

## THE FOUR SOILS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: MATTHEW 13:1-23



*The Gospel is the seed that is sown and bears fruit in the lives of those who believe.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

**Teaching Points for Class Discussion:**

**Not all seed produces a crop.** So many people came to hear Jesus teach that He got into a boat and went out from shore so that the crowds could gather along the lake to hear Him teach. Jesus told the crowd a story, or parable, about a farmer who was throwing down seed to plant. The seed hit four different places. It landed on the hard path, in the rocky areas, among the thorns and on good soil. Although three of the four soils allowed the seed to grow, only the plants sown in the good soil survived long enough to produce fruit or a crop. It is clear from what follows that Jesus did not explain what the parable meant. Later He explained it to His disciples but not to the crowd.

**The secrets of the kingdom are hidden from those who close their eyes** – Jesus further explained his use of parables to the disciples. He quoted Isaiah, who prophesied about people who would see and hear but not understand. Many people saw and heard Jesus but did not understand or believe. These were the kind of people to whom He told the parable of the sower. These people's hearts became calloused and hard, and they would not believe. The disciples' hearts were different. To them Jesus revealed the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

**The Gospel is the seed** – Jesus explained the parable of the sower to the disciples. The seed, He explained, is the message about the kingdom of heaven. That message is the gospel message. The message that is sown is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, and rose to new life on the third day so that we might also rise again. When that message goes out today, it falls upon the very same four types of soil.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in 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. We are the farmers. We sow the seed of the gospel when we are not afraid to testify about our Lord. The plan of the gospel was God's plan to save us since the beginning of time. The prophets of old longed to see the Messiah and God's salvation revealed. With the coming of Christ, the message of the kingdom was revealed. All of us who receive that message are called to bear fruit by spreading the good news.

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAMAUS

**Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.**

**Bible Passage: Psalm 14:1-7**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

Paul quotes this passage in Romans 3:10-12 when he explains the nature of man and the hopelessness of his condition. He goes on to contrast our sinfulness with a righteousness that is being revealed in Christ. David, the author of the psalm, looks forward to a day when salvation for Israel would come from Zion (Jerusalem). God restored the nation of Israel several times and preserved Israel from destruction. On this side of the cross, we understand that God's plan of salvation for Israel was so much more than just preserving a nation. God, through the sacrifice of Christ, brought an everlasting salvation from Israel to the people of all nations. Though David looked forward to that day, the fullness of it was hidden from him.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- What does the Bible call the person who says that there is no God? (Psalm 14:1 calls that person a fool.)
- What is the gospel? (Parents, never grow tired of asking your children to tell you what the gospel is. If there is one truth we want to be certain they fully comprehend, it is the gospel of the kingdom.)

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### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

*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.*

### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

#### SOW A FEW SEEDS

##### Supplies:

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

The object of this lesson is to illustrate the parable. Prior to class fill the flower box with soil and divide it mentally into fourths. Starting with the first quadrant on the left, place the rocks on top of the soil to cover the soil. Then tightly pack down the next quarter of the box (this represents the path). In the third quarter poke a bunch of thorny branches into the soil (it doesn't matter if they are not alive but you should put in quite a few to make the illustration believable, finally in the last quarter, on the far right, loosely till up the soil to receive the seeds.

Read the parable to the class then invite them to come forward. Drop a few seeds in each section and have them explain back 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.

Have them sit down and then read to them Jesus' explanation of what the parable means. Then ask them what the evil one, trouble, or worries might look like in our lives today.



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### THE HIDDEN MESSAGE

Prior to class tape a small individually wrapped candy to the bottom of each student's chair. When they all come in, tell them you have a story with 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 waiting for 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.

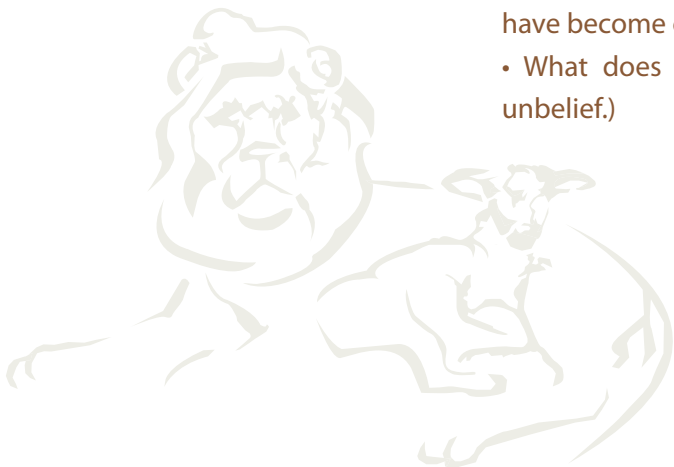
Your class should look at you very strangely. If no one asks you to tell them the meaning of the story ask them if they want to know the meaning of the story.

Explain to them that the frogs are actually students and the lily pads are chairs. The flies are actually candy and the only students that ever found the candy were the ones that found 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 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.)



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### PARABLE OF THE SOWER MIME

Divide the class into four groups, each representing seed and the various types of soil from the parable. Discuss what miming a seed being sown should look like and what the students acting as the soil should look like. 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 the farmer sowing the seed.

## PRAYER

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

## IN CLASS PROJECT

### AN ACTIVITY

**Supplies:**  
pencil and paper

Draw a picture of the four soils and what happens to the different plants as they grow.



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### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### DEFINING THE POOR SOILS

**Supplies:**

white board and markers

Draw out the class and have them offer an explanation for what the three poor soils look like in the lives of youth today. 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 be their temptation. Have them answer individually and then spend some time praying that God would pour out His grace upon their lives that their hearts might receive His truth. Help them to understand that they can't assume they are the fertile ground.

### A LITTLE BIT MORE

One hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown- The way one seed produces one hundred fold is through the new seeds that grow on the plant. If you plant one kernel of corn you might get three ears of corn with each holding more than five hundred new seeds. One stalk of wheat might produce four heads with forty grain seeds in each. This same multiplication is true in evangelism as well. One person converted might bring the Gospel to hundreds of unbelieving friends and family members.

