

Parables of Jesus

Theme Memory Verse

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11

Introduction to the teacher:

The word parable comes from the Greek word, *parabole*, which means a placing beside, or a comparison or simple story to illustrate a moral truth. Jesus used parables to explain a deeper spiritual truth. They have been described as, "Earthly stories with a heavenly meaning". Matthew 13:34-35 says, "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

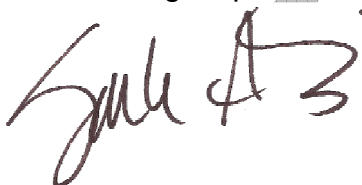
'I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.' "

Jesus had a message to deliver that until that point had been previously hidden since the beginning of time. Jesus told simple stories about everyday events so that the people of his day could understand more clearly about the Kingdom of God. Some of these "everyday events" are not as everyday to our modern-day mindset, but with a closer examination of each parable, there is much to be learned about the Kingdom of God for modern-day people.

In this series, we will examine six parables, or simple stories, that Jesus told. Each lesson is divided into two sessions. The lesson, songs*, memory verse, and craft are presented in the first session, and the lesson review, songs*, game, and memory verse recitation in the second session.

I hope you and the children you teach will have a better understanding of the meaning of these simple stories and will grow deeper in your faithwalk once you've completed this series.

In His Loving Grip,



Sarah A. Keith

* Song Time Suggestions (Available with purchase)

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Lesson 1: Parable of the Sower

Lesson Focus: "Faith"

Song Time

"Jesus Loves Me Rap" (Sung in cadence style)

Leader: Jesus loves me this I know,

Group echoes: Jesus loves me this I know,

Leader: For the Bible tells me so,

Group echoes: For the Bible tells me so,

Leader: We are weak but he is strong,

Group echoes: We are weak but he is strong,

Leader: Let us serve him all day long,

Group echoes: Let us serve him all day long.

Leader: Sound off

Group: One, Two!

Leader: Sound off

Group: Three, Four!

Leader: Sound off

Group: One, Two, Three, Four, One-Two, Three-Four!

(Repeat)

Accompany rap with hand motions. For example, Jesus= pointer finger pointing to both palms of hands, weak= slouching and hands dropped to side, strong= show muscles both arms.

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Do you know what a parable is? (Allow for discussion)

A parable in the Bible is a simple story to explain something that is very important to God. Jesus told simple stories, or parables, so that people could understand more clearly about His Kingdom. It has been said that parables are *earthly stories with heavenly meanings*. Jesus taught using parables to show us how things on earth are compared to things in heaven. He did this so we would know how God wants us to live. The Bible tells us to hide God's Word in our hearts. What does it mean to hide God's Word in our hearts? (allow for discussion)

When we memorize God's Word, by thinking carefully about it, remembering it, and obeying it, we help to keep ourselves from sinning. Over the next several weeks we will explore some of the parables that Jesus taught. During this time we will sing some great songs, play some fun games, make some crafts, and have the opportunity to earn rewards for memorizing Bible verses. Our main Bible verse for this session is found in **Psalm 119:11, which says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."** (Spend a few minutes saying the verse)

Our first parable has to do with a farmer that went out to sow some seeds. In this parable the farmer represents people that tell others about God. That could be a preacher, a teacher, a mom or dad, a friend, or even you! The seeds represent God's Word, and the different soils represent the people that hear God's Word and how they respond to it. Let's listen to the parable and decide which soil we are like.

Read: Matthew 13:3-8, and 18-23 from a child-friendly Bible.

Enrichment Idea

Bring in a few plants in various stages of health (i.e. partly withered, over watered and yellowing, healthy, etc.)

Ask the children, "What does it take to make a plant grow healthy and strong?" (Possible answers are: the right amount of water, fertilizer and sun, etc.) The point of this parable is where the seeds are planted, therefore, emphasize that where a seed is planted is very important, as well as the amount of water, fertilizer and sun they receive. Ask, "Can a seed grow if a bird carries it away? Can a seed grow if it lands on rocks? Why not? (Listen for answers) Can a seed grow if it lands in thorns? Why not? (Listen for answers) In fact, all the best fertilizer, water, and sun will not allow a seed to grow unless it is planted in good soil. The Bible tells us that the seeds in this parable represent God's Word and we are either like "good soil" or like a "path with seed-eating birds", or "rocky soil", or "thorn-filled soil". We want to be like "good soil" that allows

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God's Word to grow deep in our minds and lives so that we will be more and more like Jesus. We don't want God's Word to be snatched away from us, like the path with seed-eating birds; or for God's Word to never take root in our lives like the rocky soil, because if that happens, we will be far from God and away from his love, forgiveness, and protection. And we don't want the concerns of this life to make us afraid and worried so that we don't trust Jesus to care for us, like the thorn-filled soil that chokes the life of the plant.

Ask, "Do you have God's Word planted in your heart? You can start today by asking him to save you and to become your Savior and Forever Friend."

Once Jesus saves you and forgives you, you must then begin to read (or listen to) God's Word in order to grow to become more like him.

Additional Enrichment Ideas

Any or all of the following ideas may be used to illustrate this parable.

Plant It: Give each child a small package of Wildflower seeds. Tell the parable, and as you tell it, have the children plant their seeds into "good soil" in a designated place on your church property. Children can then use the empty seed package to store their "Good Soil" flip books from today's craft project.

Draw It: Lay four long strips of butcher paper on the floor and while you read the parable (Matthew 13:3-8) have the children draw sections of the story. Choose some of the children to draw farmers scattering seeds onto:

- 1) a path with seed-eating birds,
- 2) rocks with a bright sun,
- 3) onto thorny bushes,
- 4) onto good soil with plants taking root and growing big and strong.

Once the drawings are complete read Matthew 13:18-23 to explain the story using the drawings as your visual aids.

Act It Out: Write the words, "Path", "Rocks", "Thorns", and "Good Soil" onto large cards and lay them on the floor around the room. Before you read the story tell the children what they are to do. Choose one child to be the farmer, and a few more children to be the birds. As you read the story have the farmer drop a few seeds or kernels of corn onto each of the cards. When the farmer drops the seeds onto the "Path" have the birds snatch the seeds and carry them off. As the farmer drops the seeds onto the "Rocks" have the rest of the children yell out, "Clunk, Clunk". When the farmer drops the seeds onto the "Thorns", have the children hold their necks and make loud choking sounds. When the farmer drops the seeds onto the "Good Soil" have the children say, "Oh...that is just right.", and give a thumbs up.

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Memory Verse: 2 Peter 3:18

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

(To grow in grace means to trust in Jesus more and more. Grace is an undeserved favor. We do not earn God’s grace. It is freely given because God loves us. See Ephesian 2:8-9. Knowledge comes through reading and hearing God’s Word. Knowledge and Wisdom are also gifts from the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:8.)

Pray

Dear Jesus, I believe that you died to forgive my sins. I want you to be my Savior and Forever Friend. Help me to follow you and obey you. Help me to plant your Word in my heart so that I don’t sin against you. Help me to have faith that grows big and strong. Amen.

Craft: “Good Soil” Flip Booklet (Available with purchase)

Directions are listed in the Patterns and Templates section at the back of the book.

Craft: Dial-A-Memory Verse (Available with purchase)



Lesson Review (To be used when dividing the lesson into two sessions)

Song Time: “Tell Me The Stories of Jesus”, “I Have Hidden God’s Word In My Heart”.

Discussion Questions (Available with purchase)

Memory Review

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18

(If there’s time following today’s game, work on the Dial-A-Memory Verse craft. Then review the Theme Verse and Lesson One’s memory verse and score accordingly. If there is not enough time after the game, complete the Dial-A-Memory verse craft during Lesson Two’s craft session.)

Game: Sow the Seeds (Available with purchase)