Preschool–Grade 6

The Wheat and the Tares

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God keeps His wheat safe. We don't have to fix everything wrong around us by ourselves; we keep growing for God and trust Him with the harvest.
Bible passage: Matthew 13:24–30. Students read it out loud themselves.
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 student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 13:1–43. Write the memory verse on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Fix It Now? (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to call out things that make them want to "fix it now": a group project partner who does nothing, a mean comment online, a sibling who takes your stuff, a friend who is making bad choices. Write them on the board. Then ask: *When we rush to fix things ourselves, what can go wrong? Who gets hurt by mistake?* Say: "In Jesus' story, some servants wanted to fix a problem right away. Their master told them to wait, because he didn't want to lose any of his wheat."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the setting: Great multitudes gathered to Jesus by the sea side, and He sat in a ship and taught them; and He told them many things in **parables**, stories that teach about the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:1–3). This parable comes right after the parable of the sower.
Read out loud: Matthew 13:24–30. Students take turns, a verse each. Old words in this passage:

- **likened unto** (13:24): is like; **sowed**: planted by scattering seed
- **tares** (13:25): weeds in a grain field
- **blade** (13:26): the green leaf; **brought forth fruit**: the grain came
- **householder** (13:27): the man who owns the house and field; **whence**: where from
- **wilt thou** (13:28): do you want; **nay** (13:29): no; **lest**: so that it won't happen that
- **root up** (13:29): pull out by the roots
- **reapers** (13:30): the workers who gather the crop; **bind them in bundles**: tie them in bunches

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3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The good seed was sown first; the enemy came "while men slept" and "went his way" (Matthew 13:25). What does that tell you about how the enemy worked?
2. The tares only "appeared" when the wheat "brought forth fruit" (13:26). Why might some problems only show up later?
3. The servants asked, "from whence then hath it tares?" (13:27). Is it fair to blame the householder for the tares? Who did he say had done it (13:28)?
4. The servants were ready to pull everything up (13:28). Why did the master say "Nay" (13:29)? What does that show about how he valued his wheat?
5. "Let both grow together until the harvest" (13:30). What is hard about growing up next to tares: wrong choices, wrong words and wrong friends around you? How do you keep growing as wheat?
6. The harvest sorted everything out (13:30). Why is it good news that God, not us, is the one who judges at the end?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **reapers** are the workers who gather the crop; **bind them in bundles** means tie them in bunches.
Read the verse together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say it every day this week.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The master would not let one stalk of his wheat be rooted up (Matthew 13:29), and at harvest it was gathered into his barn (13:30). When Jesus explained the story to His disciples, He said, 'the good seed are the children of the kingdom' (13:38). God wants you to be His. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We become His the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where are "tares" growing around me right now: things that pull me away from God?
2. What is one way I can keep growing for God this week, even with those things around me?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you trust Him with the things you can't fix.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: when you feel like "pulling up" someone with harsh words, stop, pray for them instead, and leave the judging to God.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You know Your field and You keep Your wheat safe. Help us keep growing for You even when wrong things grow around us. Help us be patient, pray for others, and trust You with the harvest. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks what the parable means: Jesus explained it to His disciples in Matthew 13:36–43. This lesson stays with the story in 13:24–30. Read 13:37–39 and 13:43 together, and suggest they ask their pastor about the rest.

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