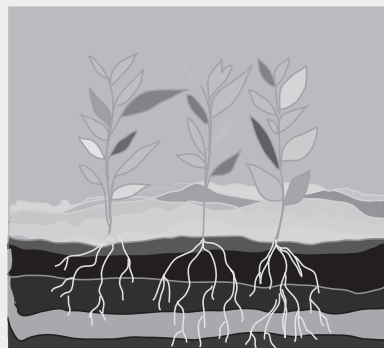


LESSON 18

The Four Soils

MATTHEW 13:1 – 23



BIBLE TRUTH

THE GOSPEL IS THE SEED THAT IS SOWN, BUT NOT ALL WHO HEAR IT BELIEVE

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

SUPPLIES: helper

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: *The Gospel Story Bible* (story 96)

3. BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

Where Is the Gospel?

SUPPLIES: Bible (ESV preferred); Review “Where Is the Gospel?” to prepare

4. SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: snack food and beverage

5. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5–10 MIN

6. ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS (CHOOSE ONE OR MORE) 20–30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES: coloring page for NT Lesson 18—one for each child; markers or crayons

Looking at the Four Soils

SUPPLIES: make a representation of the different soils for the felt board or draw them on the whiteboard or use the jars from the next object lesson to show the children.

Which Soil Is the Best Soil

SUPPLIES: four jars big enough for the children’s hands to fit into (prepare them as described); dirt, stones, tiny sticks

7. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

TOTAL 60–75 MIN

THE LESSON

OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

In today’s lesson the children will learn the parable of the four soils.

Tell the children you are going to pretend you are a farmer planting a field and they are the seeds that you plant. Have the children stand up and spread out in the class. Then have them scooch down as small as they can make themselves and wrap their arms around their knees. Tell them they are your seeds that you have planted in a field.

Say that you are going to pretend to water them with a pretend watering can, and when you do you want them to start to grow, just a little bit at first by moving their hands around but not standing up yet. Warn them that one of your helpers is a giant bird that loves to eat seeds. If any of the children get tapped on the head by your helper (the bird) they should fall down dead. Then go around the room and water your seeds. Have your helper, the bird, eat a few.

Now say that you are going to pretend to be the sun. When you wiggle your fingers and move your hands around, they should grow taller by standing up very, very, slowly. Go around the room and pretend to be the sun. Warn them that now your helper is rocky soil, and if any of the children get tapped on the knees they should sink back down to the floor because their roots have dried up.

Tell the children that many of them are growing real well. They should keep getting taller and reaching to the sky. Warn them that now your helper is a weed, and if they get tapped on the shoulder they should sink back down to the floor because the weeds have taken up all the water they need to grow.

Tell the children that they are going to learn more about how plants grow from what Jesus taught in today’s lesson. Pray for the remainder of the class time before moving forward with the lesson.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read story 96, “The Four Soils,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion:

- **What is a sower?**
(A sower is a person who plants seeds.)

- **Why did the seed fall in a number of different places?**
(The sower in the parable is not planting seeds one at a time like a person who is planting a vegetable garden. The sower is throwing handfuls of seed over a large area, more like what you might do when planting grass. Not all of the seed falls on the good soil.)

- **What is the difference between good soil and rocky ground?**
(Good soil has been turned over with a shovel and all the rocks have been taken out. The seeds fall into little holes and hiding spots so the birds cannot easily find them and it is easy for the roots to grow deep into the soil. The small holes and cavities shade the new roots from the scorching sun.)

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

The gospel is the message about the kingdom of God that Jesus introduced in the parable of the sower. Not only is it planted in the lives of believers, but also we who are Christians then share it with others. We share the gospel with the world each time we are not afraid to testify about our Lord to the people around us. As God's farmers, we sow the seed, then water it, but it is God who makes it grow (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Since the beginning, the gospel was always how God planned to reach a dying world. The prophets of old longed to see the Messiah and God's salvation revealed. The disciples were the first to see God's plan unfold. Now all of us who receive that same message are called to join in the work of scattering the seed by spreading the good news of the gospel.

SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

While the children are eating the snack, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **Why did Jesus tell this parable?**
(Jesus wanted to teach that just hearing the words of the gospel doesn't make someone a Christian.)

- **How is the Word of the gospel (the kingdom) like the sowing of seed?**
(The Word is preached to many but only a few believe.)

- **Why do we need God to help us to be like good soil?**
(Apart from God opening our hearts to believe his Word we will not understand the importance of the gospel.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5-10 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS. 20-30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 18—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **Pointing to the birds in the picture ask, “What do the birds represent?”**
(The birds represent Satan and his lies. While God's Word tells us God is good, Satan wants us to be deceived into believing just the opposite, that to follow God is oppressive and not fun at all.)

- **Pointing to the weeds in the picture ask, “What do the weeds represent?”**
(The weeds represent those things that we love more than God.)

- Pointing to the rocky soil ask, “What does the rocky soil represent?”

(The rocky soil represents the difficulties of life. When life gets hard we want to get relief as fast as we can, even if it does not come from God.)

- Pointing to the good soil in the picture ask, “What does the good soil represent?”

(The good soil is a heart prepared by the Lord to believe his Word.)

Looking at the Four Soils

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ make a representation of the different soils for the felt board or draw them on the whiteboard or use the jars from the next object lesson.

Read Matthew 13:18–23 to the class and then ask them to describe each of the soils.

They are likely not going to understand what many of the words such as tribulation, persecution, endures, or deceitfulness mean. Help them understand what these words mean and then what examples in their own lives might look like. For instance, although they may not be persecuted in a significant way, they might be looked down upon for raising their hands in worship. Although they might not be caught up with the deceitfulness of wealth, they might be more interested in material things during Christmas than in remembering Jesus. Help them to see themselves in the parable. In the end, point them to the forgiveness available through Christ.

Which Soil Is the Best Soil

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Four jars labeled 1, 2, 3, and 4, big enough for the children’s hands to fit into (prepare as described below)
- ✓ dirt, stones, tiny sticks

Before class fill the four jars as follows:

Jar 1 with dirt tamped down to compact it;

Jar 2 with stones topped off with a thin layer of soil;

Jar 3 halfway with a soil and the rest of the way with tiny sticks;
Jar 4 with loose loamy soil.

Display the jars on a table. Position four volunteers in front of the four jars. Have the children hold out their index fingers as you tell them their hand is a sprouting seed and their finger is the root.

Starting with the hard soil (jar 1), ask your volunteer to push their root (finger) down into the soil. As soon as they begin to try, grab their finger with your hand and say, "I'm sorry, you got eaten by a bird." Then move to the jar with the rocky soil (jar 2) and invite your volunteer to describe whether the soil feels like good soil.

Do the same with the soil and sticks (jar 3), and finally the fertile soil (jar 4). Then talk about how this exercise is like the parable.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Take time at the end of class to thank God for what you learned today. Include parts of your Bible lesson in your prayer as a way for the children to remember today's lesson.

LESSON 18 - THE FOUR SOILS

