Preschool–Grade 6

The Parable of the Sower

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's Word is the seed. A heart like good ground hears it, understands it and keeps it, and the word bears fruit in that life.
Bible passage: Matthew 13:1–23. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." *Luke 8:15 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, 4 sheets of paper and tape, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Write *way side*, *stony places*, *among thorns* and *good ground* on the 4 sheets and tape one in each corner of the room.

1. Opening game: Were You Listening? (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Listen carefully. I'm going to read a short story, one time only." Read slowly: *"On Tuesday, Sam got up early. He ate two pancakes, fed his gray cat, and put on his green jacket. On the way to school, he saw three ducks by the pond and gave a dollar to his little sister."* Then ask: What day was it? How many pancakes? What color was the cat? How many ducks? What did he give his sister? Ask: *Was it easy to remember every detail? What helps you really listen?* Say: "Jesus told a story about listening. He said, 'Who hath ears to hear, let him hear' (Matthew 13:9)."

2. Bible story: The Sower and the Seed (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Matthew 13. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

By the sea. Look up Matthew 13:1–2. Jesus sat by the sea side. **Multitudes**, huge crowds, came, so He went into a **ship** and sat, and the people stood on the shore.

The sower. Look up Matthew 13:3. Jesus **spake** (spoke) in **parables**, stories that teach a lesson. A **sower** is someone who plants seed by scattering it over a field.

The way side. Look up Matthew 13:4. The **way side** is the hard path along the field. Luke says the seed was **trodden down**, stepped on (Luke 8:5). The **fowls** (birds) came and **devoured** (ate) them up.

Stony places. Look up Matthew 13:5–6. There was not much earth there, so the seeds sprang up **forthwith**, right away. But when the sun was up, they were **scorched** (burned), and because they had no root, they **withered** away.

Among thorns. Look up Matthew 13:7. The thorns grew up and **choked** the plants, squeezing out their room to grow.

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Good ground. Look up Matthew 13:8. This seed "brought forth fruit, some an **hundredfold**, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." **Fold** means times as much: one seed gave a hundred times as much, or sixty, or thirty. Then Jesus said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (13:9).

Why parables? The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables (13:10). Jesus said, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (13:16). He wanted them to understand.

What Jesus said it means. Look up Matthew 13:18–19. "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower." The seed is "the word of the kingdom" (13:19). Luke says, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

- **Way side:** someone hears the word and doesn't understand it, and the **wicked one** (the devil, Luke 8:12) catches it away (13:19).
- **Stony places:** someone receives the word with joy, but has no root and **dureth** (lasts) only a while. When **tribulation** (trouble) or **persecution** (being treated badly for following God) comes, he gives up (13:20–21; Luke 8:13).
- **Among thorns:** the **care of this world** (worries) and the **deceitfulness of riches** (money tricking us into thinking it matters most) choke the word, so it bears no fruit (13:22).
- **Good ground: Look up Matthew 13:23.** Someone hears the word, **understands** it, and bears fruit.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Jesus said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (13:9). What is the difference between hearing and really listening?
2. The seed on the way side was taken away before it could grow (13:19). What can we do when we hear something in the Bible we don't understand?
3. The seed in stony places sprang up fast but had no root (13:5–6, 13:21). How does a person grow roots in God?
4. What worries or wants can crowd God's Word out of a kid's life, like thorns (13:22)?
5. What "fruit" might grow in your life when you keep God's Word? (Think of Galatians 5:22–23.)

Recall questions

1. Where did Jesus sit to teach? *(In a ship, Matthew 13:2)*
2. What did the fowls do? *(Came and devoured the seeds by the way side, 13:4)*
3. What three amounts did the good ground bring forth? *(An hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold, 13:8)*

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4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **honest** means true and real, **having heard** means after hearing, **keep it** means hold on to it and obey it, **bring forth fruit** means grow good things, and **patience** means keeping on without giving up. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The seed is the word of God, and the most important word we can hear is the gospel, the good news about Jesus. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: read one short Bible passage each day. Ask a parent or teacher about anything you don't understand, and do one thing it says.

6. Activity: Four Corners (10–15 minutes)

Read one sentence at a time. Kids walk to the corner of the ground it matches, then a volunteer reads the verse.

1. "The fowls came and devoured them up." *(Way side, Matthew 13:4)*
2. "They had no deepness of earth." *(Stony places, 13:5)*
3. "The thorns sprung up, and choked them." *(Among thorns, 13:7)*
4. "Some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." *(Good ground, 13:8)*
5. He hears the word "and understandeth it not." *(Way side, 13:19)*
6. He "anon with joy receiveth it," yet "hath he not root in himself." *(Stony places, 13:20–21)*
7. "The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word." *(Among thorns, 13:22)*
8. He "heareth the word, and understandeth it." *(Good ground, 13:23)*

   Or choose the **Parable of the Sower word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/parable-of-the-sower-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/parable-of-the-sower-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/parable-of-the-sower-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/parable-of-the-sower-worksheet).

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7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your Word. Make our hearts good ground. Help us really listen, understand what we read, and keep it, even when it's hard. Keep worries and wanting things from crowding Your Word out. Let it bear fruit in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks, "Who is the sower?": in Jesus' explanation the seed is the word (Matthew 13:19; Luke 8:11), and "the sower soweth the word" (Mark 4:14). Keep the focus on the seed and the ground, the way Jesus explained it.
If a child asks, "What if I'm stony ground or thorny ground?": answer gently. Jesus told this parable so we would listen well. Anyone can start today: listen to God's Word, ask until you understand, and keep it with patience (Luke 8:15). Encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor.

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