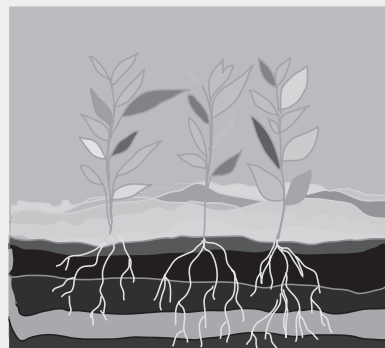


LESSON 18

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 REVIEW** **5 MIN**

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. **BIBLE STORY** **10 MIN**

Read Matthew 13:1–23 from the Scriptures or read story 96, “The Four Soils,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** **15 MIN**

Sow a Few Seeds

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a flower box with soil—or four small flowerpots with soil
- ✓ a bunch of small- to medium-sized rocks
- ✓ branches from a thorny plant
- ✓ some grass seed

4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** **10 MIN**

Know the Secrets of the Kingdom

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ three 8.5-by-11 sheets of paper
- ✓ blindfold
- ✓ hearing protection (Or have a helper cover your volunteers’ ears with their palms snugly.)

6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**

7. **ACTIVITY TIME** **10 MIN**

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

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

8. **CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**

9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**

Parable of the Sower Trivia Challenge

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ prize for the winning team
- ✓ coin for coin toss
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Not all seed produces a crop—Such a large crowd came to hear Jesus teach that he got into a boat and went out from shore so that the people could gather along the lake to hear him. Jesus told the crowd a story, or parable, about a farmer who was throwing seed to plant. The seed fell on four different types of soil: the hard-packed path, the rock-filled ground, an area with thorns, and on fertile soil. Although three of the four soils allowed the seed to grow, only the seed in the fertile soil matured. The same is true for faith in the hearts of people. Faith sprouts in many people who claim to follow Jesus, but far fewer live their lives for Christ, bearing the fruit of repentance (Matthew 3:8) and the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). The Bible is clear—both in this parable about plants and in describing our lives—only “the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22).

You must have ears to hear—Jesus closes the parable with the words, “He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9). Jesus knew that unless the Father opened up ears, people would not really hear. A lot of people heard Jesus teaching but far fewer believed and followed him. Jesus told the disciples that the people would not believe because their hearts were dull (Matthew 13:15). Jesus also explained that not everyone would be granted grace to understand. At first we might be tempted to charge God, saying, “God, why didn’t you help them all to understand?” But we need to realize any who heard the parable could have pursued Jesus and said, “Can you explain what it means to me?” But only the disciples came to Jesus to ask for the meaning. The prophets of old, Jesus explained, longed for the day when the Messiah would come, but died before Jesus was born. Yet the Jews, who knew the Scriptures and watched Jesus heal the sick, did not believe in him. But to the disciples, God poured out grace to understand the secrets of the kingdom (Matthew 13:11).

The gospel is the seed—Jesus explained the parable of the sower to the disciples. The seed is the gospel message—that Jesus Christ died on the cross, taking the penalty that we deserved for our sin so that we could be forgiven. He then rose to new life on the third day so that we might also rise again. The four soils are four different kinds of people. When that message goes out today, it falls upon the same four types of soil. The question for all of us is what kind of soil am I?

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.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Matthew 13:1–23 from the Scriptures or read story 96, “The Four Soils,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Sow a Few Seeds

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a flower box with soil—or four small flowerpots with soil
- ✓ a bunch of small- to medium-sized rocks

- ✓ branches from a thorny plant
- ✓ some grass seed

Prior to class, fill the flower box (or flowerpots) with soil and divide it mentally into fourths. Starting with the first quarter on the left, cover the soil with the rocks. Move to the second quarter and tightly pack down the soil to represent the path. In the third quarter of the box poke a bunch of thorny branches into the soil (put in quite a few to make the illustration believable). Finally in the last quarter, on the far right, loosely till the soil to receive the seeds.

Read the parable to the class, and invite them to come forward. Drop a few seeds in each section of the flower box and have them explain to you what is likely to happen to the seeds in each section. Show them how the seeds in the fertile soil are often hidden from view and are easily planted.

Read Jesus' explanation of what the parable means. Then ask them what the evil one, and trouble, and worries might look like in our lives today.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESON 2 10 MIN

Know the Secrets of the Kingdom

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ three 8½ -by-11 sheets of paper
- ✓ blindfold
- ✓ hearing protection (Or have a helper cover your volunteers' ears with their palms snugly.)

Before class write in large letters on the first sheet of paper the word "Jesus"; on the second sheet, "Christ"; and on the third, "Savior."

Read Matthew 13:10–17 to the children and tell them you want to demonstrate something about this passage.

Have a volunteer step forward and ask her if she can see and hear. She should say yes. Then have her put on the blindfold and hearing protection. Hold up one of the cards for her to read to the class. When she can't, whisper the word to her and have her repeat it to you. When she

can't do that either, show the paper to the class and ask them to shout it out loud. Then ask the volunteer if she knows what the card says. She should then be able to repeat it. Repeat this with a new volunteer for all three cards. For the last child, take off the earphones and blindfold before asking the class to shout, and have the volunteer read it to you.

In the end, explain to the class that your volunteers had eyes but could not see and ears but could not hear. The blindfold and hearing protection represent our sins and rebellion against God. The only way for us to hear is if God pours out his Spirit upon us and causes us to be "born again" (John 3:3). Then we can hear, see, and understand the message to repeat it.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 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 worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

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.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Parable of the Sower Trivia Challenge

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ prize for the winning team
- ✓ coin for coin toss
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Divide the class in half and assign an adult helper as a coach for each team.

Use the following questions to quiz the teams, giving one point per correct answer. Flip a coin to see which team answers the first question. Then have the team pick a number from one to ten. Write the number on the whiteboard to show it has been chosen and then read the corresponding question. Give the team ten seconds to deliberate and come up with an answer. (You can increase or decrease the amount of time.) If the team guesses correctly they receive a point, which you can mark on the whiteboard with a tally mark under the team's name. If they guess incorrectly, the second team may try to steal the point by giving the correct answer without losing their turn. The team with the most points at the end is given the prize. Be very strict with the answers to only give points when the answer is completely correct.

Questions:

1. What is a sower? (a person who casts seeds to plant them)
2. What is a parable? (a short story used to teach a point)
3. What does the seed represent in the parable of the sower? (the word of the kingdom)
4. What is represented by the birds that snatch the seed on the path? (Satan)
5. What is represented by the sun that withers the plants? (trials and tribulations of life)
6. What are the thorns that choke the plants? (the cares of the world and riches)
7. What kind of soil produces a crop that lasts? (good or fertile soil)
8. What is the amount of the harvest? (thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold)
9. What did Jesus give the disciples that he did not give to those who could not hear? (the secrets of the kingdom)
10. Fill in the blank. Jesus said, "This is why I speak to them in parables because seeing they do not _____ , and hearing they do not _____."

LESSON 18 - THE FOUR SOILS

