



UNIT 25 | SESSION 1

JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES

MATTHEW 13; MARK 4; LUKE 8

KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 40:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is the Bible true? Yes, the Bible is true and has no error.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don't understand the gospel, and some people care more about the things of this world than they do God's kingdom. But people who believe in Jesus and follow Him will grow to be like Him and will share His good news so others can believe, too.

STORY POINT: People will have different responses to God's kingdom.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Some people have natural green thumbs, but for most amateur gardeners, making plants grow takes skill and hard work. This is because the curse has placed many obstacles in the way of natural growth. The soil may be too tough, the heat too stifling, the shade too restrictive, or the water too scarce. What looks healthy one week, can quickly wilt the next. Growing something is harder than it looks.

Maybe that's part of what makes Jesus' parable about the sower and the seeds so relatable. In Jesus' day, farmers would scatter seed as they went through their field. Everyone listening to Jesus that day would have been familiar with this practice. In His parable, Jesus described four kinds of soil—four different heart conditions—with only one of them producing lasting fruit.

The seed, which Jesus says is the Word of God, lands in a variety of places, but not every setting leads to growth. The difference isn't the seed; it's the soil.

The good soil, Jesus says, represents those who “hear the word with an honest and good heart” and “hold on to it” (Luke 8:15). The Greek phrase for “hold on” means “to cling tightly, to keep secure.” It's the picture of someone refusing to let go, even when life gets hard. That's the difference between hearing and holding.

Growth takes time, and good soil doesn't happen by accident. God softens it through repentance, waters it through His Spirit, and keeps it fertile through His Word.

As you prepare to lead kids this week, ask the Lord to till the soil of their hearts to make them receptive to His Word. May the seeds you plant through teaching them about Jesus produce a future multiplied harvest.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "Seed Search" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ dry erase boards and markers, 1 per kid



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Jesus Taught in Parables" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ seeds (optional)
- ☐ dry erase board (optional)

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 25, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "God's Work in Deaf Missions" video

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Forever (Isaiah 40:8)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “ Tell me about a time you or someone you know planted a seed. What did it grow into? ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Seed Search” activity page.

| **SAY** “ Everyone did a great job picking out the seeds that sprouted! In today’s story, we’ll learn how Jesus compared God’s kingdom to a man who planted seeds. ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

Give each kid a small dry erase board and a dry erase marker. Explain that you are going to read out some different scenarios. Some examples could include: A dog is running toward me, I forgot my lunch at home, Your family is having spaghetti for dinner. Encourage the kids to draw a picture of how they would react in this scenario and hold it up. Continue playing with several scenarios.

| **SAY** “ We all react differently in situations depending on how they make us feel. Not everyone responded the same way to Jesus. Today we are going to be learning that **PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD’S KINGDOM.** ”

☐ OPTION 2: DO IT DIFFERENT!



Pair the kids up and instruct kids to face their partners. Explain that the kids must take turns performing an action or emotion such as jumping, acting happy, or spinning in a circle. Their partner must respond by performing the opposite of that action. For example, if the partner spins, he or she should spin the opposite direction; if the partner jumps, he or she should sit down, etc. Encourage the kids to take turns doing this back and forth.

| **SAY** “ Each of you had your own unique actions and responses! Did you know that not everyone had a positive reaction to Jesus’ teachings? Today we will learn that **PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD’S KINGDOM.** ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Hi, kids! I’m glad you could join us today! I’m [your name], and together we are going to read a parable Jesus shared about God’s kingdom and our response to it. Parables are short stories that point us to a special meaning. If you brought your Bible to class, turn with me to the New Testament. (Use this time to distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.) Our story can be found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Let’s pray together as we open God’s Word. ‘God, thank You for revealing Your kingdom through Your Son, Jesus. Open our hearts and minds as we read Your Word together. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Today, we are going to learn a new big picture question and answer together. Can anyone remind me why we learn big picture questions? [Allow responses.] Big picture questions point us to the truth about God and His Word. Our new big picture question is: **Is the Bible true?** The answer we will learn together is, **yes, the Bible is true and has no error.** God has chosen to share with us who He is and how much He loves us through His Word, the Bible. When life is hard and we are faced with tough questions, God’s Word will always point us to what is true. Today, we will learn the truth about how people respond to God’s kingdom. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “As Jesus traveled around teaching and performing miracles, He revealed Himself to be the promised Messiah the prophets said was coming. He showed His power and called the people to seek God through prayer. Jesus wanted the people to understand that a right relationship with their heavenly Father is greater than anything the world can offer. But in today’s story, we’ll see that Jesus shared not everyone will respond to God’s kingdom in the same way. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Taught in Parables.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES

“Jesus traveled from town to town, telling people the good news about God’s kingdom. Everywhere He went, crowds gathered to listen. One day, Jesus was sitting by the Sea of Galilee. So many people gathered around Him that He got into a boat, sat down, and taught while the crowd stood on the shore.

Jesus often taught using parables—short stories with a special meaning—to help people understand what God’s kingdom is like. This time, He told a story about a man planting seeds.

“Listen!” Jesus began. “A sower went out to plant seeds in his field. As he scattered them, some seeds fell on a hard path. Birds swooped down and ate the seeds.

“Other seeds fell on rocky ground where there wasn’t much dirt. They sprouted quickly, but the soil was too shallow for roots to grow. When the sun got hot, the plants dried up and died.

“Some seeds fell among thorny ground. The thorns grew up and choked the plants so they couldn’t grow strong.

“But some seeds fell on good soil. These seeds grew into healthy plants and made more grain than the farmer had planted—many times more!”

Later, Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Why do You tell stories like this instead of just saying things plainly?”

Jesus replied, “Not everyone is ready to understand the truth about God’s kingdom. I speak in parables so that those who are ready will understand, but others will not—just as the prophet Isaiah said long ago. But you, My disciples, are blessed. God has opened your eyes and ears so you can understand.”

Then Jesus explained the story. He said, “The seeds on the path are like people who hear the truth but don’t understand it. The evil one snatches away what was planted in their hearts.

“The seeds on rocky ground are like people who hear the truth and are happy to believe at first, but when it becomes hard to follow God’s Word, they quickly give up.

“The seeds among the thorns are like people who hear the truth, but their hearts are crowded with worries and the love of money. They do not give God’s

STORYTELLING TIPS

Show Seeds: Consider providing some small seeds to help the kids visualize the parable. Allow the kids to pass around the seeds as you read through the story.

Draw it Out: As you read through the story, use a dry erase board to draw the seeds in each scenario. Point to each one as you read Jesus’ words about how they relate to the kingdom of God.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Word room to grow in their hearts.

“But the seeds in the good soil are like people who hear the truth and welcome it. They understand the gospel and let it change their lives. They grow in faith and share the good news with others—producing much more than was planted!”

Christ Connection: Not everyone who hears about Jesus believes in Him. Some people don’t understand the gospel, and some people care more about the things of this world than they do God’s kingdom. But people who believe in Jesus and follow Him will grow to be like Him and will share His good news so others can believe too. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ What was different each time the man scattered the seeds? **[Allow responses.]** Though the seeds were all the same they landed in different soil, which changed how they would grow. Jesus explained that the good news of the gospel never changes. However, the condition of our hearts determines whether or not the gospel will grow and change us. Who did Jesus compare the birds in the parable to? **[Allow responses.]** The devil seeks to take away the seeds of God’s kingdom by planting confusion in our hearts. When we refuse to repent and turn to Jesus, our hearts become hard to the truth of the gospel.

Is following Jesus always easy? **[Allow responses.]** Jesus uses the example of the second seed to remind the crowd that living in obedience to God’s Word is challenging. Which is why we must build our lives on God’s Word, just as a plant grows from roots. Jesus explained that there are also people who care about the things of this world more than God’s kingdom. We can trust that God is in complete control of our lives. He promises to save and continue growing those who repent of their sin and put their faith in Him. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Jesus revealed that God’s kingdom offers us something the world cannot. Through His death on the cross, Jesus took sin upon Himself. He offers eternal life to all who turn from their sin and trust in Him as Lord. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can see your parents or a church leader. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 25, Session 1” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How do I encourage my friends to believe in Jesus?
2. Have you responded to the good news of the gospel?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “John W. (J.W.) Michaels, a man who was deaf, helped Deaf people know about Jesus. J.W. was responsible for about 100 Deaf ministries while he served in his position for Deaf ministry at the North American Mission Board.”

Show the “God’s Work in Deaf Missions” video.

J.W. Michaels was born in 1850, near Richmond, Virginia. He became deaf when he was seven years old because of an illness. J.W. attended the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Staunton, Virginia, graduated from college, and became a successful businessman. Later, he taught at the Arkansas School for the Deaf before becoming the principal of the school in 1882. J.W. also began to teach some Deaf men in a Bible study. The Bible study group grew and became a strong witness among the Deaf population in Little Rock, Arkansas. J.W. spent his summers traveling to nearby towns to teach and preach about Jesus. He became one of the first missionaries to the Deaf in the United States.

Pray, thanking God for the work of J.W. Michaels and missionaries telling Deaf people about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 40:8 together.

SAY “Jesus reminded people that God’s Word is unlike the things of this world. His Word is true and will last forever! Let’s learn more about this in our new key passage.”

Invite the kids to gather and form a circle. Encourage the kids to move and dance around the circle clockwise. When you shout Freeze! the kids must stand still where they are and repeat the key passage after you. If anyone moves, they must sit down outside of the circle and continue reciting it aloud each time with the group. Once the key passage has been repeated, the kids can start moving again. Play until you have recited the key passage aloud several times together.

Lead kids to sing “Forever (Isaiah 40:8).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “God, thank You for showing us who You are through Your Word. Help us live in obedience to Your Word and share the good news of the gospel with others. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 13. Explain that Matthew is one of the three Gospels that record Jesus' parables. Share that Jesus' parables aren't a mystery! They reveal true lessons about God's kingdom to those who are ready to listen and understand.

Consider pointing out the location of the Sea of Galilee [D6] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 13:22-23 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY “ Think about some of things you consider special, such as a toy, a stuffed animal, or even a sport. Jesus understood that we will have many cares in this world. But He reminded the people that sometimes we give so much attention to our possessions or hobbies, that we place them above our love for God and His kingdom. Just as you spend time with things or people you love, we should also spend time getting to know God through His Word. The truth of His Word is a firm foundation that will outlast anything this world has to offer! ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Why do some people hear God's Word and not understand it? ”

Remind kids that some people harden their hearts by refusing to believe that Jesus is God's Son. Jesus offers the gift of salvation to everyone, but not everyone will place their faith in Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matthew 11:27.)

SAY “ Is everyone invited to be a part of God's kingdom? ”

Explain that God wants everyone to know and love Him. God has made the way for sin to be forgiven through His Son, Jesus. But not everyone will accept God's gift of salvation. Share that only those who trust in Jesus as Lord will enter into God's kingdom. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 3:3.)

SAY “ What are some things in our lives that we might place above God? ”

Answers will vary. Encourage kids to think about the activities they participate in each day. Remind them that they can prioritize God by spending time in His Word and in prayer. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Romans 6:23.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: NAME THAT PATH



Line the kids up shoulder to shoulder on one side of the room. Explain that they will be taking a journey and must choose between three different paths: the *hard path* (take small steps and stomp your feet), the *rocky path* (move from side to side), and the *thorny path* (crawl on hands and knees). When you say, Go, the kids must cross the room using one of the three actions as they travel. Once the kids make it to the opposite side of the room, they may choose a different action to travel back. The first kid to make it across the room and back wins.

SAY “ This game reminds us that **PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO GOD’S KINGDOM**. Jesus shared that everyone must choose to accept or reject God’s kingdom. Those who repent of their sin and trust in Jesus as Lord will inherit God’s kingdom! ”

☐ OPTION 2: GOD’S KINGDOM

Lead kids to get into small groups of three or four and give each group a Bible and something to write with. Assign each group a verse about God’s kingdom. Some examples include: Matthew 6:33; Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; or Matthew 6:10. Encourage groups to look up their verse. Give each group a chance to read their verse to the class. Then, as a class, discuss what it teaches us about the kingdom of God.

SAY “ It can be exciting to learn about God’s kingdom, but not everyone will have the same response to hearing about God’s kingdom. We want to be faithful to have soft hearts for the seeds of God’s Word to be planted in, while also being faithful to share the good news of the gospel with others. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.