

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

BIG IDEA

*The seed of God's great news grows best in people with open hearts.
But God still plants seed everywhere, so unexpected miracles do happen.*

PREP *(Kids can help!)*

Find four containers and fill two with water (they could be buckets or ice cream containers or something similar)

Find a large stone or rock

Find a sponge

Find a piece of fruit (e.g. apple, pear, tomato)

Take 4 pieces of paper (any paper will do) and write one word on each of them (sand, stones, thistle, soil)

Buy a packet of radish seeds (optional)

Put everything into the Faith Box before you start



INTRO

TAKE OUT THE SPONGE AND THE STONE. We're going to talk today about how people's hearts can be soft to God's message, or hard and so not able to receive God's goodness.

(This is a great outdoors activity, so make the most of good weather. Otherwise, you will need a plastic sheet on the floor.)

PUT TWO ICE CREAM CONTAINERS OF WATER AT ONE END AND TWO EMPTY ONES AT THE OTHER END OF YOUR COURSE.

Line up the children and tell them that each of them must transfer water from one container to the other using whatever you give them.

Take out a sponge first followed by a rock. Keep giving the rock and sponge randomly to the children as they each have a turn!

Ask the children how easy it was to carry water with a sponge, and how easy it was to use a rock! Now explain that Jesus told a parable that connects with this... a story about soft and hard hearts.

Remember that a parable is an everyday story but with a 'special hidden meaning', so you'll need to put on your invisible 'thought spectacles' to think about the meaning.

READ

☞ A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them.

Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died.

Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants.

Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ☞

Matthew 13: 3-8 TNLB

PLAY

SPIN THE SEED

DIVIDE THE BACK LAWN INTO FOUR SECTIONS (if you play this inside you may need to shift furniture out of the way).

Bring out the four pieces of paper with words on them and place one in each of the four sections.

Dad or Mum pretends to be the farmer. He stands in the middle of the lawn/room ready to plant some seeds. The children are the seeds. The parent chooses a child and holding two hands spins them around (with their feet off the ground) until the rest of the family calls "Plant!" Then the parent immediately stops and that child is 'planted', (carefully placed) in one of the four sections. (If the children are too big to be spun with their feet off the ground, just blindfold them, spin them around and then plant them.) Repeat with each of the other children.

EXPLORE

When everyone has had a turn, sit down and ask each child to show the piece of paper (sand, soil, stones or thistle) from the area where they were 'planted'.

QUESTIONS

How well do you think your seed would have grown in that substance?

Why would your seed grow – or not grow?

READ

TAKE OUT THE PIECE OF FRUIT AND THE KNIFE.

Ask the children how many seeds they think are in the fruit.

Then cut it open and as you read, let them count the seeds...

Here is how Jesus explained the 'special meaning' of the parable.

"Anyone can count the seeds in an apple; but only God can count the apples in a seed." Anon

☞ The seed that fell on the footpath represents people who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ☞

Matthew 13:18-23 TNLB

QUESTIONS

How much fruit could these seeds multiply and produce?

How many more apples might one apple be able to make?

How 'many times as much' did the seed produce from the good soil in the parable?

When we take time to understand the Bible and to love Jesus, we will live the way he wants us to and produce a great harvest of goodness. When we listen to Jesus' words and are careful to obey them, then our hearts become like the good soil and lots of wonderful seeds grow in them.

What sort of things would be like a 'harvest' in our lives?

The great thing is that the more you do loving things the more loving you become on the inside.

LIVE

Try an experiment. Sprinkle some radish seeds in a place with weeds, some on a footpath and some in good soil.

Watch them over the next week and see what happens.

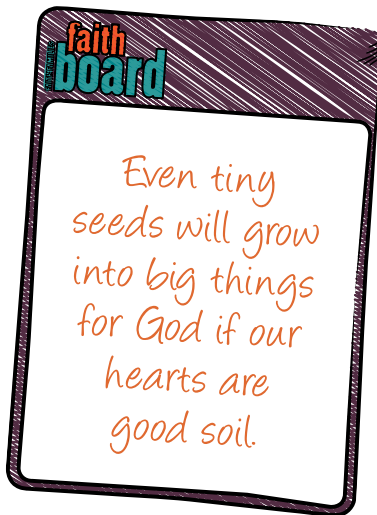
PRAY

Hand out a seed for everyone to hold.

Dear God, make our hearts like good soil so that your gospel will grow in our hearts and others will come to love you too. Amen.

Put the seed in your pocket today as a reminder of this story that Jesus told.

FAITH BOARD



OTHER IDEAS

1 See how amazing good soil is by placing some potting mix in plastic zip lock bags and 'planting' two kinds of seeds (e.g. beans or radishes). Leave the bag open, place them in the sun and watch them grow!

2 'Domino effect' game. Stand dominoes close to each other in a long, long line... then push the last one over and watch what happens! As you do this talk about how the trampled path was a hard place for seeds to grow because they just stay on the surface. People sometimes do not understand the good news because they feel so trampled down and pressured. Peer group pressure can make us feel like we need to do or be the same as those around us and it can be really hard to stand up and be different. It is a bit like the domino effect. Talk about what it feels like to be pressured to do things when you don't really want to do them.

3 Make a prickly hedgehog with a blob of clay and some halved toothpicks poked in to make the prickles. Talk about how hard it is to grow when you are surrounded by prickles. What prickly things or people stop you following Jesus? (e.g. worries, hurts, wanting more and more.)

**BUY FOR
NEXT SESSION**

• Chocolate gold coins