Preschool–Grade 6

# The Wheat and the Tares

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

**Main point:** God keeps His wheat safe. He knows what is growing in His field, He doesn't let His wheat be lost, and we can trust Him and wait for His harvest.
**Bible passage:** Matthew 13:24–30. Read it before class.
**Memory verse:** "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." *Matthew 13:30 (KJV)*
**You need:** a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
**Before class:** write the memory verse on the board. Clear some space for the opening game.

## 1. Opening game: Wait or Pull? (5–10 minutes)

Everyone stands. Read a short situation. If the best thing is to act now, kids pretend to pull a weed. If the best thing is to wait, they sit down with folded arms. Try: your cake is in the oven but not done; your little brother is about to touch a hot stove; the bread dough is still rising; a seed was planted yesterday and you want to see it grow; someone fell and is hurt. Ask: *Why is waiting so hard?* Say: "In today's story, some servants wanted to pull up the weeds right away. Their master said, 'Wait.'"

## 2. Bible story: The Wheat and the Tares (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.

**A parable.** Jesus told many **parables**, stories that teach about the kingdom of heaven. **Look up Matthew 13:24. Sowed** means planted seed by scattering it.

**An enemy while men slept. Look up Matthew 13:25.** While men slept, the man's enemy sowed **tares**, weeds, right among the wheat, then went his way.

**The tares appear. Look up Matthew 13:26.** The **blade** is the green leaf; **brought forth fruit** means the grain came. Only then did the tares appear.

**The servants ask. Look up Matthew 13:27.** The **householder** is the man who owns the house and the field. **Whence** means where from. He answered, "An enemy hath done this" (13:28).


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**"Shall we pull them up?"** The servants asked, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" (13:28). **Look up Matthew 13:29. Nay** means no; **lest** means so that it won't happen that; **root up** means pull out by the roots. The roots of the tares and the wheat were growing side by side.

**Wait for the harvest. Look up Matthew 13:30.** At harvest the **reapers**, the workers who gather the crop, would gather the tares first and **bind** them, tie them, in **bundles** to burn them. But the wheat would be gathered into the master's **barn**.

## 3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

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

1. The enemy came "while men slept" (Matthew 13:25). Why do you think he came while men slept?
2. The servants were ready to fix the problem right away (13:28). Why was that not the best plan?
3. What does the master's answer in 13:29 show about how much he cared for his wheat?
4. Waiting is hard. What is something you have had to wait for God to take care of?
5. Sometimes wrong things are all around us, like tares in the field. How can we keep growing for God anyway?

**Recall questions**

1. What did the enemy sow among the wheat? *(Tares, Matthew 13:25)*
2. What did the man say when the servants asked where the tares came from? *("An enemy hath done this," 13:28)*
3. Where did the wheat go at harvest? *(Into his barn, 13:30)*

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

Explain the old words: **reapers** are the workers who gather the crop; **bind them in bundles** means tie them in bunches. 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.


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## 5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The master in Jesus' story would not let his wheat be rooted up by mistake (Matthew 13:29), and at harvest he gathered it into his barn (13:30). Later Jesus told His disciples, 'the good seed are the children of the kingdom' (13:38). God wants you to be His and to be safe with Him. 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:** when something wrong is going on around you, keep doing right, pray about it, and trust God to take care of it in His time.


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## 6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Matthew 13:24: What is the kingdom of heaven likened unto? *(A man which sowed good seed in his field)*
2. Matthew 13:25: When did the enemy come? *(While men slept)*
3. Matthew 13:26: When did the tares appear? *(When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit)*
4. Matthew 13:27: Who came to the householder? *(The servants)*
5. Matthew 13:28: Who did the householder say had done this? *(An enemy)*
6. Matthew 13:29: What might the servants root up with the tares? *(The wheat)*
7. Matthew 13:30: What would the reapers bind the tares in? *(Bundles)*
8. Matthew 13:30: Where would the wheat be gathered? *(Into my barn)*

Or choose the **Wheat and the Tares word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/wheat-and-the-tares-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/wheat-and-the-tares-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/wheat-and-the-tares-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/wheat-and-the-tares-worksheet).

## 7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for caring for us and keeping us safe. When wrong things grow around us, help us keep growing for You. Help us to be patient and trust You to make things right in Your time. In Jesus' name, amen."

**If a child asks what the parable means:** Jesus explained it to His disciples later, in Matthew 13:36–43. This lesson stays with the story itself. If a child asks, read 13:37–38 and 13:43 together, and suggest they ask their pastor too.


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