grow large bushes, some people believe that Jesus used this story to say that a church has small beginnings but can grow and produce great results — providing great blessings to all who come into the family of God.

But size doesn’t necessarily mean it’s healthy. A normal mustard plant is only the size of a small bush. This parable says that the mustard seed became a tree so large that birds could make nests in its branches.

That is not normal! Just because a mustard plant grows to the size of a tree, doesn’t mean that it’s better. Bigger is not necessarily better!

In the same way, if a church becomes huge in number, it is not necessarily a sign that it is healthy.

Ask: What can happen if the enemy sends “birds” into our churches while we are not paying attention that get comfortable?

Like wolves in sheep’s clothing, false teachers can come into our churches and start to lead people to believe lies about God.

Ask: If a church allows “birds” to come in and get so comfortable they *make nests in the branches*, what does that tell you about the church leadership?

This seems to say that while the church leaders were not paying attention, false teachers came in and started to feel right at home.

Ask: What do you think you and I need to do to safeguard our churches from allowing “birds” to come in and feel so at home that they nest in our branches?

We need to pray for our church leaders that they would stay true to God’s Word and to be good shepherds over the flock in their care.

The Parable of the Leaven

This parable explains what happens when we allow evil or sin to remain in our churches without doing something about it.

Matthew 13:33 (see also, Luke 13:20-21)

Jesus also used this illustration: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”

Ask: What does leaven (or yeast) have to do with the kingdom of heaven?

Let’s explore that...

Ask: Who knows what leaven (or yeast) is?

Normally, when you bake bread, you put leaven (or yeast) into the dough. *Leaven* is a substance that you put into bread dough to make it rise. It produces a gas that makes the dough puff up.

In other Bible passages, leaven (or yeast) is used as a symbol of sin because it puffs up, just as pride puffs us up and makes us proud. Although leaven looks like a minor ingredient, it seeps into the whole loaf.

This parable explains what happens when evil or sin is allowed to exist within the church, such as gossip, backbiting, complaining, arguing, etc.

If you leave the sin in the church, it will affect the whole church family in a bad way.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Who doesn't love a treasure hunt! In this parable Jesus tells of a man that discovers a hidden treasure.

Matthew 13:44

*“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a **field**. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.*

To figure out this hidden message, let's review the terms:

Ask: What is the **kingdom of heaven**? (The family of believers in this world—the church.)

Ask: What is the **field** in this parable? (The world, the hearts of all the people in the world.)

Ask: Who is the **man** that found the treasure? (Jesus)

Ask: What did he do? (The man discovered a hidden treasure in a field. He was filled with such joy he sold all that he had to buy the field to get the treasure.)

Ask: What treasure did Jesus find? (He looked into people's hearts and found true understanding of Who He is and why He came—true belief. True believers are precious to the Lord.)

Ask: What did Jesus have that He could sell in order to buy the field?

Jesus gave His life for the field. First, He came down out of Heaven to be born as a baby human. He temporarily gave up his position in glory to humble Himself as a man! (Philippians 2:5-7.) Then, He allowed Himself to be crucified on the cross to pay for our sins. (1 John 2:2.)

Jesus went through a torturous death on the cross to take the punishment that you and I deserve, so we can now come into Heaven to live with Him for all eternity.

This parable teaches us God loves us so much that He gave everything He had to save our souls because we are precious to Him. We are the treasure hidden in the field, the world.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for teaching us what the kingdom of heaven is like. Some of these parables are not easy to understand, but I know that You want to challenge us to put our thinking caps on and dig for the hidden treasure in these stories. Thank You for writing them all down for us to discover in our Bibles. It excites our hearts when we figure out the secret messages you have hidden in Your word. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. What is a parable? (A true-to-life story designed to teach a spiritual lesson.)
2. Why did Jesus teach people using stories? (Everyone loves stories. Jesus told stories to teach people about the kingdom of God because it got their attention!)
3. What is the **kingdom of heaven**? (All the true believers)
4. Tell me **the Parable of the Mustard Seed** in your own words. (This parable is talking about the growth of the kingdom of heaven; that is the growth of the church. This parable explains what can happen when a church grows out of control.)

5. Who are the **birds** in this parable? (The birds are a type of Satan and represent fake believers that come into our churches and get so comfortable they *make nests in the branches*.)
6. What can happen if "birds" come into our churches and get comfortable? (They can start to lead people to believe lies about God.)
7. If a church allows "birds" to come in and get so comfortable they *make nests in the branches*, what does that tell you about the church leadership. (This seems to say that the pastors and elders are allowing false teachers to come in and teach people lies about God's kingdom.)
8. Tell me **the Parable of the Leaven** in your own words. (A woman was making bread and even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough. This parable explains what happens when evil or sin is present within the church. If you leave the sin in the church, it will affect the whole body of believers in a bad way.)
9. What is **leaven**? (It's a substance you put into bread dough to make it puff up; yeast.)
10. In the Bible, what is leaven often a type of? (It's a symbol of evil.)
11. What does leaven have to do with the kingdom of heaven? (If you let sin into the church, it will affect the whole body of believers in a bad way.)
12. Tell me **the Parable of the Hidden Treasure** in your own words. (In this parable, a man discovers a hidden treasure in a field. He is filled with joy and sells all that he has to buy the field and obtain the treasure.)
13. What treasure did Jesus find? (He looked into people's hearts and found true understanding of Who He is and why He came—true belief. True believers are precious to the Lord.)
14. What does it mean that he sold all that he had to buy the field? (Jesus gave up His position at the right hand of God and allowed Himself to be sacrificed on the cross to die for the sins of the whole world.)

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]

Various “Kingdom” Parables, Part 2

(Matthew 13)

Introduction

We have been studying some of Jesus’ parables. We’ve learned that parables have two layers of meaning. The first level is just the story itself. The second level is like a secret message. Jesus didn’t always tell his listeners the meaning of His stories because He wanted to challenge them to think a little deeper and search out the hidden meaning. He knew if they did that, they would grow spiritually.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, it is really fun to sit with Your Word and to think about it. I know that You desire for us to dig into these parables and decipher the hidden meaning you have there for us to find. It’s like finding hidden treasure! So, thank You for Your Word. Give us a love for it. Amen.

Memory Verse

He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, (Mark 4:11)

Lesson

Today we will learn two more parables that teach us about the kingdom of heaven.

Ask: Do you remember where the **Kingdom of Heaven** is – is it someplace far off?

No, it’s right here among us. We joined God’s kingdom the moment we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior. Jesus’ kingdom is right inside of our own hearts. We believers make up the kingdom of heaven!

Jesus wanted people to know what the kingdom of heaven is like, so he compared it to things that they understood from their everyday lives.

Let’s review what we’ve learned about the kingdom of heaven so far:

Ask: What did Jesus want us to learn about His kingdom in the Parable of the Mustard Seed? [Have a child tell the story in their own words.]

He wanted us to know what can happen when a church grows out of control.

Ask: What did Jesus want us to learn about His kingdom in the Parable of the Leaven? [Have a child tell the story in their own words.]

He wanted us to know what can happen when evil or sin is allowed to remain in a church.

Ask: What did Jesus want us to learn about His kingdom in the Parable of the Hidden Treasure? [Have a child tell the story in their own words.]

He wanted us to know that He loves us so much that He gave everything He had to save our souls.

Let’s dive right into the next parable...

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

This parable is similar to the *Parable of the Hidden Treasure* in that it teaches us God gave everything to save our souls.

Matthew 13:45-46

*“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a **merchant** on the lookout for choice pearls. (46) When he discovered a **pearl of great value**, he sold everything he owned and bought it!*

A *merchant* is like a shop keeper. It’s his business to go out into the market place to buy things to sell in his store. A good merchant is always on the lookout for high quality goods or products.

Ask: Who do you think is the **merchant** in this story? (Jesus)

Ask: Who is the **pearl of great value**? (Me and you!)

We are valuable to God; He says we are righteous and that He loves us with an everlasting love! He thinks you are precious!

Ask: What does it mean that He **sold all that he had** to purchase this valuable pearl?

He gave up his position at the right hand of God in heaven to come to earth to live among mankind. Then He allowed Himself to be sacrificed on the cross to pay for our sins. He purchased our salvation.

Here’s some interesting facts about pearls:

The pearl is the only jewel that is a product of a living organism. All other jewels (diamonds, topazes, and so on) are minerals mined out of stone.

Pearls grow inside of oysters as a result of an irritation when a piece of sand gets inside of its shell.

The **oyster** is a symbol of the world, like the *field* is in the other parables.

An interesting thing to know is that according to the law God gave to Moses, oysters were unclean and the people were forbidden to eat them. Yet, these precious, valuable pearls grow inside of an oyster.

Ask: How is this a picture of the kingdom of heaven?

This is a picture of how you and I, as true believers, live in this wicked world. As we live out our lives as strong Christians in this unclean world, we can be an irritation to the worldly people around us. Worldly people can get upset with us if we let the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts, words, and actions. They might “bully” us for being believers and trying to live our lives in a way that pleases God. They might call us names or make fun of us.

Ask: How are we like a pearl of great value?

If we stay strong in our beliefs and stay faithful to God, it will cause us to grow spiritually to be even more beautiful and valuable in God’s eyes.

The Parable of the Dragnet

This parable is similar to the *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* in that it teaches us that there is going to be a day of judgment at the end of time when the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.

Matthew 13:47-50

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. (48) When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. (49) That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, (50) throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

A *dragnet* is a fishing net. Modern day commercial fishermen still use dragnets to catch fish. They throw a big net over the side of a boat and drag it along for a way, then when they pull it back up into the boat it is filled with all sorts of fish, some that are good to eat and some that aren’t, like jelly fish. They keep the good ones and throw the rest back into the sea.

Ask: How is this a picture of the kingdom of heaven?

Just as the sea contains both good and bad fish, so the world has true believers as well as unbelievers. It is not until the fishermen pull in the harvest that they can save the good and throw back the bad.

In this life, we are like one of the fish. We’re to swim around in this world telling others about the Good News of God’s plan of salvation. Our job is to obey God and tell others about His grace and goodness, but we cannot judge who is part of the kingdom of heaven and who is not. This sorting will be done at the end of time by the angels who are much more qualified than we are.

Remember the *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares*, the tares were bundled up and thrown into the lake of fire; the good wheat was gathered into the barns which is a type of Heaven (see verse 30).

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for giving us all these parables that tell us about Your kingdom. We know that the kingdom of heaven is right inside of our own hearts. As we learn about Your ways it helps us with our attitudes. We want every thought that we have, every word that we speak, and everything that we do to be pleasing to you, Lord. Help us to remember the lessons we’ve learned. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Pass the Chicken Review Game

For this review game, have all of your students sit in a circle. Randomly ask a student a review question while the chicken is **slowly** passed around the entire circle.

- If the rubber chicken arrives back at the student before they answer, the student will have to go and sit in the middle (chicken coop) of the circle.
- If a student answers correctly, then the chicken is then passed to the next person, and the game repeats.
- If a student doesn’t answer the review question correctly, they can ask the student/s in the chicken coop if they know the right answer. If the chicken coop student is correct, they can re-join the circle and the student who was unsure of the question goes into the chicken coop.

Naturally, consider creating some safety rules since students tend to get rough with the rubber chicken!

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

1. What is a parable? (A true-to-life story designed to teach a spiritual lesson.)
2. Why did Jesus teach people using stories? (Everyone loves stories. Jesus told stories to teach people about the kingdom of God because it got their attention!)
3. What is the **kingdom of heaven**? (All the true believers)
4. Tell me **the Parable of the Pearl of Great Value** in your own words. (A merchant or businessman, like a shop keeper, went on a buying trip and found a pearl of great value. So, he went and sold everything he had so he could buy it. This parable teaches us that God gave everything to save our souls.)
5. Who is the **pearl of great value**? (Us, the church)
6. What interesting fact can you tell me about pearls? (The pearl is the only jewel that is a product of a living creature. Pearls grow inside of an oyster as a result of an irritation when a piece of sand gets inside of its shell.)
7. How are we like the pearl of great value? (As we live out our lives as strong Christians in this unclean, wicked world, we can be an irritation to worldly people around us. But if we stay strong in our beliefs, it will cause us to grow spiritually and to be even more beautiful and valuable in God’s eyes.)
8. Tell me **the Parable of the Dragnet** in your own words. (Some fishermen went out fishing with a dragnet. When they brought in the catch, they put the good fish into containers and threw the bad fish away. Just as the sea contains both good and bad fish, it is not until the fishermen pull in the harvest that they can save the good and throw back the bad. This parable teaches us that there is going to be a day of judgment at the end of time when the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.)

9. What is a **dragnet**? (A fishing net)
10. What is the end of the age? (At the end of time, Jesus will judge every person that ever lived on earth.)
11. Who will sort out the good fish from the bad? (The angels.)
12. What will happen to the those who have not placed their trust in what Jesus did on the cross? (They will be thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.)

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]

The Prodigal Son

(Luke 15:11-32)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Ask: Have you ever felt like running away from home?

Perhaps you've lain in your bed at night thinking of what it would be like living somewhere else.

[Teacher, perform the following skit with a puppet or in a role-play:]

"I'm going to run away from home! I hate living here. I'm always getting bossed around. My mom is always making me clean my room, do my homework, and wash the dishes. Every day it's the same old routine. I have to get up at 7 a.m., go to bed at a 9 p.m. even when I'm not even tired — I wish I could do the things I want to, when I want to do them!"

Ask: What would make a kid want to run away from home?

[Teacher, lead a discussion. Maybe the kid is bored at home or doesn't want follow his parents' rules and just wants to do things his own way.]

It's very easy to become dissatisfied with what you have when you constantly think about the things you don't have rather than remembering all the good things you do have.

Perhaps that's what happened to the guy in a story Jesus told. Things looked a lot better anywhere else.

Opening Prayer

Father, this morning we will again learn one of Jesus' parables. I pray that You will give us the spiritual understanding that we need to see beneath the surface of this story so that we might understand the deeper spiritual truths that You want us to learn about Your kingdom. Open the eyes and ears of our heart, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

O Lord, You are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for Your help. (Psalms 86:5)

Lesson

The Pharisees and scribes were the arrogant and self-righteous religious leaders of Jesus' day. They thought it was terrible that Jesus showed kindness toward sinners. They thought they were better than most people because they strictly kept the *Ten Commandments* and all the rest of the rules. They thought that God shouldn't forgive people that they considered horrible sinners. It made them angry and resentful to hear Jesus teach that God wanted sinners to come to Heaven. So, Jesus confronted them with a parable to show them God's love for the lost sinner.

Luke 15:11-12

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. (12) The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

Although this son had everything he needed. His father provided for all his needs. He had food, clothes, and he even had servants. For some reason he was not happy at home with his family.

Maybe he was jealous of his big brother because he was always doing things better than him and he thought he could never be good enough to please his parents. Maybe he thought his father made him work too hard. So, one day he went to his father and asked for his share of his inheritance.

In Bible times, the oldest son always inherited two portions of the father's estate while the other brothers got only a single portion. Usually, the sons would not have received their father's inheritance until after their father died.

How good this father was to his younger son! He was willing to give his hard-earned savings to his son even though the son didn't deserve to have it until after his death.

The love of the father in our story is a picture of God's mercy and grace. None of us deserve anything good from God. But because of His great love for us, He went to the cross so that we might have eternal life with Him.

Jesus wanted to teach the Pharisees and scribes about God's goodness. When the younger son asked for his portion early, it showed that he was self-centered and had no respect for his father, which was just like these Jewish religious leaders.

Luke 15:13

A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living.

Some versions of the Bible say that this son *wasted his possessions with prodigal living* (NKJ), that's why we call this the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The word *prodigal* means wasteful. Someone who lives a prodigal life is one who recklessly and foolishly wastes his life.

The son had disregarded his father's love and care and decided to go his own way. How foolish! God's Word says that you and I can be just like that. God is so very good to us: He has provided for our needs and given us many things to enjoy. Yet we, too, go our own way (Isaiah 53:6) and waste what the Father has given us. We often do things that displease God.

Ask: Can you think of ways we displease God?

When you speak rudely to your brothers and sisters, talk back to your mothers, or get cocky at school with your teachers, you displease God. You do those things because you were born with a sinful heart that is constantly persuading you to do wrong despite God's goodness to you. So often we foolishly go our own way and disregard God's goodness and love.

Soon the son would have to suffer the consequences of following his own sinful heart.

Luke 15:14-15

About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. (15) He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs.

His money ran out and there was a great famine in the land. The only place he could find a job was with a local farmer who hired him to feed the pigs.

According to the law God gave to Moses, pigs were unclean animals and the people were forbidden to eat pork (Leviticus 11:7,8). Jews would not even touch pigs. For a Jew to stoop to feeding pigs was a great humiliation.

Luke 15:16

The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

This son was so hungry that the pig food began to look good to him.

Ask: Do you know what pigs eat?

They call it "*pig slop*" for a good reason! It's stuff that you and I would consider garbage! And it stinks really bad.

He was starving and would have eaten the pig food if it had been offered to him. But, for this young man to eat food that the pigs had touched was disgusting to the listeners of this story. The prodigal son had truly sunk to the depths of society.

This young man, like many who are rebellious and immature, wanted to be free to live as he pleased, but he had to hit bottom before he came to his senses. It often takes great sorrow and tragedy to cause people to look to the only One who can help them.

Luke 15:17

When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger!'

This son finally came to his senses! He realized he had made a big mistake. This was not at all what he wanted to do with his life.

He knew that his father was kind and always made sure that the people who worked for him had plenty to eat. So he thought to himself, *"I will go back home and ask him to hire me as one of his servants so that at least I won't starve to death."*

Luke 15:18-19

I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, (19) and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."

The son realized he had sinned against God and his father. Recognizing that you have sinned is the first step towards making peace with God. Jesus was telling this story to the Pharisees and was hoping they would see that there was hope for them if they would only recognize their sins like the guy in this story.

Luke 15:20

So, he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

The son headed back to his father's house. When he was still a long way off his father saw him coming.

Ask: What does that tell you about the father?

In this story, the father was watching and waiting for his son to return to home. He had never stopped loving his rebellious son. He was ready to greet his son if he returned. And when he saw his son, he ran to him and hugged and kissed him and held him in his arms.

In the same way, God will not force us to come to Him when we sin. God waits patiently for us to turn from our sins, come to Him, and ask Him for forgiveness.

Luke 15:21-24

His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' (22) "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. (23) And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, (24) for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So, the party began.

The father didn't yell at his son or punish him. He didn't tell him he'd made a stupid choice in life. Instead, he had his servants bring his son new clothes, then put a ring on his finger which showed that his father had forgiven him and accepted him back into the family. And then the father threw a great feast to celebrate his return.

The son had left out of selfishness, just like we do when we willfully disobey God. Our Father in heaven is ready and waiting for us to confess our sins so that He can forgive us and restore us to right standing with Him. (1 John 1:9) God's great love reaches out and finds us sinners no matter why or how we got lost.

The Older Son

Ask: How many of you have siblings? Are you ever **jealous** of your brother or sister? Have you ever been **resentful** when your sibling got something you felt you deserved?

That's the situation in this story. It was hard for the older brother to accept his younger brother when he returned.

Luke 15:25

Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house,

The older son was out dutifully working in the field. He had no idea what was going on. When he got back to the house the party was well underway. There was laughter and noise and rejoicing. The musicians were playing and everyone was singing and dancing. The barbeque was filling the air with delicious aromas.

Luke 15:26-28

and he asked one of the servants what was going on. (27) 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.' (28) "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him,

The older brother was angry. He thought, "*This isn't fair!*" And he absolutely refused to go into the celebration. The father tried to reason with his older son and get him to join the party. But he would have nothing to do with it!

The older brother's attitude was just as self-righteous as the attitudes of the Pharisees to whom Jesus was telling this story.

Luke 15:29-30

but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. (30) Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

In the story of the prodigal son, the father's response is compared with the older brother's response. The father forgave because he was filled with love. The older brother refused to forgive because he was bitter about the injustice of it all. His resentment just showed that he was just as lost to the father's love as the younger brother had been.

Luke 15:31

His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours.

The father encouraged him to rejoice on behalf of his younger brother. He said, "*everything I have is yours.*" The father wasn't going to take the older son's inheritance away from him. He still had the double portion that was his by birth right, even though the younger son had already spent his single portion. The father was just glad the son had come home where he belonged and he wanted the older son to rejoice, too.

Luke 15:32

We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!"

In Jesus' story, the older brother represents the Pharisees who were listening to Jesus tell this story. They were so busy finding fault with Jesus, they missed the whole the point of His story. Jesus wanted them to understand that God is good and gracious and kind and forgiving, and that He's just waiting for them to turn to Him.

Their self-righteous attitude prevented them from entering into the joy of experiencing God's gracious forgiveness for themselves, just like the older brother's resentment kept him from entering into the celebration.

Don't you miss out on the celebration we'll have when we all get to heaven. God is longing to forgive your sins and give you everlasting life. Just turn to Him and give Him your heart. Ask Him to be your Lord and Savior. And you, too, can join the party we'll have in heaven one day.

Closing Prayer

Father, I know that You are longing to forgive us our sins and to give us everlasting life. I pray that we would be like the younger son, and come to You with repentant hearts. Help us not to be resentful of others that receive Your love and forgiveness. We want to rejoice with You and the angels when the lost come into Your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

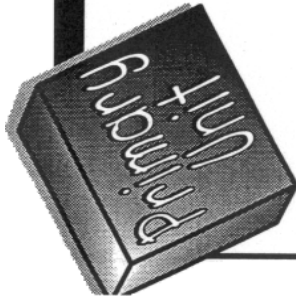
Have the children work on *The Lost Son* worksheet or send it home as a “take home” paper.

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. Who were the Pharisees and the scribes? (The arrogant and self-righteous religious leaders of Jesus’ day)
2. Why did the Pharisees and the scribes think it was terrible that Jesus showed kindness towards sinners? (They thought they were better than most people.)
3. This is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. What does the word *prodigal* mean? (The word *prodigal* means wasteful or reckless.)
4. Tell me in your own words the Parable of the Prodigal Son?
5. Who does the father represent? (God, the Father)
6. The son disregarded his father’s love and care, decided to go his own way. What is that a picture of? (We, too, go our own way and waste what the Father has given us.)
7. What is the love of the father in the parable a picture of? (God’s love for us. He willing lets us enjoy all that belongs to Him.)
8. What are some ways we displease God? (Speak rudely to our brothers and sisters, talk back to our mothers, get cocky at school with our teachers, etc.)
9. Why do you do things that displease God? (We were born with a sinful heart that is constantly persuading us to do wrong despite God’s goodness to us.)
10. Why is feeding pigs the lowest possible thing for the listeners of this story to imagine? (According to the law God gave to Moses, pigs were unclean animals and people were forbidden to eat pork or even touch a pig.)
11. What did the prodigal son finally realize once he came to his senses? (The son realized he had sinned against God and his father.)
12. Why did Jesus tell this story to the Pharisees and scribes? (He wanted them to realize that they were sinners and needed to ask the Father for forgiveness.)
13. Where was the father when the son finally came home? (He was watching and waiting for him and ready to greet him.)
14. Tell me about the older brother? Who did he represent in this story? (The arrogant and self-righteous Pharisees and scribes who were listening to Jesus tell this story.)
15. Why was the older brother so full of hate and bitterness and resentment? (His father was throwing a “welcome home” party for his little brother and he didn’t think it was fair. He had stayed home and done all the right things—worked hard for his father, never did any prodigal living like his younger brother had.)
16. Why did the father throw that party for the younger son? (Because he had been lost, but now he was back home safe and sound.)

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]



The Lost Son

Read Luke 15:11–32. Then complete the sentences or mark the statements true or false.

1. There was a man with two sons. The _____ (a) younger (b) older son asked for his inheritance.
2. The son spent the inheritance very _____. (a) wisely (b) foolishly
3. The son got a job feeding _____. (a) horses (b) cows (c) pigs
4. **True or False** It was a very good job and the son had a lot to eat.
5. The son finally came to his senses and realized that his father's _____ (a) hired (b) top men had more food than he did.
6. **True or False** The son decided he would say to his father, “I have sinned against you and I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.”
7. When his father saw his son from far away, he _____ (a) walked slowly (b) ran to him and _____ (a) yelled at (b) kissed him.
8. His father did not give him _____ (a) a robe (b) a ring (c) sandals (d) a bag of money.
9. The older son was very _____ (a) angry (b) happy that his father was giving his brother a celebration.
10. **True or False** The father said to the older boy, “My son, you are always with me and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again.”

In this parable “the father” represents God. What are some of the qualities of God shown by this parable? Unscramble the words.



yremc _____ veol _____

gfroineessv _____



The Good Samaritan

(Luke 10:25-37; Luke 6:27-36; and Matthew 5:43-44)

Introduction

Ask: Have you ever **not** wanted to do what you knew was the right thing to do?

Maybe you knew that the Holy Spirit was prompting you to be a friend to someone that everyone at school thinks is just a dope. The Spirit is telling you it is the right thing to do, but you think, *“What will everyone think of me if I make friends with someone no one likes?”*

Or maybe your mom asks you to go down the street to visit this sick old lady and read the Bible to her. In your heart of hearts, you know it would be the kind thing to do, but you think, *“I don’t want to spend my Saturday with a sick old lady! I want to be out playing baseball with my friends.”*

Sometimes it’s hard to do what’s right.

Today we are going to learn the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*.

Ask: How many of you already know this story?

I want to challenge you to pay close attention to this lesson. See if God has something He wants to teach you.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be the kind of people You want us to be. We pray this morning that You will give us the power of the Holy Spirit to understand the lesson You have for us today. Then help us to apply the lesson to our lives. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Memory Verse

Love knows no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:10)

And/or

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (Luke 6:35)

And/or

Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:17)

Lesson

One day a lawyer came and asked Jesus a tricky question.

Luke 10:25

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

Ask: How would you answer that question?

The Jews in Jesus’ day believed that a person must obey the *Ten Commandments* perfectly in order to go to Heaven after they die. They thought that they could earn eternal life by doing good works.

Jesus came to earth to tell people that it is impossible to earn eternal life. The good things we do don’t make us right in the sight of a holy God. You can’t do enough good things to make up for the sin in your life. Jesus wanted people to understand that they needed a Savior and that He came to be our Savior.

When the scribes and Pharisees heard Jesus teach about God’s kingdom, His teachings were so radically different than anything they’d ever heard before, they thought He was being wicked.

Because the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus’ popularity with the people, they would try to trick Jesus into saying something contrary to the Word of God. Their hope was to bring Him before the high priest and have Him punished.

This lawyer in our story this morning was an expert in explaining God’s laws. He, of all people, knew God’s laws very well. So, when he

asked Jesus, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” he was just testing Jesus to see what He would say.

Luke 10:26

Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

Jesus answered the lawyer by asking him another question.

Luke 10:27

The man answered, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The lawyer answered Jesus’ question by summing up the *Ten Commandments*. The first four commandments tell us to love God. (Don’t have any other gods, don’t have any idols, don’t take God’s name in vain, and keep the Sabbath holy.) The last six commandments tell us to love others. (Honor your parents, don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t lie, and don’t covet.)

The whole law is summed up with, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbor as yourself.*”

Ask: When it says to *love your neighbor as yourself*, what does it mean?

Just as you love and care for your own needs, you are to love others. When you’re hungry, you get yourself something to eat. If a friend of yours came over you wouldn’t get yourself something to eat and not give anything to your friend, would you? You wouldn’t make a houseguest go sleep out in the back yard while you went and slept in a nice warm comfortable cozy place. In the same way you take care of yourself, so you are to treat your neighbors; the Golden Rule.

Luke 10:28

“Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

Jesus knew that it is impossible to do this. No one in his own strength could ever love God or his neighbor with all of his heart, soul, strength and mind. And, the lawyer was probably feeling very uneasy at this point, knowing that he didn’t love God with all his being or his neighbor as himself. So, he asks Jesus to define the term “*neighbor*.”

Luke 10:29

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

As a Jew, the lawyer probably believed that his neighbor was only his fellow Jew. So, Jesus used a parable to show the lawyer what God’s love is like.

Luke 10:30-31

*Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. (31) “By chance a **priest** came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by.*

A priest is like a pastor. They spent their lives teaching people about God’s law.

Surely a priest, who served God and led others in the worship of God would care about this wounded man. But he didn’t. He glanced at the injured man, saw that he was a bloody mess, went to the other side of the road and walked on by, choosing not to dirty himself. He didn’t want to become unclean.

Luke 10:32

*A **Temple assistant** walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side*

The Levites were like deacons. They did work around the temple. Surely this guy would stop to help this poor man. But he, too, refused to help. He stopped and looked at the victim lying there, but he also went to the other side of the road and just passed him by.

Luke 10:33

*“Then a despised **Samaritan** came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him.*

This is very interesting. The Jews and the Samaritans had been bitter enemies for years. The Jews despised Samaritans and the Samaritans despised the Jews. Jews would never dream of helping a Samaritan and the Samaritans would never think of helping a Jew.

Yet it was a Samaritan who showed compassion to the wounded Jew! This must have stunned this lawyer who was listening to this story.

Luke 10:34-35

Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. (35) The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

The Samaritan paid all costs, left money, and promised more!

Now Jesus asks the lawyer a question.

Luke 10:36-37

“Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. (37) The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

It was probably hard for the lawyer to admit that the Samaritan was the hero in Jesus’ story. Yet the Samaritan was a wonderful example of what it means to be a true neighbor. He showed kindness to a man who probably hated him.

Jesus told His followers, “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid.” (Luke 6:35 NLT)

Sometimes it’s even hard to show love to our friends. It may require sharing, giving in to their way, or letting them be first. It’s even harder to reach out and love our enemies. It takes God’s love to be kind to someone who has been mean to us. You can’t do it in your own strength, you must ask Jesus into your heart and then you can call upon the Holy Spirit to give you the power you need.

We need to ask God to help us notice people who are in need. Look for practical ways to be of help each day. [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion using the following questions.]

- How can we help the **sick**, or the **old**, or the **poor**? (Visit the sick, send cards, be a friend, say a kind word, or invite them to church.)
- How can we be good neighbors to people who live on the other side of the world? (Support mission work, write letters, and pray)

Regardless of who they are, God will give you the power to love them.

Ask: So, who is your neighbor?

Anyone you can help is your neighbor — any friend or enemy in trouble. **Showing love and kindness shows that you truly love God.** God loves every person, no matter what church he goes to, or if he’s been mean to you, or if his skin is a different color. God wants us to do good to all. To Jesus, everyone was worth dying for.

Closing Prayer

Father, we usually know what is right. We pray that you will empower us to do what we know we should do. Help us to always be loving and kind to everyone, no matter which church they go to or what color their skin is. We want to be Good Samaritans, helping people in need, no matter what the cost is to us personally. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Use the “Good Samaritan” booklet pattern found on my website (at https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com/KidsWorld/TopicalTeachings/Parables/05bParables_Samaritan_worksheet1.pdf), to make a little booklet about this lesson.

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. How did the Jews in Jesus’ day believe that a person got eternal life? (By obeying the *Ten Commandments* perfectly and doing good works.)
2. Why did the scribes and Pharisees think that Jesus was wicked? (He was teaching that you don’t get to heaven by keeping the 10 Commandments. His teachings were so radically different than anything they’d ever heard before.)
3. What did Jesus teach the people that made the scribes and Pharisees so angry? (That you couldn’t keep the *Ten Commandments* perfectly; that’s why you need a Savior.)
4. If a lawyer is an expert in explaining God’s laws, why did he ask Jesus what to do to inherit eternal life? (He was trying to trick Jesus into saying something contrary to the Word of God.)
5. Why did the religious leaders of Jesus day try to trick Him into saying something contrary to the Word of God? (They wanted to bring Him before the high priest and have Him punished.)
6. Tell the parable of the Good Samaritan in your own words.
7. Which of the three was the “*neighbor*” to the guy who fell among the thieves? (The Samaritan)
8. When Jesus said to *love your neighbor as yourself*, what was he saying? (Just as you love and care for your own needs, you are to love others.)
9. How can we help the **sick** or the **old** or the **poor**? (Visit the sick, send cards, be a friend, say a kind word, or invite them to church.)
10. How can we be good neighbors to people who live on the other side of the world? (Support mission work, write letters, and pray.)
11. It’s impossible to love God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself. So, what must you do? (Ask Jesus into your heart and call upon the Holy Spirit to give you the power you need to be loving.)
12. What is one thing God showed you in this lesson today?

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]

3

Once a man was taking a trip when he was attacked by robbers and left half dead.



9

A Samaritan stopped and helped the man as Jesus wants us to help people.



"Love your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27c

The Good Samaritan

8

1

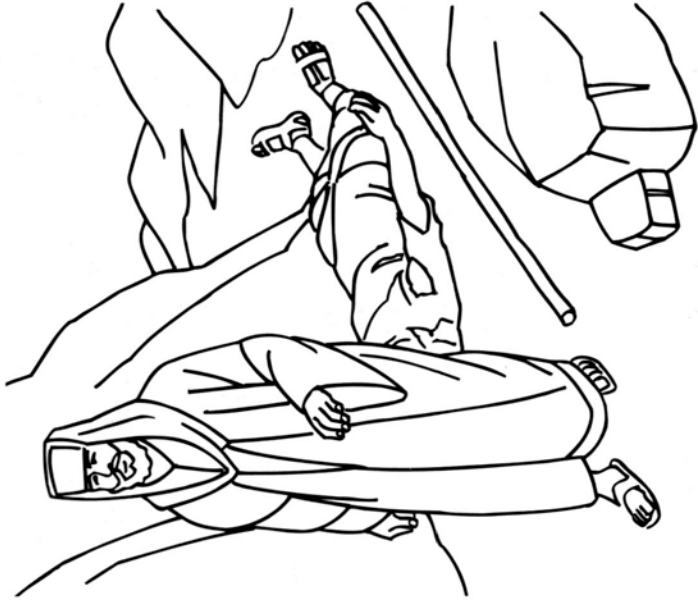
5

Another religious leader passed by the hurt man without stopping to help.



4

A religious leader saw the injured man, but he did not stop to help.



This book was made by

2

Draw a picture of how you have been a Good Samaritan by helping someone.

7