



44. Growing



Mark 4:1-25, Galatians 5:22-23

Jesus tells the parable of the sower, and explains it to his disciples



To help the children understand the different ways people respond to God's Word.

To help them reflect on how they are responding to what they hear, and how they would like to grow in faith or understanding of God. Jesus used a parable about seeds growing on different types of ground to teach his followers about different responses people have (consciously or subconsciously) to hearing his words.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- Which type of soil best represents how you are responding to God's Word just now?
- How would you like to ask God to help you grow?

 Take some time to pray for your

Take some time to pray for your group.



Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

Corners Game

You will need: pens and paper, Blu-Tack, equipment to play music

Make up signs saying path, rocks, weeds and soil, and put one up at each corner of the room. Tell the children that they are going to be the seeds in the game. Play some music and let them dance or move around. When you stop the music and shout, "Scatter!" they have to choose one corner to go to. Get a leader who is not looking to call out either path, rocks, or weeds. The seeds in that area die so

the children there are eliminated from the game.

Repeat this until you have a winner. The children may have noticed that while the path, rocks, and weeds were called out at different points in the game, the soil was never called out. If they haven't noticed, you could point this out to them and explain that the soil was the one place where the seeds were able to grow.

Seed Challenge

You will need: sunflower seeds, bowls, chopsticks, timer

Choose a few children to take part in a challenge. Give each of them a bowl containing sunflower seeds, an empty bowl and a pair of chopsticks. See who is able to transfer the most seeds from one bowl to the other in a minute, using the chopsticks.

(continued overleaf)

You can find a minute timer here:

https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=ebvtJCu33vM or else, simply use a timer on your watch or phone.

Seed Scattering Game

You will need: large sheet with areas representing the different types of ground in the parable of the sower (there is one to print out at this website: https://christiangamesandcrafts.com/items/view/152 or you could design your own), seeds, blindfolds

Each child in turn is blindfolded, given a handful of seeds, then spun around a couple of times. They then scatter their seeds across the ground. Give them points for the number of seeds that fall on the good soil, and see who is able to get the highest score.



Recap/ Intro

Last time we talked a bit about Jesus teaching the people and we thought about one of the stories he told. See if the children can remember the story of the wise and foolish builders and what it meant.

Both builders in the story listened to Jesus' teaching, but he said the one who put it into practice was wise and would be equipped to deal with stormy times, while the one who didn't put it into practice was foolish.

We're going to think some more about that today, and to do that we're going to learn about another parable Jesus told.

See if the children can remember what a parable is, and remind them that it is a story with a meaning, used to teach or to make a point.

Parable of the Sower

You will need: equipment to play video, Bible, images printed out or on PowerPoint (as detailed below)

First we'll watch a video that will show us the story Jesus told.

Show the video from the Max 7 website, telling the parable of the sower.

https://www.max7.org/en/resource/ParableSower

Then read Mark 4:3-8

This is the story Jesus told. I wonder if you have any idea what he could have been trying to teach the people? (Allow the children to give some answers.)

Jesus' disciples didn't understand, so later on they asked Jesus to explain it.

He said the seed represents God's Word and the farmer is someone who is taking it to others, so the different types of ground the seed fell on tell us about different ways people respond when they hear about God.

Use pictures 3-6 from this set of Free Bible Images, either printed out or displaying them on a laptop/ PowerPoint as you explain:

http://freebibleimages.org/ illustrations/parable-sower/

First, there was seed that fell on the path. Because the path was so hard, the seed could never sink into the ground and grow. It just sat there on the path until the birds came and ate it.

That is like people who hear about God but it doesn't really sink in. Maybe they aren't really listening or paying attention, or they don't really want to know. What they hear about God makes no difference to them at all and they quickly forget about it.

Then there is the seed that fell on the rocky soil. The seeds there sank into the ground and the plants grew up quickly, but they weren't able to grow deep roots because of all the rocks underneath the soil, so, before long, they withered and died.

That is like people who hear about God and at first they are excited and enthusiastic, but then there are problemsmaybe someone makes fun of them for being a Christian or for going to SU Group to find out more, or they have some other kind of difficulty that puts them off - and they aren't interested any more.

The third type of ground is the thorn bushes. The plants here grow at first but, as they grow up, the thorns grow around them and choke them. That is like someone who hears about God and is interested at first but then lots of other things get in the way - family, friends, sports, activities, things they have to do. There's nothing wrong with any of those things but for some people life gets so busy that they don't have any time to think about God and they lose interest.

Finally there is the good soil where the crops grow well. That is like people who pay attention to God's Word and keep going when it is hard and make time to find out more. People like that grow in their faith. They learn to know God more and trust him more, and they are able to help other people understand as well.



Reflection

You will need: pictures (printed from additional document: Crops Pictures), pens or pencils All of us are in this story.
because all of us are people
who have heard something
from God's Word, the Bible.
Some of you might have heard
a lot if you have family who are
Christians, or you go to church,
or you've been coming to the
SU Group for a long time.
Others of you might only have
been coming for a few weeks
so you've only heard a little bit.
But all of us decide what our
response is going to be.

Show the children the picture of a barren field (from additional document: Crops Pictures) and ask them:

What kind of things can make it difficult to be a Christian/ to keep finding out more about God? What things can get in the way of that?

Write their answers in the space around the picture.

Then repeat the exercise with the picture of the flourishing field, asking:

What kind of things can help us to keep growing in faith or to find out more about God?

Depending on the stage your group is at, you could point out that what we are like on the inside is shown by what we are like on the outside. What we do and say reflects what we value. What do people see in what you do and say? (You could give the children a moment to think about this individually.)

Prayer Activity

You will need: flower for each child (printed from additional document: Prayer Activity), pens or pencils, Blu-Tack

Give each child a paper flower and give them a moment to think about what they have heard about God, what they know about him, and how they want to respond.

Maybe there is a question they want to ask, maybe they want

to ask God for help to grow in faith or keep learning about him, maybe they want to say thank you to God for something they know about him.

Give them a moment to write down their response. They could then use Blu-Tack to stick them to the wall to create a field of flowers.

Lead them in prayer asking God to help them keep growing in knowledge of him.