

Sowing and Growing

LESSON

1

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ Jesus wants us to tell others about him.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ act out the parable of the sower,
- ✓ learn how they can “sow” God’s Word,
- ✓ understand why it’s important to tell others about Jesus, and
- ✓ practice sharing their faith.

YOU’LL NEED

- grape soda*
- vanilla ice cream*
- a blindfold
- an ice-cream scoop
- cups
- spoons
- Bibles
- a photocopy of the “Parable of the Sower” script (pp. 14-15)
- scissors
- photocopies of the “Dough-n’t You Know God Loves You?” handout (p. 19)
- 8 oz. cream cheese*
- 1 lb. powdered sugar*
- 2 to 3 drops peppermint oil*
- plastic sandwich bags
- photocopies of the “God’s Garden” handout (p. 20)
- tacks or transparent tape
- colored pencils or markers

* Always check for allergies before serving snacks.

BIBLE BASIS

Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

Jesus, being a wise teacher, related deep truths about God's kingdom through simple stories about agrarian life that his listeners could readily understand. Compared to the endless arguing and nit-picking of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, Jesus' teaching must have seemed lively, relevant, and fresh. The parable of the sower is such a story.

Even his own disciples asked Jesus why he taught in parables. Jesus explained that understanding would be given only to those who had faith. Critics who listened intending to argue and contradict would find little in Jesus' simple anecdotes to criticize. But those who listened with faith would discover profound truths and insights about God's kingdom. We can interpret all of Jesus' parables at many different levels. In this lesson we'll focus on the idea that kids can be sowers and that when they share their faith, they can trust God to produce fruit for his kingdom.

1 Corinthians 2:9

God has unimaginably wonderful things planned for us! To a child, Walt Disney World might qualify as unimaginably wonderful. But God is the mastermind of our glorious future. The label "child of God" carries with it incredible benefits. God gave us this good news to share with a world of lost people. Let's do it!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Young children are not at all shy about sharing their faith. If Laura's family honors Jesus as Lord, Laura naturally assumes that others will do the same. But as their social contacts increase, children become aware that not everyone accepts God's Word and that a large and vocal part of our society looks down on Christianity, labeling it simplistic and narrow-minded. It takes only one or two encounters with skeptics to make kids fearful of speaking out about their faith. Kids need to see that telling others about Jesus is like giving a precious gift. Use this lesson to help kids learn fun, practical, positive ways to share their faith.

The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

Glob Tag

As kids arrive, ask if they've ever seen a purple cow; then promise to show them one in class today. Set out chilled grape soda and vanilla ice cream. Explain that a purple cow is a float made with these ingredients and that kids will be able to sample one as soon as they've played the opening game.

Ask for a volunteer to be "It" for a game of Glob Tag. As you blindfold It, say: **The rest of you spread out around the room. Once I say "freeze" you can't move until It touches you. Then you'll hook arms with It and go in search of another person. You'll keep adding people until everyone is part of the "glob." Once you've joined the glob, you have to be silent. You can't tell It where to go or pull It in any direction—members of the glob just move along wherever It takes them. The game is over when everyone is part of the glob.**

Start the game by calling out: **Freeze!** Kids are likely to call to It to find them so they can finish the game and enjoy the treat you've promised. It's fine for kids to give verbal clues before they're caught, but remind them to stay silent after they've joined the glob. Be sure to guard the safety of the blindfolded person.

When everyone has been caught, remove It's blindfold and have everyone give him or her a round of applause.

Then have kids gather around a table and help you scoop ice cream into cups. As you pour grape soda over the ice cream and distribute spoons and the purple cows, ask:

◆ **What did you think about that game?** (I wanted to get it over with so we could have our treat; it was fun being part of the glob; I wanted to hurry up and get caught.)

◆ **What was good about being caught in Glob Tag?** (We got to be part of the glob; we wanted to hurry up and get the game over with so we could get our treats.)

Say: **Today we're going to learn that ★ Jesus wants us to tell others about him. We'll also discover some fun ways to help the kingdom of God grow. Jesus often told stories that started with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." Well, I'd like to tell you that the kingdom of heaven is like a purple cow. Take a cup from a child who has drunk all the grape soda but still has some ice cream left. When I pour in this much soda (indicate just an inch or two), the purple cow grows this much (indicate twice the volume of the soda). In God's kingdom, when we put this much effort into telling others about Jesus (indicate just an inch), God can take what we've done and**

Teacher Tip

An excellent way to see if kids understand the rules of a game is to ask them to explain the rules to you.



make his kingdom grow this much (indicate twice the cup volume) **or even more. Jesus explained this in a special story we call the parable of the sower. As soon as you're finished slurping your purple cows, we'll present this Bible story in a way I guarantee you've never done before.**

Have kids help you gather the empty cups and used spoons.

BIBLE STUDY

Scripture in a Circle (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23)

Designate an open area of your room as the "stage." To the left of the stage, have kids form a line that trails around the room in a circle. Choose an older child or adult to read the passages from Matthew phrase by phrase as kids perform. You will be the stage manager. You'll call one, two, or three children to the stage and help them act out what's being read.

Say: You're going to be the actors in our unique presentation of the parable of the sower. As our reader reads Jesus' words from the Bible, I'll call you up to the stage and tell you what to do. Then you'll scamper off the stage, rejoin the line, and watch the drama until it's your turn to perform again. Is everybody ready? Here we go!

Give the reader a photocopy of the "Parable of the Sower" script, and signal him or her to begin.

If you have time, run through the Bible story drama again. It will go much more quickly than the first time, and the repetition will reinforce the story in kids' minds. Then gather everyone in a circle on the floor and ask:

Say: In this Bible story, the farmer stands for us as Christians and the seed is God's Word. Ask:

◆ **How can we "produce fruit" for God's kingdom?** (By helping other people believe in Jesus; by telling people about God and the Bible.)

Say: ★ Jesus wants us to tell others about him. And when we do, we can trust God to help those seeds grow. When other people start believing in Jesus because of seeds we've helped to plant in their lives, that's how we produce fruit. We plant the seeds, and God makes those seeds bear fruit in the lives of other people. Let's find out what good things happen to people when they believe in Jesus.

Help children quickly form four groups with a balance of older and younger children in each group. Hand out Bibles and assign each group one of the following passages of Scripture: John 1:12; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Romans 8:17; and John 3:16.

Say: Your job is to read your passage to discover what good things happen to people who put their faith in Jesus. Give kids about two minutes to read and discuss their passages. Then

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

(Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 3 | Then Jesus used stories to teach them many things. He said: "A farmer went out to plant his seed. | <i>Have a "farmer" pretend to scatter seed and then walk off.</i> |
| 4 | While he was planting, some seed fell by the road, and the birds came and ate it all up. | <i>Have two "seeds" curl up in a squatting position.
Have two "birds" swoop down on the seeds and carry them away.</i> |
| 5 | Some seed fell on rocky ground, where there wasn't much dirt. That seed grew very fast, because the ground was not deep. | <i>Have two seeds curl up in a squatting position and then extend their arms and "grow."</i> |
| 6 | But when the sun rose, the plants dried up, because they did not have deep roots. | <i>Have a big, scary "sun" tower over the seeds and then run off with them.</i> |
| 7 | Some other seed fell among thorny weeds, which grew and choked the good plants. | <i>Have two seeds curl up in a squatting position and extend their arms and grow. Have two big, scary "weeds" pretend to choke the seeds and run off with them.</i> |
| 8 | Some other seed fell on good ground where it grew and produced a crop. Some plants made 30 times more, some made 60 times more, and some made 100 times more. | <i>Have three seeds curl up in a squatting position and then extend their arms and grow. Have the first seed grow a little, the second a little more, and the third as tall as possible.</i> |
| 9 | You people who can hear me, listen. | <i>Call all the children on stage, and have them cup their hands around their ears.</i> |
| 18 | So listen to the meaning of that story about the farmer. | <i>Have children continue to cup their hands around their ears.</i> |
| 19 | What is the seed that fell by the road? | <i>Send all the children back to the line.</i> |
| | That seed is like the person who hears the message about the kingdom but does not understand it. | <i>Have a seed curl up in a squatting position and then stretch its arms and grow.</i> |

(continued)

The Evil One comes and takes away what was planted in that person's heart.

Have an older child swoop down on the seed and carry it away.

20 And what is the seed that fell on rocky ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and quickly accepts it with joy.

Have a seed curl up in a squatting position, extend its arms and grow, and then jump up and down with joy.

21 But he does not let the teaching go deep into his life, so he keeps it only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching he accepted, he quickly gives up.

Have the seed look scared; then have an older child swoop down on the seed and carry it away.

22 And what is the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching but lets worries about this life and the temptation of wealth stop that teaching from growing. So the teaching does not produce fruit in that person's life.

Have a seed curl up in a squatting position, extend its arms and grow, and then look worried. Have an older child pretend to choke the seed and carry it away.

23 But what is the seed that fell on the good ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and understands it. That person grows and produces fruit, sometimes 30 times more,

Send one-third of the children onto the stage. Have them sit down, cup their hands around their ears, nod their heads, and then stretch out their arms.

sometimes 60 times more,

Send another third of the children onto the stage behind the children who are sitting. Have them kneel and then stretch out their arms.

and sometimes 100 times more."

Send the rest of the children onto the stage and have them stand behind the first two rows and stretch their arms over their heads.

ask for a reporter from each group to share the group's discoveries. Possible responses may include

- ◆ John 1:12—they become children of God.
- ◆ 1 Corinthians 2:9—God prepares unimaginably wonderful things for them.
- ◆ Romans 8:17—they receive blessings from God with Christ.
- ◆ John 3:16—they'll live forever in heaven.

Say: **It's hard to imagine anyone saying "No, thanks" to God's love and all the wonderful things he offers us through Jesus. But sometimes it's hard to know just what to say to people and how to say it. Let's have some fun learning about a really different way to share your faith.**

LIFE APPLICATION

Dough-n't You Know God Loves You?

Have kids remain in four groups. Distribute scissors and the "Dough-n't You Know God Loves You?" handout to each child. Demonstrate how to fold and cut the handout to make an eight-page booklet. (See the illustrations in the margin.)

Say: **Your booklet contains a rap message about Jesus. Read through it aloud together in your group.** Give kids a few moments to read through the booklet. Then have each group choose a rapper to perform for the class. Assign page 3 of the booklet to one group, page 5 to another group, page 7 to a third group, and page 8 to the last group. Allow a couple of minutes for practice; then have the rappers from each group pop up and do the rap in sequence. Reward the rappers with a hearty round of applause.

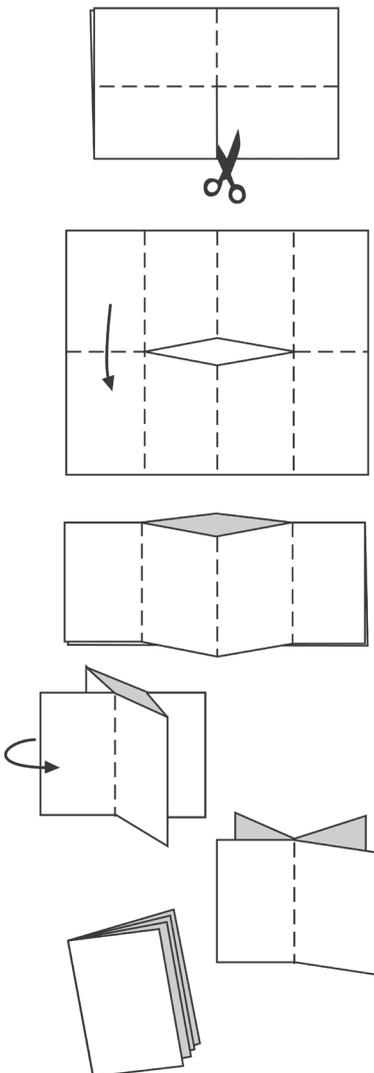
Then say: **This is a great rap, not only because it's fun to do, but also because it tells about God's love and how people can receive forgiveness. ★ Jesus wants us to tell others about him. This rap is a fun way to do that. And here's something that can make sharing your faith even more fun.**

Before class, mix 8 oz. of cream cheese, 1 lb. powdered sugar and a few drops of peppermint oil to make a soft, nonsticky dough. Give each child about one-third cup of dough in a plastic sandwich bag. Show kids how to model the dough into the shapes shown in the booklet—a person, a snake, a cross, and a crown.

Say: **When you share the rap with your friends and use the dough to model the shapes in the booklet, you can leave your friends with a sweet reminder of God's love. Thinking back to the parable of the sower, this rap and this dough are seeds you can plant to help God's kingdom grow!**

Now let's see what it might look like if God's kingdom started growing right here with the people in our class.

Have kids set their dough and booklets aside.



COMMITMENT

God's Garden Grows!

Distribute scissors, colored pencils or markers, and photocopies of the "God's Garden" handout. Demonstrate how to fold the handout in half and then cut on the solid lines to make a repeating pattern. Have each child write his or her own name on the stem of the middle flower. On the petals of the flowers to the right and left, have kids write the names or initials of friends or relatives who don't know about Jesus—people with whom they can share God's love.

As kids are working, ask:

◆ **Besides using the booklet and rap, what are some other ways we can share God's love with people who don't know about Jesus?** (We can make friends with them; we can offer to pray for them when they're worried; we can be kind to them.)

Say: ★ **Jesus wants us to tell others about him, and there are lots of ways to do that. Using the rap is great, but sometimes we can show people Jesus' love just by being a friend or showing kindness. It's important to pray for people and ask God to help us show Jesus' love in the very best way. And that's how God's garden grows!**

Help kids hook each other's flower sections together by matching and sliding together the slits at the edges. Have kids tape or tack the "garden" to a wall. Cut off the right half-flower of your flower section and place your section at the left end of the display. As you work, say: **God's kingdom grows one person at a time. You never know when a seed of God's love may bloom in a person's heart, but when that happens, you've helped another person become a child of God. And that's just about the best thing anyone on this earth can do!**



Teacher Tip

For extra fun, photocopy the "God's Garden" handout on different colors of bright neon paper. If you have extra time, let kids decorate their flowers with markers, bits of colored tissue paper, or glitter glue.

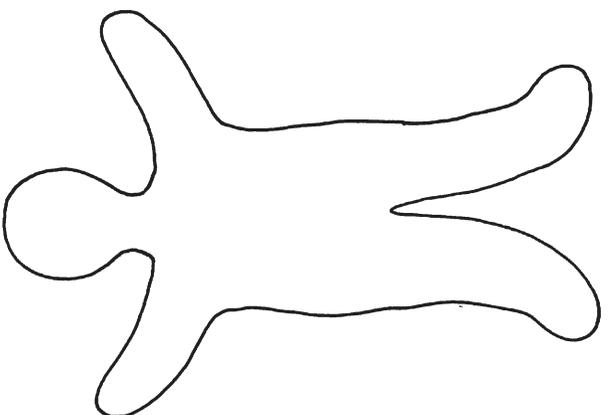


CLOSING

Chain of Prayer

Say: ★ **Jesus wants us to tell others about him. Let's pray for each other and ask God to help us do that.** Have kids stand in front of the flower sections they created. Begin a chain of prayer by praying for the person whose flower section is next to yours. Pray: **Lord, please help** [name of child] **share your love with** [person or people named on the flower]. Then have that child pray the same prayer for the next person and so on. Have the last child come to the front of the line and pray for you and the person or people named on your flower. Close by having everyone say "amen" together.

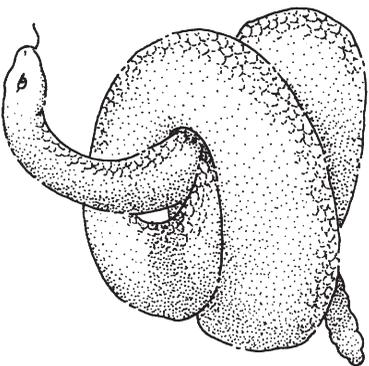
Remind kids to take their booklets and dough with them.



2

God made people
from a lump of clay.
We were perfect then,
but didn't stay that way.

3



4

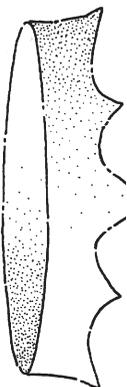
A serpent tempted Adam
and Eve to sin.
After that, people's
hearts turned
bad within.

5

DOUGH-N'T
YOU KNOW
GOD LOVES
YOU ?



So when you ask forgiveness
and in Jesus believe,
Eternal life in heaven is what
you'll receive.

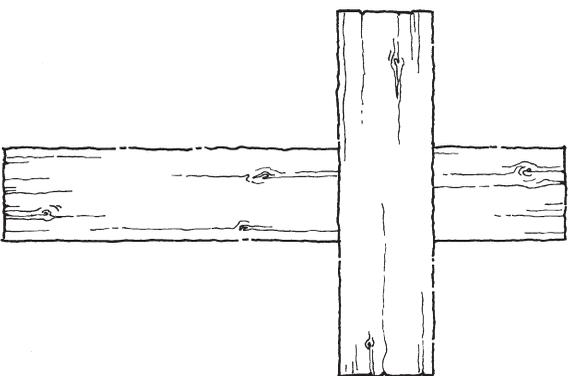


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8

So Jesus came to
earth as a sacrifice.
On a cross on a hill
he paid the price
For all the bad things
you and I have done.
Now he is our Savior,
God's only Son.

7



6

GOD'S GARDEN

Fold on the center line; then cut on the solid lines. Unfold and cut the slits.



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