

# Sharable Parables

- Great for church school or VBS
- Five large group sessions
- Five small group sessions for kindergarten-grade 3 and grades 4-8
- Five original dramas
- Large selection of crafts and activities
- Complete—no other resources to buy

**LEADER'S GUIDE K-8 SUMMER BOOK 1**

# *Sharable* **Parables**



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Any questions or comments about this unit?  
We'd love to hear from you:

Faith Alive Christian Resources  
1-800-333-8300

E-mail: [editors@faithaliveresources.org](mailto:editors@faithaliveresources.org)

RCA Children's Ministry Office  
1-800-968-3943

E-mail: [childrensministry@rca.org](mailto:childrensministry@rca.org)

Presbyterians for Renewal  
1-502-425-4630

E-mail: [office@pfrenewal.org](mailto:office@pfrenewal.org)

*Walk With Me* curriculum has been developed by Faith Alive Christian Resources in cooperation with the Children's Ministry Office of the Reformed Church in America and with Presbyterians for Renewal.

We are grateful to Roger Groenboom, Alison Groenboom, and Susan Thornell for their work in developing this summer unit of *Walk With Me*. We are also grateful to Margo Burian for drawing the diagrams for this unit.

Unless otherwise indicated, the Scripture quotations in this publication are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

*Walk With Me*

Kindergarten-grade 8

Summer, Book 1: Sharable Parables

Faith Alive Christian Resources published by CRC Publications.

© 2004 by CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America on recycled paper.

[www.WalkWithMeOnline.org](http://www.WalkWithMeOnline.org)

ISBN 1-59255-176-9

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Contents

- How to Use This Book . . . . . 4
- Tailoring Your Sessions to the Ways Children Learn . . . . . 8
- A Summer Celebration Program . . . . . 9
- Additional Program Ideas . . . . . 10
- Session 1: The Sower and the Seed
  - Large Group Session . . . . . 12
  - Small Group Session, K-3 . . . . . 16
  - Small Group Session, 4-8 . . . . . 26
- Session 2: The Wise and Foolish Builders
  - Large Group Session . . . . . 36
  - Small Group Session, K-3 . . . . . 40
  - Small Group Session, 4-8 . . . . . 50
- Session 3: The Great Banquet
  - Large Group Session . . . . . 58
  - Small Group Session, K-3 . . . . . 62
  - Small Group Session, 4-8 . . . . . 70
- Session 4: The Lost Son
  - Large Group Session . . . . . 82
  - Small Group Session, K-3 . . . . . 86
  - Small Group Session, 4-8 . . . . . 96
- Session 5: The Good Samaritan
  - Large Group Session . . . . . 106
  - Small Group Session, K-3 . . . . . 110
  - Small Group Session, 4-8 . . . . . 120
- Dramas . . . . . 131
- Songs . . . . . 153
- Reproducible Pages . . . . . 179
- Leader’s Evaluation . . . . . 223



# How to Use This Book

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”*

—Matthew 7:24

Jesus often spoke to people using parables. The five parables in this course are stories that Jesus told to teach people about the kingdom of God. From them we also can learn about God’s kingdom, and we can share these parables with others. That’s why we call them “sharable parables.”

## Goal and Theme

The unique format of this five-session course allows you to use it as a lively and exciting curriculum for your summer church school or for an entire week of summer ministry programs such as vacation Bible school (see pp. 6-7 for helpful tips).

Whether you choose a church school or summer ministry setting, the goal of this course is to teach children five of the parables that Jesus told. We pray that leaders, kids, and all who participate in the sessions and in the summer celebration program will come to know more about Jesus. To help meet this goal, one main theme will shine brightly throughout the session plans: God wants us to share these parables and the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone—not just family and friends, but everyone! We need to hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice.

To support our theme, this book offers a variety of ideas and options for large group sessions, small group sessions, and a summer celebration program. Use the ideas and options that work best with your church school or summer ministry. Ideally, the large group session takes about 15-20 minutes, after which kids break into their small group sessions for 30-40 minutes. You may also want to schedule an extra practice time or two if your church is planning on hosting the summer celebration program.

Finding time to do everything in this book will not be possible—or even desirable—for most churches. You’ll need to choose what your group will be able to handle in the time you have available. Be sure to purchase one copy of this book for each of your leaders. As purchaser of this book, you are granted permission to photocopy the dramas, patterns, and activities on reproducible pages 131-152 and 179-221.

## Getting Started

Because these materials suggest a different format and approach than the regular *Walk With Me* units, you’ll want to spend some extra time planning and preparing. Although each church situation is unique, you may find some of the following suggestions helpful:

- In early spring, organize a small team to read through this book. These folks can review the session plans, dramas, and songs, then choose what they think will work best for your church.
- After the committee makes its recommendations, recruit teachers, song leaders, accompanists, and drama participants.
- Recruit volunteers who are willing to gather materials for these special sessions. Give them plenty of time for this task (a month or two) since they will likely want to ask the congregation to save and/or gather some of the items.
- Schedule rehearsals for the drama team.
- If you’re planning to use the summer celebration program, schedule a single, final rehearsal for everyone involved in the program.

## Large Group Sessions and Summer Celebration Program

The large group session materials include a drama for each week and a list of songs to learn as a whole group. Presenting a drama may, at first, sound intimidating, but these dramas are written in such a way that both children and adults will enjoy performing and/or viewing them. Each drama will take about 8-10 minutes, and each requires five to eight actors (more actors are optional). The costumes may be as simple or elaborate as you would like.

You'll probably want middle schoolers or a team of older teens to play these roles (although adults would be fine too). Each drama offers ways to include younger children in nonspeaking roles, if you wish. Please see session 1 for more information.

The dramas and songs can be used not only for each large group session, but also for the celebration program. You'll find a sample program along with ideas for organizing and producing it on pages 9-11.

## Small Group Sessions

Small group sessions will give you the opportunity to help apply the story to the children's lives. If you are unable to present the story as a drama in the large group setting, you can still use the drama to tell the story another way in your small group setting. It's a story you want children to hear!

Each small group opens with a Hello step designed to catch the children's interest and get them thinking about the lesson's theme.

Next comes the Know step (telling the story). If the children have already heard the story in the large group session, you'll want to use this time to review the story with them. If they did not participate in a large group session, you can use the drama or another interesting way to present the story to the group (see sessions for suggestions).

The Grow step will help kids understand what the story means for their lives, and the Show step will guide them to respond to what they learned in this session.

Each small group session includes options for activities and crafts. You'll want to carefully consider these well ahead of teaching these materials. Once you've decided which crafts and activities to use, you may want to appoint two or more volunteers (possibly parents of kids in the group) to gather the materials, cut out patterns, and assemble all the items you'll need. Having a helper in the classroom is also a plus when doing crafts and other activities with young children.

We trust that God will use you as you share these parables of the kingdom and the love of King Jesus with the children.



Small group leaders may want to send a short letter to the families of the kids in their group at the beginning of this unit. Explain what these five sessions will be like and invite families to share in the experience by praying for you, talking about the stories with their kids, helping out in your sessions, and/or attending the final celebration program (if you plan to have one).



# How to Use This Book for VBS or Other Summer Ministries

Much of this material was originally written for vacation Bible school at Westview Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, by Rev. Roger Groenboom, Alison Groenboom, and Susan Thornell. You can use the five sessions for a five-day vacation Bible school, as the authors did, or for a once-a-week session for five weeks. Here's a suggested schedule and format for using the large and small group approach for vacation Bible school.

## Opening Large Group Session (30 minutes)

- Opening prayer and singing time (Check each session for song suggestions; all are included on the CD that accompanies this course.)
- Drama (See pages 131-152 for dramas for each of the sessions and tips on how to present them. Purchasers of this book may photocopy all drama scripts.)

## Small Group Sessions (45-90 minutes)

Small groups may spend 90 minutes or more enjoying the four steps of the session plans. Remember that you'll need to make some choices about what to use and what to ignore, especially in the Show part of each session.

- The Hello step (10 minutes) gets you started with a fun activity that introduces the theme of the parable.
- The Know step (10-15 minutes) gives you some great ways to review the parable that was presented in the large group session.
- The Grow step (10-15 minutes) helps nurture faith as kids think about how the parable affects their lives.
- The Show step (15-30 minutes or more) helps kids respond to the parable through a variety of crafts and activities. You'll find suggestions for learning the Memory Fun or Memory Challenge, making attractive parable bookmarks, and retelling the parable to others. You'll also find single session ideas for parable-sharing crafts, fun projects, and other activities.

## Closing Large Group Session (15 minutes)

You may want to get the entire VBS back together for a time of singing and sharing. If you're planning a summer celebration program, you can use this time to review the songs that are part of the program. Kids can recite their memory work and show their crafts or other projects to the entire group. End your time together by inviting everyone to join hands for prayer.

### Terrific Tees



Westview Church makes the summer program extra-special for staff and kids each year by ordering T-shirts printed with the program logo for all participants. (See p. 179 for a "Sharable Parables" logo that can be screenprinted onto shirts or printed on a program.) When ordered in large quantities, these T-shirts are quite inexpensive. Look for a printer in your area.

## Forming Ministry Teams

Sharable Parables provides a great opportunity for many people from your congregation to become involved in summer outreach ministry. Here are a few suggestions for setting up teams from your congregation:

- **Planning team:** Decides the dates of the program. Assists and guides the other teams so that the main theme and vision of the VBS or other outreach program is apparent.
- **Music team:** Chooses music, finds music leader and musicians, selects music for program. This material suggests a number of songs and includes them on a CD.
- **Publicity team:** Creates small fliers and distributes them throughout the neighborhood. Gets the word out about location, date, and theme.
- **Program team:** Organizes the celebration program and possibly an “after-program” event like an ice cream social or small picnic.
- **Small group session team:** Selects the ideas that will be used for the small group sessions, especially for craft and activity time.
- **Drama team:** Recruits actors, obtains the necessary items for each drama, and presents the drama to the entire VBS. See session 1 for additional comments.
- **Decoration team:** Decorates the large group session area as desired, perhaps with large drawings of the characters in the parables (use an overhead projector to trace onto shelf paper), enlarged Memory Fun/Memory Challenge verses and Sharable Parables logo, and so on.

We encourage you to draw on the diverse gifts of members when you compose your teams. Involve as many people from the congregation as you can. Share your enthusiasm about the parables and how the children will respond to them with others!



# Tailoring Your Sessions to the Ways Children Learn

How do children and young teens learn? The answer to that question can be almost as varied as the kids in your group. Some learn best through words. Others through music. Still others through nature or through movement.

Sessions in the *Walk With Me* curriculum try to respect the many ways kids learn. *Walk With Me* sessions include a wide range of activities that speak to kids with the following types of intelligence (based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences). Within each session, the icons below highlight the learning styles represented by each activity. As you teach, you'll begin to get a sense for how the kids in your group learn best. Kids who are



## Word Smart

learn best through verbal activities (listening, reading, or speaking), including discussions, worksheets, writing, reading, storytelling, and word games.



## Music Smart

learn best through sound, music, and rhythm—playing musical instruments, writing their own songs and raps, listening to recordings, singing, and so on.



## Number Smart

learn best by exploring patterns and relationships through activities such as problem solving, logical puzzles or games, making charts and graphs, or putting things in sequence.



## People Smart

learn best through doing things with others, cooperating and working in small or large groups, role playing, conversations, brainstorming, and other interactive exercises.



## Picture Smart

learn best by visualizing concepts. These kids enjoy viewing maps, slides, pictures, videos, and diagrams; making jigsaw puzzles; and expressing their ideas with shape, color, and design.



## Self Smart

learn best by working independently through such things as writing in a journal, meditating, reading, and reflecting.



## Body Smart

learn best by using their bodies, acting things out, using puppets, moving—anything hands-on.



## Earth Smart

learn best through activities connected to living things and natural phenomena, through nature walks, examining plants and animals, nature experiments, and activities that focus on ecology.

—The ideas on this page are based on material from the following resources: *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong, © 2000, and a chart prepared by Donald L. Griggs, Livermore, California.

# A Summer Celebration Program

## Sharable Parables

Processional and Greeting: *"Ha La La La"* (David Graham)

Opening Prayer

Reading: *The Sower and the Seeds* (Matthew 13:3-8)

Song: *"Stop and Let Me Tell You"*

Memory Fun (younger children)

Psalm 119:105

Memory Challenge (older kids)

The Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:25-27)

Song: *"He Is the Rock"* (Troy and Genie Nilsson)

Reading: *The Great Banquet* (Luke 14:21b-23)

Song: *"Big House"* (Mark Stuart, Barry Blair, Will McGinnis, Bob Herdman)

Congregational Song: *"Amazing Grace"* (John Newton, arr. Thomas A. Arne)

Drama: *"The Lost Son"* (Luke 15:11-32)

Song: *"Amazing Grace/Fill It Up"* (Grooters and Beal)

Reading: *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10: 30-37)

Song: *"Jesu, Jesu"* (Ghana folk song, adapted Tom Colvin, arr. Robert Roth)

Meditation

Closing Prayer

# Additional Program Ideas

Having a summer celebration program is a great way to help focus your church's attention on sharing the good news about Jesus. This program can be used during a Sunday service or for a special weeknight "bring-a-neighbor" service. Read through the sample program (previous page) and use it as a guide for creating your own unique program. (You may want to use the logo on p. 179 for a program cover.)

Here are a few additional ideas:

## Scripture Readings

- Your middlers and younger children who are good readers can nicely present this part of the program. Consider using simplified English versions such as the New International Reader's Version or the New Living Bible. *The Message* could also be used for one or two of the readings.
- Children can recite their Memory Fun/Memory Challenge in unison. Note that the younger children learn a different passage than the older ones. Both are given opportunity to recite in the program.

## Singing

- We suggest six songs for the children to sing during the program (the audience sings "Amazing Grace" just before the dramatization of the Lost Son). All the songs the children sing are on the CD that's part of this resource, as are the optional songs you may want to substitute, below. Even if the children know all the songs by the last session, you may still want to plan an extra practice session, perhaps on a Saturday or evening. Having a closing song time during your weekly or daily sessions will also give the kids time to practice the songs.
- You may want to divide up the songs. For example, kids in K-3 could learn a few of the songs while kids in the other grades learn the rest. For the program, have each group sing the songs they've learned, instead of having all the kids sing together. Or have boys learn some songs and girls learn others.
- If kids make the paint stick clappers in session 2, use them during the singing of "He Is the Rock," "Amazing Grace/Fill It Up," and "Jesu, Jesu." See pages 47-48 for instructions on making the clappers.

## Drama

- Presenting one of the dramas from this course is bound to delight your audience. We suggest using the drama of the Lost Son (see pp. 145-148). You could omit reading the entire Scripture passage for that drama, reading instead only the "lost and found" reference from Luke 15:31. Of course, if you think one of the other dramas would be more effective, feel free to substitute.
- The drama can be presented by your drama team or by other adults, young adults, and middle schoolers. Involve younger children in nonspeaking roles. Costumes, props, and sets can be as simple or elaborate as you like. Read through the suggestions at the beginning of each drama.

## Stage Direction Ideas for the Program

- **Pre-processional:** Have the children line up in the back of church.
- **Processional:** All of the children enter the worship space from the back of church singing "Ha La La La." Encourage the children to smile and greet people as they enter. They can shake hands with each other and with the people in the congregation.

- **Formation up front:** Line kids up in front. They can be spread across the front of the worship space in a single row or several rows. (During practice time, assign each child a special spot or area where they will be standing when they sing during the program.)
- **Singing:** If you are planning on having all of the kids sing all of the songs, they may all stay up in front of church. If smaller groups are singing certain songs, have the others stay seated until it is their turn to sing.
- **Opening Prayer:** Have one of the older kids open with prayer. He or she can thank God for the Bible and the parables that they are going to share, as well as ask God's blessing on the program.
- **Scripture Reading:** Have kids that are reading move to a visible location. Microphones may or may not be necessary depending on the size of your worship space.
- **Transition to Drama:** After kids sing "He Is the Rock," have them exit the worship space to make room for the drama or have them sit down. During the transition time, have the accompanist play music.
- **Drama:** The drama team will need to set up and take down quickly. They may need some extra stagehands to help them. Sets and props do not have to be elaborate; perhaps they can be partially set up ahead of time. Have the accompanist play music during the transition time before and after the drama.
- **Transition to Meditation:** Following the song "Jesu, Jesu," the children should be seated. The pastor then leads the balance of the worship time.

### Optional Songs

Feel free to substitute some of the following songs for those suggested for the program. These optional songs are listed in the large group sessions and are printed at the back of this manual. They're also on the CD that accompanies this course.

- "Tell It!" (Cindy Berry)
- "The Wise Man and Foolish Man" (traditional)
- "Two Houses" (Robert C. Evans)
- "Sandy Land" (Karen Lafferty)
- "The Good Samaritan" (Mary Lu Walker, arr. H. Myron Braun)
- "You Shall Love the Lord" (Frank Hernandez)
- "Make Me a Servant" (Kelly Willard)

# The Sower and the Seed

## Scripture

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23

## Focus

Jesus teaches us to keep telling others about him because many will believe.

## WORDSearch

### Think About It

In the parable of the sower and the seed, we meet a farmer and his seeds. Quickly we are navigated through the neighborhoods where the seed falls. Some seed falls along a path, but the birds eat the seed. Other seed falls on rocky places, but the sun withers the seed. Still more seed falls among thorns, but the thorns choke out the seed.

“How sad,” we are tempted to think. This is one bad-aim farmer. He’s like a hunter with a bent sight. And by the way, what a waste! All that seed, and not a single stalk to show for it. We object to his promiscuous planting. It’s as wasteful as throwing away a pint of pure nard (John 12:3). Unfortunately, this whole seeding enterprise seems to be going to the dogs (make that the birds!).

But then, these infertile side streets are not the parable’s final destination. There’s one more borough to visit—the good soil. Arriving there, we realize that Jesus’ words have brought us to a place designed to make us forget all the failures. It’s like that family vacation where everything goes wrong—a flat tire on the camper, a Freon leak turning your climate-controlled Chevy into an oven on wheels, and Junior’s dreadful nausea, complete with not-so-special effects. But none of that wretchedness matters when you round the bend, and there is the Grand Canyon in all its majesty. Or the Tetons, or Lake Louise, or wherever your favorite place may be.

“Forget about the failures,” the farmer is telling us. “Other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.” We’ve arrived at last at a place where the soil is right, the shade brings relief, the birds are in retreat, the thorns are

removed, and the seed is ready. *Everything*, in fact, is ready. Everything is ripe for a superabundant harvest. This is our destination on the kingdom tour. Do you see it off in the distance?

But wait, that’s only part of the story. That’s just the ending. As every traveler knows, even with the flat tires, Freon leaks, and flu symptoms, the journey itself holds a special satisfaction of its own. Not to mention the fact that on the journey is exactly where we find ourselves.

### Pray About It

This is a parable about a superabundant harvest in the kingdom of God. Pray that you will be a part of God’s promiscuous seed-sowing project. Pray that the children will understand the message of good news, and that it needs to be told again and again to others, especially to those who have never heard. Pray for opportunities to share some seeds with your students and others. Pray for the courage and boldness to live with the promise of an assured multiplying harvest. Pray that God’s harvest will increase through your voice telling out the good news.

### Tell About It

The children need to hear that the fields are ripe for harvest. They need you to tell them about the joy of sharing the good news. They need to know that God will bless the gospel message they learn and tell. They need to know that thirty-, sixty- or even one hundred-fold is easy for God, even when it looks and feels so difficult for us. They need to know that we should speak the good news with confidence, for many will believe it.

And right there on the journey is where we need to hear a couple of companion verses to our parable. The first (John 4:35) is spoken by Jesus to his disciples: “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

Do you see the connection? The harvest is ripe *right now*. We are all on a harvest journey—a journey on which everyone we meet who hasn’t heard the good news should be considered an opportunity. God has ripened the fields, and we are walking through them. Shall we walk right on by or shall we gather the harvest by opening our mouths with the words of good news? Surely God has provided the opportunity.

God has also given us a promise. We hear it in a companion verse. Can you guess what it is? “My word that goes out from my mouth . . . will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:11). There we have the promise: a harvest of achievement, a harvest of accomplishment, a harvest of fullness. The Word of God will go out on the voices of God’s people and the harvest will be gathered.

Both opportunity and promise abound even today in this 21st century. Dear teacher of children, we are on the journey of our lives. So let’s take our feet off the brakes and honk our horns telling out God’s goodness; and then let’s sow the good news far and wide, confident that the Holy Spirit will awaken the superabundant harvest.

## Planning the Session

You are in charge of presenting the parable of the sower to all the children—from kindergarten to grade 8—in your Sunday school or vacation Bible school. That’s quite a challenge! The little ones on your group will hear the parable as an interesting (and somewhat funny) story about a farmer and seeds. Older kids, at least those familiar with Scripture, may already begin making some connections between the seed and the gospel. Here in the large group session, you should concentrate on presenting a lively and interesting story for all to enjoy; interpretation of that story will happen in the small groups.

Depending on how much time you have available, you’ll probably want to take 5-10 minutes for singing and another 10-15 minutes for the drama.

If you’re going to be presenting a summer celebration program, you may want to use part of the large group session to help the children prepare. You’ll find suggestions for program planning on pages 9-11.

The suggestions in this large group session assume that you’ll be dramatizing the parable of the sower to children and young teens and preparing them to respond to it in small groups.

## Singing

You may want to ask someone with musical gifts to lead the singing and teach new songs to the children during these five sessions. Be sure to share the tips in the box “Introducing a New Song” with that person.

You’ll find the songs on pages 153-178 of this book and on the CD that accompanies this course. A great warm-up song that will get everyone involved is “Ha La La La.” A song that relates directly to today’s parable is “Stop and Let Me Tell You.” Both are suggested for the summer celebration program.

An optional song for this session or for the entire unit is “Tell It!” by Cindy Berry.

If you decide to present a summer celebration program, consider dividing the songs between groups of children: the children in kindergarten-grade 3 might learn some of the easier songs, those in grades 4-8 could sing all of the songs.





### Introducing a New Song

The way you introduce a new song is crucial. Of course you'll want to know it well yourself. But you'll also want to think through how you'll introduce it to your group. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind:

- Many kids learn mostly by rote and repetition. Listen to the CD or play the tune and encourage the kids to join in on a line or phrase that repeats often.
- Make up motions that may go along with simple words (i.e. step, Jesus) to help them remember the words.
- Be enthusiastic! Model your love of singing instead of being concerned about your performance.

## Drama

Rehearsing and presenting a drama can be a rewarding experience—both for the actors and for those who view the drama. Consider finding a team of actors and begin working with them early. This could be a wonderful gift for your middle school group to offer to the younger children. Teens and adults can also be drama team members. And children of all ages can play nonspeaking roles. This week's drama, "The Sower and the Seeds," includes seven reading parts plus as many nonspeaking parts for the "Good Seeds" as you can line up—the more, the better! You'll also want to begin thinking about costumes and props—consider asking persons in the congregation (especially people who sew!) to help you out.



Roger Groenboom, author of the dramas in this course and pastor of Westview Christian Reformed Church, where this material was taught in a VBS setting, says kids enjoyed watching their pastor and other teens and adults acting in the skits. "They especially enjoyed it when I goofed up the lines," says Roger. He said the team managed to "loosely" memorize their lines, improvising a bit as they went along. On the weekend before VBS began, the team rehearsed the first two dramas. Once VBS was underway, they rehearsed and learned lines in the evening. To cut down on the time required from drama team members, consider forming two or more drama teams.

If your drama team doesn't have time to memorize, reading the lines from scripts you provide is fine. Drama teams can still rehearse together, even though they aren't memorizing their lines.

Simple costumes are suggested on the first page of the script. The suggestions we offer are only that—suggestions. Use what you have available and what you can find to create your own costumes. The most important prop is plenty of tan or brown sheets (burlap sacks would also work). Put out an early call for these! A few rocks and small branches are simple enough to collect.



No time or people for drama teams? Present the dramas without rehearsal, choosing your actors from the large group, distributing costumes and scripts, and walking your actors through the presentation. It won't be smooth, but it's certainly doable. You'll need to allow more time than for rehearsed performances by a drama team. Plan to have at least one adult "stage manager" who gets kids assigned to parts, distributes costumes, and, when necessary, acts as a prompter to keep the action moving. It would also help to have an older teen or an adult—perhaps a small group leader—take a major role in the play. For this week's drama, get an adult to play the farmer.

Please note that two pieces in the skit have been set to music by author Roger Groenboom (both are sung by him on the CD). The first, "I Am a Little Seed" (p. 135; CD, track 3) may be sung by the Road Seed. The second, "The Money Song" (no printed music available; CD, track 4) may be sung by the Choked Seed. This song, says Roger, is "loosely based" on



the Veggie Tales “Bunny” song from the video *Rack, Shack, and Benny: A Lesson in Handling Peer Pressure*.

Before presenting “The Sower and the Seeds,” ask someone—preferably a good reader from your middle school—to read the parable from Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23, using an easy-to-understand version such as the New International Reader’s Version (NIRV). A careful, slow reading will help children understand what the drama is about.

## Small Groups

After the drama, children will meet in small groups. Notice that we’ve included two session plans—one for kindergarten-grade 3 and another for grades 4-8. If your regular church school leaders are present, it’s probably best to have the children meet in their groups as usual; however, you could also choose to combine several groups together. Each small group leader will need to adapt the plan to the needs of his or her children.

# The Sower and the Seed

## Scripture

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23

## Memory Fun

Psalms 119:105

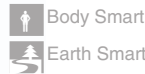
## Focus

Jesus teaches us to keep telling others about him because many will believe.



## HELLO

Taste and Guess



### Goal

Think about seeds and what they become when they grow.

### Time

10 minutes

### Materials

- Small pieces of a variety of fruit and veggies on toothpicks (watermelon, apple, tomato, cucumber, carrot, beans, and so on)
- Platter or large plate to hold fruit and veggies
- Blindfold
- Seeds from a couple of the fruits or veggies

When all the children are present, remind them that today's Bible story is about seeds and the fruit or veggies that grow from them. Show them the plate of fruit and veggies on toothpicks and explain that they're going to have a chance to see how good they are at identifying what they're eating.

Invite kids to come forward, one at a time, put on the blindfold, choose an item, taste it, and tell what they think they just ate (be sure to observe what item they took so you can tell if they guessed correctly). Enjoy the game and applaud everyone, whether they guessed correctly or not.



Before proceeding, ask if any of the children are allergic to any fruits or vegetables. If so, remove the offending items from your platter!

After all have had a chance to guess, show the group seeds of a couple of the fruits and vegetables you've brought. Let them guess what kind of seeds they are. Ask them to imagine that they are farmers. Would they plant just one seed if they wanted, say, one watermelon, or would they plant many seeds? Conclude that we would want to plant more than one seed because some seeds may not sprout.

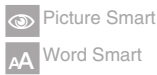


No time to find a variety of fruits and veggies? Then stick to just one fruit and its seeds. Let's say it's watermelon. Show the group the watermelon seeds without identifying what fruit they'll grow into. Ask the kids to close their eyes as you place a piece of watermelon in their mouths (or have one volunteer do the guessing). Can they identify the fruit without looking at it? Transition to today's topic with comments like those that conclude the regular step.

# 2

# KNOW

## Today's Parable Retold



### Goal

Retell the parable of the sower and the seeds.

### Time

10 minutes

### Materials

- Plastic tablecloth—solid color is better than patterned
- Small pile of dirt
- A couple of large and small rocks
- Branches/brambles
- Piece of tan/gray felt for a path
- Bowl of grass seed or other seed
- Cap or straw hat

Spread out your props and put on your hat. Ask the children to imagine that you are a farmer who is going to sow some seeds. Alert them to be ready for four questions you're going to ask. Tell them they should respond with a loud YES or NO.

First, sow some seeds along the path. Ask, **Will this seed grow up into beautiful plants?** After the children respond, talk about what happened to those seeds—the birds ate them before they had a chance to grow.

Then sow some seeds by the rocks. Ask, **Will these seeds grow?** Let the children respond, and then talk about what happened to those seeds—because they took root in shallow soil, among the rocks, these seeds grew at first but then withered away in the heat of the sun.

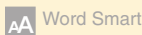
Next, sow some seed among the branches (thorns). Once again, ask, **Will these seeds grow?** Again let the children respond. Talk about what happened to these seeds—the thorns choked them out.

Finally, sow some seed on the good dirt and ask, **Will these seeds grow and produce healthy plants?** After the children respond (at last!) with a loud and enthusiastic YES, talk about how these seeds will grow up into beautiful, strong plants that will provide a lot of food for people to eat.



If you have second and third graders in your group, you could ask them to take turns being the farmer and sowing the seed in the various places.

## Storybook



### Time

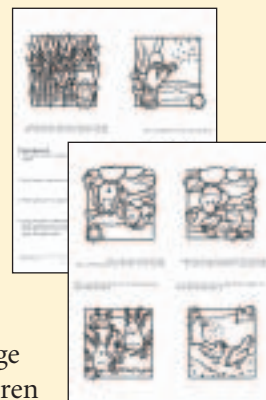
5-10 minutes

### Materials

- Storybook, "The Parable of the Sower and the Seeds" (reproducible pages 185-186), copied and assembled

Use this option if you're looking for a simpler way to present today's story. Assemble a sample storybook before class and show the children the pictures as you read through the pages together.

If your photocoppy machine has this feature, you may want to enlarge the pages of the storybook to full size, making it easier for the children to see the book as you read it. Or, if you're artistic, copy the simple drawings and text yourself onto full-size pages.



Option to step 2

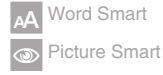


You may want to ask an older child to read the story to the others. If so, try to get a copy of the book to the child before today's session so that he or she can practice reading it at home.



# GROW

## People Poster

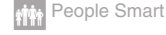


Word Smart



Picture Smart

Number Smart



People Smart

### Goal

Sense how important it is to tell others about Jesus.

### Time

10-15 minutes

### Materials

- Several “people pictures” per child (cut from magazines; look for diversity in age, race and so on)
- 6' (2 m) length of paper tablecloth or large sheet of posterboard
- Glue sticks
- Marker

Give a very simple explanation of the parable by reading these lines to the children: **The farmer in the parable sows *many* seeds. The farmer wants as *many* seeds to grow as possible. The farmer wants to have *many* bushels of wheat or corn at harvest time. God also wants *many* people to believe in him, know him, and love him. God wants *many* people to tell others about Jesus. God wants *many* people to be in the kingdom.**

Tell the children you're going to say these same words to them again. This time, whenever you point to them, you want them to jump up like seeds popping from the ground, and shout *many* together. Try this once or twice.

Ask the kids who in the world needs to hear about Jesus (everyone!). That's why it's so important that we tell people about Jesus. Explain that you're going to make a “people poster” together. Distribute several people pictures to each child. (Have these available ahead of time, or, if you prefer, allow extra time and have kids cut out the pictures themselves.)

Roll out about a 6' (2 m) length of paper tablecloth on a table or the floor (or display a large piece of posterboard). Have kids attach their people pictures to the paper or posterboard using glue sticks. As they work, mention the many different kinds of people on the poster, reminding the children again that everyone in the world needs to hear the good news about Jesus.

When they've finished gluing the pictures, ask the group to think of a title for their poster: something like “Tell everyone about Jesus” or “The whole world needs Jesus.” You may also want older children to count the number of people displayed on your poster. Ask them to imagine how big their poster would have to be to show a picture of everybody in the whole world!

Conclude by helping the children think of ways that we can share the good news about Jesus. For example, we can talk about Jesus with our friends at school. We can pray for our missionaries. We can be kind and loving to others so they can see if we love Jesus. And we can even “share a parable” that we learned at church school or VBS.

*Note:* If you make the people poster, please save it for reference later in this unit.

## Seed Pictures Picture Smart Word Smart

Option to step 3


### Time

10-15 minutes

### Materials

- Drawing paper
- Crayons or colored markers

Use this option if you prefer a more open-ended art activity to the people poster in the regular step. Begin by giving everyone a seed—watermelon, bean, sunflower, and so on. Talk about the variety of sizes, but do not tell what kind of seeds they are.



Instead of buying seeds in a packet, save money by buying fifteen-bean soup mix.

Distribute drawing paper and crayons or colored markers. Ask kids to use their imagination and draw a picture of what they think their seed might become. This is just for fun—it doesn't matter if the drawing matches the seed! It might be a fruit, a vegetable, even a tree!

When they're finished, admire the sketches, then ask what they think their seed needs to grow up into a plant or tree. Explain that, like the seeds, everyone in the world is different. But everyone needs to know and love God. God wants us—and all people—to grow up to love and serve him. Talk about how we can help others know about God and grow into the kind of people that God wants them to be.

# 4 SHOW

Show and Tell

### Goal

Celebrate and share the good news about Jesus.

### Time

15-30 minutes or more

### Materials

See individual projects for lists

Like the sower who plants seeds everywhere, we want to tell the good news about Jesus whenever we can. Below are a variety of projects to help kids celebrate and share the good news about Jesus. Some of the projects run for the entire unit, others are for just this session. Choose one or more that best suits your time frame and the interests of your children.

## Unit Project Ideas

### Memory Fun Word Smart

### Time

5-10 minutes

### Materials

- Memory Fun (reproducible page 181), one per child

Tell the children that during your times together in the next few sessions, they'll be hearing stories Jesus told called parables. Jesus told these stories because he wanted people to know how to live as God's children.



Read the Memory Fun verse to the children. Then read it again, phrase by phrase, and have the children repeat it after you. Talk a bit about what the verse means. The words and stories Jesus tells are like lamps or lights: they help us see how to live. Urge the children to listen carefully to the stories they will hear during your time together. That’s what Jesus wants us to do!

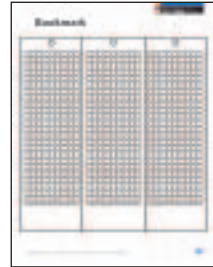
If you plan to have the children memorize this verse, send home a copy of the Memory Fun home today with a note asking families to help the child learn these important words.

## Sharable Parable Bookmarks

**Time**  
5-10 minutes

**Materials**

- Bookmark pattern (reproducible page 187), one bookmark per child
- Crayons
- Construction paper, various colors
- Paper punch
- Glue sticks
- Small pieces of ribbon



Have the children make bookmarks to share with others the parable they hear each session. Run copies of the pattern (page 187) on heavy stock. Younger children can simply color in the circles to create a picture or design. Older children can glue on paper-punched circles made from various colors of construction paper for a mosaic look. For today’s session, a flower or tree or sun and field would make an appropriate design.



Notice that there’s room at the bottom of the bookmark to print a title or the Scripture location of the parable. If you are working with very young children, you will want to add that before the session. Attach a ribbon through a hole punched at the top of the bookmark.

Encourage kids to show the bookmark to their families and friends and to share the parable with them.

## Storybooks

**Time**  
15 minutes

**Materials**

- Storybook, “The Sower and the Seeds” (reproducible pages 185-186), one set per child
- Crayons or markers

Each of the five sessions offers a take-home storybook that the children may share with their family and friends. For today’s session, photocopy pages 185-186 and distribute a set to each child. Walk the children through the folding process, as follows, offering your help and the help of older children to the little ones in your group.

1. Fold both pages in half horizontally along the dotted lines.



2. Fold both pages in half vertically along the dotted lines.



3. Insert the second set of folded pages into the first set, so that page 3 is opposite page 2.



Have the kids print their names on the cover, then color in the pictures. (If you're short on time, just read the booklet with them and let them color it at home.) Encourage them to read the story with their family and friends.

## One-Session Project Ideas

### Sower and Seed Flowerpots



Earth Smart



Picture Smart



Body Smart

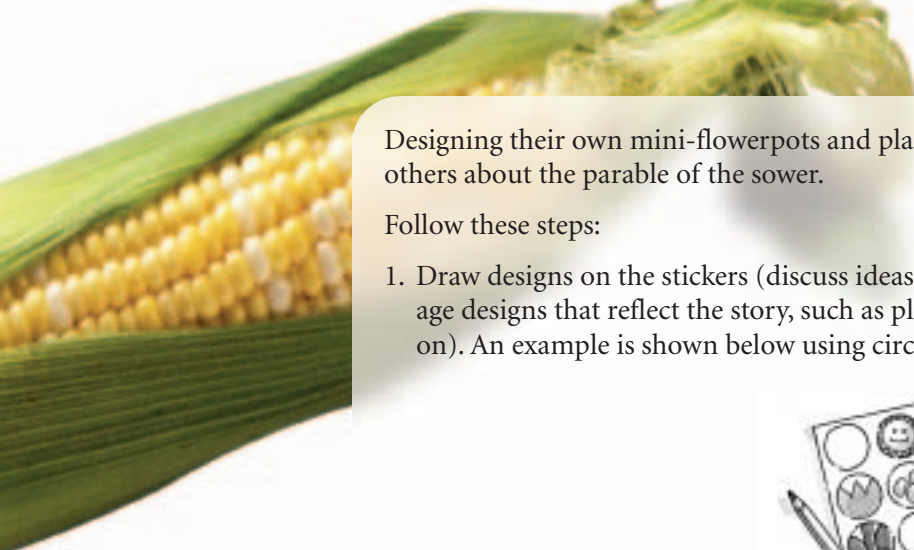
#### Time

20-30 minutes

#### Materials

- Small clay flowerpots about 2" (5 cm) high, one per child
- Plain label stickers, various colors and shapes (available at office supply stores)
- Colored pencils, markers, crayons
- Scissors
- Potting soil and plastic spoons
- Cover-up shirts or other protection for children's clothing
- Flower seeds such as Zinnia
- Masking tape
- Video labels
- Plastic baggies and rubber bands





Designing their own mini-flowerpots and planting seeds will help kids remember and tell others about the parable of the sower.

Follow these steps:

1. Draw designs on the stickers (discuss ideas before children begin drawing and encourage designs that reflect the story, such as plants, seeds, paths, rocks, birds, sun, and so on). An example is shown below using circle labels.



2. Cut out the designs and stick them around the lower part of the flowerpot.
3. Cut the video labels into long, thin strips so that they fit around the rim of the flowerpot. First have the children write "The Sower and the Seeds" on the label (or write the title on the labels for them before the session).
4. Cover the bottom hole of the pot with a piece of masking tape.
5. Using the plastic spoon, have kids fill each pot with potting soil (provide some "cover-up" shirts or other protection for children's clothing). Then have them plant a few small seeds such as Zinnia seeds.
6. Cover the pots with plastic baggies and secure them with rubber bands for a dirt-free trip home.



If your time is quite limited, or if you are working with very young children, you may want to prepare the stickers before the session and have them cut out and ready for the children to stick on their pots. You may even want to decorate the pots ahead of time and just have the children do the planting to complete the project.

Tell kids to put the pots in a warm, sunny place and to keep the soil moist. (If you are working with very small children, be sure to send a short note home with the plant!) If you planted Zinnia seeds, the plant can be transferred to the garden when it's about five inches tall.



Encourage the children to tell the story of the parable when family members and friends admire their plant.

## My Parable Picture of Seeds



People Smart



Picture Smart

### Time

15 minutes

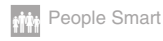
### Materials

- 12" x 18" (30 x 45 cm) piece of posterboard, one per child
- Variety of seeds
- Glue sticks
- Crayons or markers



First have the children use crayons or markers to draw the farmer and the various places he planted the seed (you'll need volunteer helpers to work with younger children on this, reminding them of the different types of soil from the parable). Then distribute the seeds and show the children how to glue them to the posterboard. If time permits, let the children use their picture to tell the story to a partner or to you.

# Parable Story Box



## Time

20-30 minutes

## Materials

- Small shoe box, one per child
- Large seeds (such as bean seeds or sunflower seeds)
- Very small stones or gravel
- Piece of tan felt for the path
- Piece of black felt for the dirt
- Branch with pretend paper thorns taped on (or small twigs)
- Glue sticks (for felt items)
- White glue or tacky glue (for seeds)
- Pipe cleaners to make farmer-figure

Before the children assemble their story boxes, review with them the various places where the farmer sowed seeds. Show them the various items (stones, tan felt, and so on) that will be used to represent each place in the story box.

Consider walking younger children through the construction of the story box, step by step, handing out an item from your supply pile and waiting until everyone has the item glued down before proceeding to another item. We suggest first gluing down the felt and other items to represent the various places, then adding the seeds. Pipe cleaners can be used to make the figure of the farmer (stand him up by bending the legs to form feet; tape the feet down to the shoe box).

Older children may prefer to plan their own design for the story box, selecting materials from a supply table and proceeding at their own pace.

Here's a sample of what a finished story box could look like:



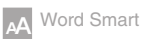
To save time and assist the younger children, have the various pieces of felt cut out prior to your session. Be sure to show the children a finished model of your own parable story box. In addition to finding volunteers to help you gather and prepare materials, you may want a volunteer or two to attend this session and offer assistance to children as needed.

Another timesaving option is to build one story box together as a group.



White glue or craft glue will take some time to dry. Rather than have the children take the boxes home today, let them stand in your classroom or on a closet shelf until your next session.

# God's Little Seeds

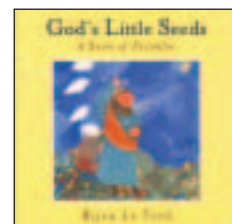


## Time

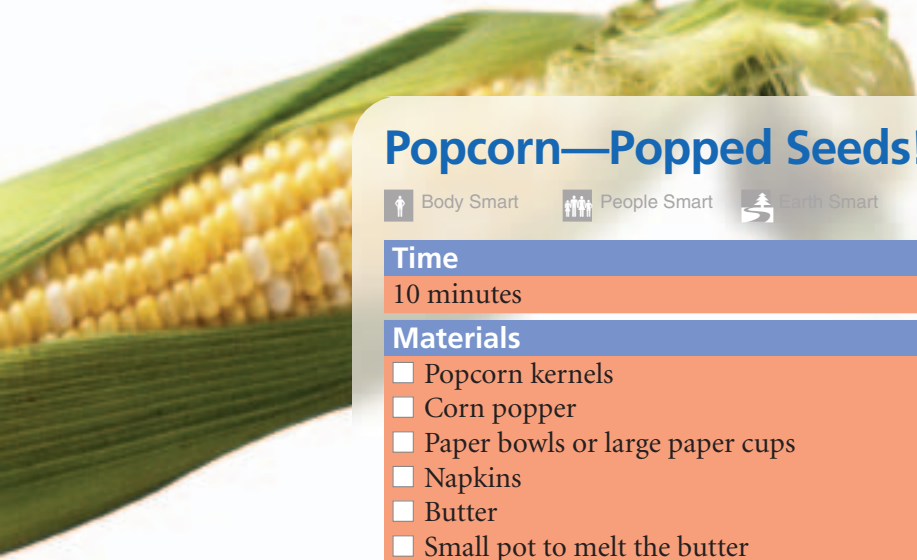
10 minutes

## Materials

- *God's Little Seeds* by Bijou Le Tord (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998)



Your group will enjoy this delightful retelling of the parable as well as the lovely watercolor illustrations. The book also includes the parable of the mustard seed.



## Popcorn—Popped Seeds!



Body Smart



People Smart



Earth Smart

### Time

10 minutes

### Materials

- Popcorn kernels
- Corn popper
- Paper bowls or large paper cups
- Napkins
- Butter
- Small pot to melt the butter

Show the kids the popcorn kernels and remind them that popcorn is nothing more than popped corn seeds. Have fun making and eating the popcorn together. An alternative, of course, is to buy microwave popcorn (kids can look at some of the unpopped corn kernels left in the bag).



Small Group Session: Grades 4-8

# The Sower and the Seed

## Scripture

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23

## Memory Challenge

During this unit the children may memorize the parable of the wise and foolish builders. Since that parable is told in session 2, it's probably best to introduce the Memory Challenge project at that time.

## Focus

Jesus teaches us to keep telling others about him because many will believe.



# HELLO

Sink That Shot!

↑ Body Smart  
⬢ Number Smart

<b>Goal</b>
Introduce the parable of the sower.
<b>Time</b>
10 minutes
<b>Materials</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Soft balls (such as Nerf or tennis balls)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hoop or bucket</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small bags of popcorn as prizes (optional)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lemonade or juice (optional)</li> </ul>

Prior to your session, set up a shooting game that involves trying to sink a shot at some target. A wastebasket and some tennis balls would work fine; or maybe you've got a Nerf basketball and hoop at home that you can bring to class. Or just bring pennies to pitch into a cup. Make the shot challenging enough so that kids will miss at least some of their attempts.

When the kids come into your room, tell them they each have three shots at the target. If you want to ham it up a little, pretend that you're running a concession at a fair. "Step right up here, sir. Sink one shot and win a prize!" If you like, offer bags of popcorn to everyone who participates. Tell kids the popcorn is a clue to what today's Bible story is about. If you go the popcorn route, have some lemonade or juice available for thirsty kids.

Ask kids to guess what the overall shooting percentage of the group was: 25 percent of shots taken? Fifty? Seventy-five? Explain that our first "sharable parable" features a farmer who also took some "shots"—and who missed more than a few! He threw out a whole bunch of seeds. Some missed the target, but many made it and grew up into beautiful plants. The parable is called "The Sower and the Seeds." (Does anyone get the connection between the popcorn and the parable? Both are about seeds.)

## Taste and Guess Body Smart Earth Smart

Option to step 1

<b>Time</b>
10 minutes
<b>Materials</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small pieces of a variety of fruit and veggies on toothpicks (watermelon, apple, tomato, cucumber, carrot, beans, and so on)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Platter or large plate to hold fruit and veggies</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Blindfold</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Seeds from a couple of the fruits or veggies</li> </ul>

Try this mouth-watering option if you're more into snacks than games. It's all spelled out for you in the Hello step of the session for K-3 (p. 16). Actually, it's lots of fun for kids of all ages. You can alter it a bit, if you wish, by having kids pair off to do the tasting and guessing (in that case, supply multiple plates of fruits/veggies and multiple blindfolds).

## **KNOW** Body Smart Word Smart Getting into the Parable


<b>Time</b>
15 minutes
<b>Goal</b>
Retell the parable of the sower and the seeds.
<b>Materials</b>
None needed

A fun way to review today's Bible story (or present it for the first time if you did not have a large group session) is to act out the story in what may be a new way for the kids in your group.

The basic idea is simple and familiar: you will narrate the story from Scripture, a line at a time, while kids act it out. The fun part is that kids play inanimate objects like seeds, rocks, birds, sun, thorns, and so on. So the birds get to eat the seeds that fell on the path; the thorns get to wrap their arms around the seeds that fell among them and pretend to choke them; the sun gets to rise and shine, and so on.

Ask for volunteers for the following:

- the farmer (sower)
- seeds that fell on the path
- birds
- seeds that fell on rocky ground
- the sun
- seeds that fell among thorns
- thorns
- seeds that fell on good soil



If you're thinking this little drama requires a huge group of kids, don't worry. Just assign kids to multiple roles.

Begin by opening your Bible to Matthew 13:3 and reading "Listen! A sower went out to sow . . ." (*kid playing farmer pretends to sow seeds*)

Continue: "As he sowed, some seeds fell on the path . . ." (*kids playing seeds on the path fall down on the path*)

"And the birds came and ate them up." (*kids playing birds begin eating kids playing the seeds on the path*)



And so on, until you finish the parable at verse 9.

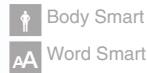
After the drama, ask for a volunteer to read Jesus' explanation of the parable from Matthew 13:18-23. Then ask: **What do you think Jesus is teaching us in this parable?** Focus on two basic responses:

- We need to allow God's Word to take root and to grow in us so that we become strong, healthy Christians—just like the seed needs good soil to grow into a healthy, productive plant.
- We need to tell others the good news so that as many people as possible come into God's kingdom.



## GROW

Good Seeds Dramas



### Time

15 minutes

### Goal

Describe how we can help “sow the seed” of the good news about Jesus.

### Materials

None needed

Say something like this: **This parable is a picture of the way people are saved and the way God's kingdom grows and grows. Jesus is saying that even though some seeds landed on bad ground, many other seeds landed on good ground. A huge, healthy crop of new believers is coming! But listen—we are the ones who must tell others about Jesus. We are the ones to spread the good news in our neighborhood, at school, wherever we are, however we can.**

Divide into small groups of 3-5 kids, taking care to have younger and older children in each group. Ask the groups to demonstrate—act out or pantomime—two or three things they could do in their neighborhood, at school, at church, and elsewhere to help spread the good news about Jesus. Give them five minutes or so to come up with ideas, then let the groups make their presentations. Here are some possible actions they could demonstrate:

- Pray for a missionary in your church; write him or her a note.
- Share a parable with a younger child (see ideas in the next section of this lesson).
- Do something kind for someone who is not a Christian.
- Don't be ashamed to let kids at school see you pray or read your Bible.
- Use language that's appropriate for a Christian; avoid profanity or dirty talk.
- Invite someone at school to attend your youth group at church.
- Talk with friends and others about what Jesus means to you.
- Donate some of your time to work in a food pantry or similar project.
- If people ask why you go to church or pray, tell them you do that because you love Jesus.

Commend the groups for all their ideas.



## Where Am I in This Parable?

Option to  
step 3

Self Smart    Body Smart    Word Smart

<b>Time</b>
10 minutes
<b>Goal</b>
Reflect on where we are in this parable.
<b>Materials</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> “Where Am I in This Parable?” (reproducible page 189), one per person <input type="checkbox"/> Pen or pencil

Use this option if you want to try a more personal approach to the parable of the sower and if your kids enjoy writing. Distribute a copy of reproducible page 189 to each person. Read the sentence starters to the kids and ask them to think about which response or responses they’d like to check and then complete with their personal thoughts.

Allow five minutes for writing, then invite any who wish to share any or all of their statements to do so. You may want to ask all the kids to suggest ways we can be more like the farmer, spreading the good news about Jesus.

Conclude this step by having a time of silent prayer, during which each person may talk to God about what he or she wrote. Open and close the prayer yourself.

## 4 SHOW Sharing the Good News

<b>Goal</b>
Celebrate and share the good news about Jesus.
<b>Time</b>
15-30 minutes or more
<b>Materials</b>
See individual projects for lists

Like the sower who plants seeds everywhere, we want to tell the good news about Jesus whenever we can. Below are a variety of projects to help kids celebrate and share the good news about Jesus. Some of the projects are for the entire unit of five sessions; others are for just this session. Choose one or more that best suits your time frame and the interests of your kids.



# Unit Project Ideas

## Sharable Parable Bookmarks



### Time

5-10 minutes

### Materials

- Bookmark pattern (reproducible page 187), one bookmark per person
- Crayons
- Construction paper, various colors
- Paper punch
- Glue sticks
- Small pieces of ribbon

Have group members make bookmarks to share with others the parable they hear each session. Run copies of the pattern (see page 187) on heavy stock. Kids can either color the circles to make a design or they can glue on paper-punched construction paper circles of various colors for a circular mosaic look.

For today's session, a flower or tree or sun and field would make an appropriate design. Notice that there's room at the bottom of the bookmark to print a title or the Scripture location. Attach a ribbon to the bookmark through a hole punched at the top.



## Sun Art



### Time

15-20 minutes

### Materials

- Construction paper in various dark colors
- Removable glue sticks (check your local craft store)
- Scissors
- Large seeds
- Pen

This project, adapted from a Martha Stewart newspaper column, uses the power of the sun to make a unique kind of art. Kids can make interesting illustrations related to the parables they're learning. You could do this project for one session or for all five, depending on the interest of the kids and your time schedule.

The basic idea is to place cutout shapes on a sheet of colored construction paper. Cut shapes from construction paper, and glue them with removable glue to the sheet. Then tape the sheet, cutouts facing out, to a window where it will catch a lot of sun. After a week or so (longer if higher contrast is desired), peel off the cutouts. The images will be bold and sharp on the construction paper, while the paper surrounding the images has faded in color.

For today's session on the parable of the sower, kids could make cutouts of flowers, stems, and leaves to glue on their construction paper. Or they could make a cutout of the farmer and glue seeds to the construction paper around him (any relatively flat object placed on the paper will make a sharp outline). Letters can also be used as cutouts for those who want to label their artwork.



Kids can take this project home today, hang it in a sunny window, and let the sun do its work for a week or so. Encourage them to show their art to their family and friends and explain how it relates to the parable of the sower.

## One-Session Project Ideas

### Parable Story Box



Earth Smart



Picture Smart



People Smart

#### Time

20-30 minutes

#### Materials

- Small shoe box, one per person
- Large seeds (such as bean seeds or sunflower seeds)
- Very small stones or gravel
- Tan felt for the path
- Black felt for the dirt
- Branch with paper thorns taped on (or small twigs)
- Glue sticks (for felt items)
- White glue or tacky glue (for gluing seeds)
- Blue construction paper (to represent the sky)
- Pipe cleaners to make farmer-figure
- Scissors
- Masking tape

These story boxes will be fun for the kids to make as gifts for younger children in their family or neighborhood. They would also be great to take to a babysitting job.

Before kids assemble their story boxes, review with them the various places the farmer sowed the seeds. Show them the various items (stones, tan felt, and so on) that will be used to represent each place in the story box. Place all the supplies on a table where kids can readily locate them. Have scissors available for cutting out the various pieces of felt. You may want to show them a finished model of the story box (see below), but encourage kids to use their own designs for the boxes and to plan out their design before gluing down the various pieces.

Suggest that they may first want to glue down the felt and other materials, then add the seeds. Pipe cleaners can be used to make the figure of the farmer (stand him up by bending the legs to form feet; tape the feet down to the shoe box).

Here's a sample of what a finished story box could look like:



If you are working with middle school kids, you may want to help a group of younger children make these boxes. Check with Kindergarten-grade 1 leaders to see if they'd appreciate your group's help!



White glue or craft glue will take some time to dry. Let the boxes stand in your classroom or on a closet shelf until your next session.



## Time

20-30 minutes

## Materials

- White fabric, 100% cotton, about 8" x 8" (20 x 20 cm) or larger, prepared as described below
- ¼ cup alum (purchase at pharmacy or spice section of grocery store)
- Washing soda
- Laundry detergent
- Hammers
- Cutting boards or other smooth boards on which to pound (towels underneath help cut down on noise)
- Fresh flowers and leaves (non-white geraniums, pansies, daisies, impatiens all work well)
- Wide masking tape (2 ½" is best)
- Nut pick or stylus or ballpoint pen without ink (or similar sharp tool)

Here's a fun project that requires some preparation at home prior to your session but pays off in a unique and attractive piece of flower art that should delight your kids. The final product can be displayed as a wall hanging or, if made small enough, used as a beautiful bookmark. If you line up a volunteer to help you with the preparation, the rest is a piece of cake (make that a bed of roses).

Either buy fabric pretreated for dyeing (available at some fabric stores) or prepare your own as follows:

- Wash fabric in hot water and laundry detergent. Add two tablespoons of washing soda per yard of fabric. Run the fabric through a double rinse cycle to make sure the soda has been removed.
- Pour two cups of hot water and ¼ cup alum (per yard of fabric) into a pail. Stir well and add fabric. Add more hot water if needed to cover fabric. Allow to cool for two hours.
- In a separate bowl, mix a teaspoon of washing soda per yard of fabric with about ½ cup of water. Stir into the bucket of fabric.
- Soak for at least eight hours, then rinse well, wring out, and partially dry on a line (not in dryer). Iron until wrinkle-free.

That's the hard part. Now for the fun part:

1. Cut fabric into squares of at least 8" (20 cm) each if you want the final product to be a wall hanging. If you want to make bookmarks, cut the fabric into bookmark size (approximately 2 ½" x 8" or 6 x 20 cm).
2. Select a fresh flower, removing a few petals for larger flowers. Leaves are also great. Place the flower or leaf on the fabric, face down. Apply wide masking tape over the entire flower or leaf, covering it completely. To add definition, trace around the edges of the flower with a nut pick or other sharp pointed tool.



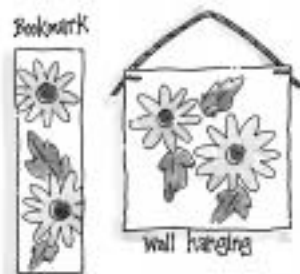
3. Turn fabric over, place it on a cutting board with a towel underneath the board, and begin to pound the taped areas gently but firmly with a hammer. You'll notice the color begin to emerge right away. Continue until you're happy with the look.



4. Turn fabric over and remove tape and smashed flower. Let dry for a minute or two, then add to your flower arrangement until complete.



5. Display the finished piece as a wall hanging (or use as a bookmark, if you made the smaller piece).



It's probably best to show your kids the entire process, then let them try a practice flower on a small piece of fabric. Once they see how the process works, they can begin on the regular-sized fabric. Encourage them to talk about the parable of the sower as they show their finished art to their families.

## Class Story Picture



Picture Smart



Word Smart



People Smart

### Time

15 minutes

### Materials

- 6'-8' (2-2.5 m) length of paper tablecloth (check your church kitchen)
- Markers, crayons, in various colors

Unfurl a roll of paper tablecloth that's long enough for everyone in the class to work on simultaneously (you may want to use two rolls if your group is larger than ten). Place the paper tablecloth on a table or on the floor.

Have kids work individually or in pairs to illustrate the parable of the sower. They can use their Bibles to decide which kids will draw what story scene. A sample arrangement:



- One person/pair can begin at one end of the paper and sketch the farmer sowing seeds.
- The next person/pair can sketch birds gobbling up seed from the path.
- The next person/pair can show small plants in rocky soil being scorched by the sun.
- The next person/pair can show plants being choked out by thorns.
- The final person/pair can show healthy plants producing a huge crop. The sower is smiling.

The class can add a caption to the finished product and display it for the congregation to enjoy.

## Greenhouse Field Trip Earth Smart People Smart

### Time

1-2 hours

### Materials

- Signed permission slips from kids' families
- Transportation to a nearby greenhouse
- Arrangements with greenhouse owner

Perhaps there is someone in your congregation or community who owns a greenhouse and who would be willing to give your group a guided tour, showing kids how he or she raises plants to sell from the seeding process right through the sale itself. He or she could also talk about some of the different types and sizes of seeds, the care that seedlings require, some of the “thorns” that the plants have to fight to survive, and the fun and reward of seeing everything grow. If the owner of the greenhouse is a Christian, ask him or her to make some ties to the parable of the sower.

Before you make the arrangements, talk it up a bit with your kids. See if they're interested. If they are, make your contacts, arrange for permission from parents and for transportation, and go “greenhousing.” Who knows, your brief field trip might just help produce a future farmer (or maybe a future pastor!). And it will make the parable come alive for everyone.