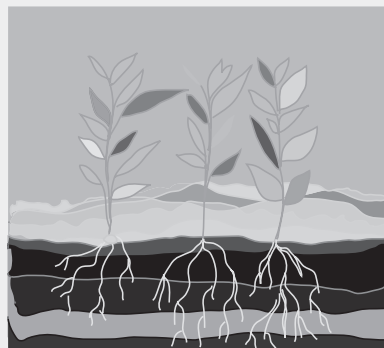


LESSON 18

# 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 . . . . . 10 MIN**

**Defining the Poor Soils**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

**4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION**

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

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

**The Hidden Message**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ individually wrapped candies—one for each student
- ✓ tape

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

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

**The Four Soils**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

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

**9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 20 MIN**

**Parable of the Sower Pantomime**

**TOTAL 75 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?

## A LITTLE BIT MORE

### *Hundredfold*

We don't use the word "hundredfold" in our conversation today. But in Jesus' day, farmers used that word to describe the size of their harvest. If you harvested a hundredfold, then for every seed you planted you brought in one hundred—the one seed produced one hundred more. The way one seed produces one hundredfold is through the new seeds that grow on the plant. If you plant one kernel of corn you might get three ears of corn, each comprised of more than five hundred new kernels. One stalk of wheat might produce four heads with forty grains in each. This same increase is true in evangelism as well: one person who becomes a Christian might bring the gospel to hundreds of others.

## 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**

**Defining the Poor Soils**

**Supplies:**

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Ask the class to offer an explanation for what the three poor soils look like in the lives of youth today. Write their suggestions on the whiteboard. The evil one coming to snatch the gospel message away might be an unbelieving friend used by the enemy to make fun of their “religiosity.” The deceitfulness of wealth might be money, or perhaps the love of something like sports or video games. Come up with a comprehensive list and then ask them which ones are most likely to tempt them. Encourage them to answer individually and then spend some time praying that God would pour out his grace upon their lives so that their hearts might receive his truth. Help them to understand that they can’t assume they are the fertile ground.

**TEACHING/DISCUSSION**

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points

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

**The Hidden Message**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ individually wrapped candies—one for each student
- ✓ tape

Use this object lesson to introduce today’s story. Prior to class, tape a small individually wrapped candy to the bottom of each student’s chair. When they all come in, announce that you are going to tell them a story that has a meaning.

*There once was a pond full of frogs and lily pads. The frogs sat on their lily pads each day. They would look up and all around trying to find flies to catch and eat. But they never saw any. The*

*frogs would look left and right, forward and back, but never caught a fly. Only the frogs that found a new direction ever ate.*

Your class should be confused. If no one asks you to explain the meaning of the story, ask them if they want to know what it means.

Explain to them that the frogs are actually students, and the lily pads are chairs. The flies are actually candy, and the only students who ever found candy were the ones who looked in a new direction. The only direction left was down. The students who looked under their chairs were the only ones to find the candy.

Hopefully one of your students will get the idea to look under his or her chair. Once the candy is discovered, read Matthew 13:1–23 and ask them the following questions:

- How was my story like the Parable of the Sower?  
*(There was little hope of ever understanding the parable without the explanation.)*
  
- Why did Jesus say that not everyone would receive the message of the parable even if they heard it?  
*(In Matthew 13:15, Jesus said that certain people's hearts have become calloused and they have closed their eyes.)*
  
- What does this represent?  
*(Calloused hearts and closed eyes represent unbelief.)*

**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**

**The Four Soils**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of the four soils that illustrates what happens to the different plants as they grow. Use this as an opportunity to review the lesson with the children.

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

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

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 20 MIN**

**Parable of the Sower Pantomime**

Divide the class into four groups, each representing seed and the various types of soil from the parable. Discuss what it might look like to pantomime a seed being sown. The students playing seed, for instance, might want to keep their arms in until they sprout. The students playing the weeds might want to pretend to choke the seeds sprouting in their soil. After everyone knows their parts, pick a narrator and you play a farmer who sows the seed.