

PARABLES PART 2

Lesson 2: The Sower and the Seed

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

When you plant a seed, many factors determine if it will grow. One major factor is the condition of the soil in which the seed is planted. In this lesson students will be challenged to look at the condition of the “soil” of their hearts. Our hearts must be fertile soil so our faith can grow roots and help us stand strong when the trials of life come.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: When we are rooted and planted in God, we will experience a fruitful life.
2. WHY: The condition of our heart causes people to respond to the message of God’s kingdom in different ways.
3. HOW: Your students will be challenged to look at the obstacles that hinder their spiritual growth and be faced with choosing to desire growth or stagnation.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:1-23

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 7:15-20; 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:14-19

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read Matthew 13:1-23.

It is a heartbreaking truth that when we spread the message of Jesus, not everyone who hears the message is ready to receive it. This passage helps to take the pressure off teachers and preachers everywhere who think that if they could have spoken more clearly or if they would have said it a different way, then maybe that person would have



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accepted the message of the gospel. Scripture reveals that God is working behind the scenes to prepare hearts to accept the message of Jesus. This parable reminds us to rely on God's grace and work in drawing people to faith in Jesus. We can prepare for hours for a lesson or sermon, but in the end God does the work in people's hearts.

The four groups revealed in this parable can be found in our own youth ministries. Some students hear the gospel but too tightly grip the desires of this world. Others sit in our youth rooms but pay little attention to the message of Jesus. Some teenagers begin the journey of following Christ but become distracted, discouraged, or disinterested. And others lead lives of committed discipleship to Jesus. And while it may be years down the road before the seed begins to show signs of taking root, God continually is working in the lives of our students.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What prevents you from growing roots? Let's chat about it as a group tonight!
- How is your heart like soil? We'll dig deep (get it?) for some answers tonight!

Parent Email

We've provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We're in our second week of a three-lesson series on parables. We had a great study this week on the parable of the sower and the seed found in Matthew 13.



Our discussion focused on knowing that God wants us to live a fruitful life, and we talked about specific ways we can encourage growth in our faith. Students are surrounded with objects that desire to take their attention off growing their faith, but they need to rely on God to build their roots.

As you go throughout the week, help reinforce this teaching in your teenager's life by asking these kinds of questions as you have the opportunity:

- What are some areas in your life where your faith needs deeper roots?
- What are the toughest things you as a teenager face that might prevent you from growing spiritually?
- The larger a tree is, the deeper and larger its roots are. How is this idea similar to your need for roots in your faith?

Have a great week!



PARABLES PART 2

Lesson 2:
The Sower
and the Seed

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

For the opening activity, you will need three clear glasses—one filled with good potting soil, one filled with rocks, and one left empty. Present the various glasses to the students and talk about how the different environments would affect the ability for a seed to grow.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area.

Open in prayer, and then ASK:

- *Of these three glasses, which is the most favorable for growing a seed? Which is the second-best choice? Which is the worst? Why?*
- *What forces or factors might prevent the glass with the potting soil from allowing a seed to grow into a plant?*
- *In what ways can you help seeds to grow and become healthy and fruitful?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *When you plant a seed, many factors determine if it will grow. One major factor is the condition of the soil in which the seed is planted. God wants us to examine the condition of the “soil” of our hearts. They need to be fertile soil so our faith can grow roots and help us stand strong when the trials of life come.*

TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) God calls us to live a fruitful life, (2) The wrong soil will hinder spiritual growth, and (3) The right soil will nurture spiritual growth.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.



Read Matthew 13:1-23 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's take a look at what God has to say to us through this parable.*

1. God calls us to live a fruitful life

ASK:

- *What is a seed's purpose when you plant it?*
- *If a seed refuses to grow or is in conditions that do not nurture growth, it isn't fulfilling its purpose—what is our purpose as followers of Christ?*
- *This passage says Jesus didn't explain the meaning of the parable to the large crowd, but he did explain it to his disciples. In just a few words, how would you summarize Jesus' rationale in verses 10-17?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Once seeds have been planted, they depend on water and the sun. In a similar way, followers of Christ are dependent on God to continue to nurture and grow our faith. And as our faith grows, it will naturally produce fruit—evidence of God's work in changing us, transforming us, and helping us lead a Jesus-centered life.*

2. The wrong soil will hinder spiritual growth

ASK:

- *What are some challenges a seed faces while it is trying to grow?*
- *What are some challenges followers of Christ face as they try to grow in their faith?*
- *Look at verses 19-22, where Jesus gives three examples of bad soil. How can you recognize when seed falls on a footpath? on rocky soil? among the thorns?*
- *What are the toughest things you as a teenager face that might prevent your faith from growing spiritually?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The bad soils revealed in this parable can be found in our own world today—even in our churches. Some people hear the gospel but too tightly grip the desires of this world.*



Others sit in church each week but pay little attention to the message of Jesus. Some people begin the journey of following Christ but become distracted, discouraged, or disinterested.

But the good news is that we don't have to be these bad soils; we can be the kind of soil that God desires, the kind of soil that produces growth in our lives and in the lives of other people.

3. The right soil will nurture spiritual growth

ASK:

- *Look at verse 23. How do you know if you're maturing in your faith? What evidence will be seen?*
- *The larger a tree is, the deeper and larger its roots are. How is this idea similar to your need for roots in your faith?*
- *Why must the desire for growth be greater than the desire to sin in order for us to grow in our faith?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *When a seed is first planted, its main focus is securing roots. But over time, as the root system is established, the focus changes to reproducing itself in another seed. We are surrounded by people who need to hear the message of the Gospel and that God loves them more than they could ever imagine. It is as we grow our faith that the desire to share our faith grows in us.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:

- *Read Ephesians 3:14-19. What can keep you spiritually strong, according to this passage? Do you find this passage easy or difficult to follow—and why?*
- *Read Matthew 7:15-20. What is the difference between recognizing a person by his or her fruit, and judging people who aren't consistent in their faith? How does God want us to respond and not want us to respond?*



- *Read Matthew 28:18-20. How does this passage relate to our conversation today?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

APPLICATION

ASK:

- *Where do you find yourself in the seed-planting process? Finding your roots? Growing your roots? Sharing the fruits?*
- *What are some ways you can encourage growth not only in yourself, but also in the lives of people around you?*
- *What are some activities that you can do on our own to encourage your “faith roots” to grow?*
- *In what ways can you plant a seed in someone’s life, even if it will not grow for several years?*

SUMMARY

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



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FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong (Ephesians 3:17).



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