



# Jesus Teaches the Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1–23



## LESSON GOAL

The student will hear God's Word, understand it, and bear good fruit.

## BIBLE TRUTHS

- Jesus taught many lessons in parables.
- The parable of the sower teaches how different people responded to God's Word.
- God chooses who will understand His message.

## KEY VERSE

"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

—Matthew 13:23

## APPLICATION

- Praise God if you have eyes that can see and ears that can hear God's Word.
- Check your heart. Respond to God's Word by trusting Christ as Lord and Savior.
- Tell others about God's good news.

## NEXT WEEK

Jesus Feeds the Multitude

Matthew 14:13–21

### Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



4 Age Group

# Teacher Planning Sheet

## PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Application

*As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to...*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*Three ways students need to apply this passage are...*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Materials Needed:

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## POINT

*Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PROCLAIM

*Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.*

### Presentation Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Praise/Music Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PRACTICE

*Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

#### Introduction

Although the intensity of their opposition varied, both the people of Israel and their leaders refused to accept Jesus as their King. The people were amazed by Jesus’ miracles and fascinated by His teachings, but they were unwilling to submit to His authority and become His disciples. The leaders were also unwilling to repent, but their opposition to Jesus was more intense since His authority threatened their own power. Instead of the indifference which characterized the general population, the leaders vehemently attacked Jesus’ character and conduct. In their attempt to discredit Jesus, the Pharisees had the audacity to say that Jesus cast out demons through Satan’s power. Israel did not want their King because the obedience He demanded was too costly. Because of their rejection, the King began to judge His people. Since the people were unwilling to understand, Jesus taught them in parables impossible for them to understand.

#### Jesus Teaches the Crowds in Parables (Matt. 13:1–9)

On the same day (Matt. 13:1) on which the Pharisees accused Jesus of being Satan’s servant and on which Jesus’ family (who thought He was crazy) came to take Jesus away (Matt. 12:46–47; Mark 3:20–21), Jesus taught the people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The crowds were so large that Jesus taught while sitting in a boat (13:2). As He taught the people, Jesus “spoke many things to them in parables” (13:3). Parables are extended figures of speech in which everyday objects and activities are used to explain spiritual truths. Parables incorporate the well-known to explain the less-known, the familiar to explain the unfamiliar, and the concrete to explain the abstract. While all of Jesus’ parables explained truth perfectly, Jesus’ parables were often unusual because He did not specify what truth He was teaching. The parable of the sower is just one of many parables Jesus taught that day which actually hid spiritual truth.

In the “parable of the sower” (it is called by Jesus in Matthew 13:18), Jesus described a common sight in ancient Palestine: a man scattering seed in order to grow crops. The success of the crop depended on where the seed fell. Seed which fell on the hard, packed ground of the “wayside” could not penetrate the soil and was quickly eaten by birds (13:4). Seed which fell on “stony places,” shallow soil on top of solid rock, grew quickly but withered in the sun. The plant’s roots could not grow deep because of the layer of rock beneath the surface (13:5–6). Other seed fell on ground infested with thorns. When the thorns sprouted along with the seed, the thorns overpowered and “choked” the young plants (13:7). The last seed fell on good soil and developed into a fruitful harvest, ranging from a very good crop of “thirtyfold” to an extraordinary crop of a “hundredfold” (13:8).

Jesus finished His parable without explaining it to the crowds. Even though Jesus knew that most of those present would not understand what He was teaching, Jesus still challenged the crowds to understand the parable. He finished by saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (13:9) Jesus was not hiding truth from those who understood, but those who had “hardened ears” instead of “hearing ears” would not be able to understand Jesus’ parable.

### **Jesus Explains the Purpose for Teaching in Parables (Matt. 13:10–17)**

When Jesus finished the parable, the disciples were curious about both Jesus’ method and His message. They asked Jesus why He spoke to the people in parables (Matt. 13:10) and what the parable of the sower meant (Luke 8:9). Before explaining the parable’s meaning, Jesus explained why He spoke to the people in parables.

Jesus gave His reason to the disciples: “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matt. 13:11). The ultimate reason Jesus spoke in parables was because God is sovereign. He gives revelation to whom He chooses. God chose to whom the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” would be revealed. These “mysteries” were the hidden truths about the coming of God’s Son and the arrival of God’s kingdom. These truths could not be understood from the Old Testament. Contrary to popular Jewish expectations, Jesus taught His disciples how God’s kingdom would continue and grow among those who responded to the gospel until the Messiah returned in judgment.

Although all Jews were commanded to respond to their King, these “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” were not taught to all Jews. Only the Jews who turned to Jesus would understand these mysteries. Jesus gave a principle to explain God’s revelation: “For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance” (Matt. 13:12). Jesus’ parables were God’s way of giving more truth to those who had responded to the gospel. The parables were also God’s way of hiding truth from the crowds who followed Jesus but refused to repent. Jesus added, “Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” (13:12). The Jews who continued to reject the gospel would have nothing left.

Jesus first explained His purpose for teaching in parables in terms of God’s choice. God could reveal kingdom mysteries to whomever He wanted. Jesus’ next reason for teaching in parables was that the parables were fitting judgment upon people who refused to see, hear, and understand (13:13). Like their forefathers who refused to listen to the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9–10), the Jews of Jesus’ day refused to respond to Jesus’ message (Matt. 13:14–15). Because their hearts were hard, the Jews chose to make their eyes and ears useless. They might as well have been blind, deaf, and unaware of what Jesus said and did. Since the Jews enjoyed their spiritual blindness more than obedience, Jesus released them to their desires and taught them parables which they would not be able to understand. The people had been unwilling to understand; now they would be unable to understand—unless they humbled themselves and asked Jesus to take away their blindness and deafness.

Unlike most of the Jews, the disciples were blessed because their eyes saw and their ears heard (13:16). Their righteous response to God’s King had been rewarded with more of God’s revelation. Instead of being cursed with blindness and deafness, the disciples had received a great blessing. Jesus described this blessing to His disciples: “I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (13:17). Because the disciples saw the arrival of God’s King and His kingdom, they were more blessed than the greatest prophets and most righteous

men of the past. In keeping with their privileged position, Jesus taught His disciples what the parable of the sower revealed about God's kingdom.

### **Jesus Reveals the Meaning of the Parable of the Sower (13:18–23)**

The parable of the sower describes four responses to the “word of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:19). The “word of the kingdom” is the good news of how to enter into God's kingdom through faith and repentance. The first response is an unwillingness to believe. This response is pictured by the seed which fell by the wayside but was devoured by birds (13:4, 19). Those who respond in unbelief are content not to understand the Gospel. Their minds will not submit to God's truth, and Satan accommodates their unbelief by snatching away whatever truth was there.

The second response is an unwillingness to persevere. This response is pictured by the seed which didn't have enough soil (Matt. 13:5–6). While the seed grew quickly, it also died quickly in the sun. This response is characterized by one “who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy” (13:20) but who “stumbles” “when trouble or persecution arises because of the word” (13:21). Although this person confesses Christ and mimics certain characteristics of a Christian life, he reveals the absence of true conversion at the first sign of opposition. To this person, salvation was a matter of emotion-altering experience rather than repentance and saving faith. When opposition reveals the cost of following Christ, his commitment to Christ ends.

The third response is an unwillingness to sacrifice. This response is pictured by the seed which was choked by thorns after sprouting (Matt. 13:7). It is characterized by one “who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful (13:22). Such a person is convinced of the truth of the gospel but unwilling to put the truth into practice. He is too consumed with this world to make the necessary sacrifices to obey and bear fruit. Instead of trusting God to supply his needs and satisfy his heart, he succumbs to worship of self and money. His divided heart leads to his destruction.

The last response is a willingness to believe and obey. Jesus describes the response of one who “received seed on the good ground” (Matt. 13:23). This response is characterized by hearing, understanding, bearing fruit, and producing thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold. Although every person is naturally bad ground, God changes a man's heart so that he becomes good ground. He gives him eyes to see and ears to hear His gospel and enlightens his understanding so he will respond with obedience. As the man responds to the gospel in faith and submission, he obeys and bears a multitude of fruit, the characteristic of a transformed life.

### **Conclusion**

Although most of the Jews were blind and deaf to its message, the parable of the sower revealed a mystery about the kingdom of God: different people will respond to the word of the kingdom in different ways. While Christians are used to people rejecting the gospel, the Jews' failure to accept Christ could have been a stumbling block for those who were waiting for Him to reign as their King. With this parable, Jesus encouraged His disciples by helping them understand why the word of the kingdom was not accepted. It also challenged the disciples to bear fruit in keeping with their professed allegiance to Christ and to praise God that He had made their hearts good ground.

## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.



### Review Questions

Was Jesus upset at the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum?

Yes.

Why was Jesus upset at the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum?

*Because they saw His miracles and did not believe that He is God.*

Should the people have believed that Jesus is God because of His miracles?

Yes.

Where did Jesus say that the people of Capernaum would be sent because they did not repent?

*Hell.*

What does Jesus invite people to do?

*Jesus said those “who labor and are heavy laden” should go to Jesus and He will give them rest.*



### A Modern Parable

A parable is a simple story with a moral lesson. Jesus taught many spiritual truths about God in parables. To introduce the children to this concept you may want to read a modern parable to the children at the beginning of class and then ask them what the story teaches us. A good example would be “Twice Mine” by Paul Hinton or a book from the Adam Raccoon series.



### Our Soil

In last week’s lesson Jesus taught about two types of trees. One of the trees grew good fruit and the other grew bad fruit. Where do trees come from? What is inside of fruit? In today’s lesson we will be learning more about how Jesus used plants to teach us a lesson about the spiritual life. Let’s listen carefully to see if we can figure out what type of soil our spiritual life is like.



### On Target

While the sowing of seeds was a common metaphor in the first century, it is foreign to many city dwellers today. Give the children an opportunity to be the “farmer” who is trying to sow his seed in the best possible soil. Use a sheet of construction paper to create a field with a section of good soil, surrounded weeds and thorns, and hard soil. Have the child scatter his seed and count how many fell in the various types of soil.

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

### Bible Lesson

The people of Israel and the Gentiles said that they did not want Jesus as their king. They did not want to give up their sinful lives to obey Him, even though Jesus offered eternal life and rest in Him if they obeyed. Jesus had given them the opportunities to see His power, His love, and His compassion through His miracles, but now Jesus was beginning to bring judgment (punishment) upon those who chose not to understand the truth. He began teaching the crowds lessons that most of the people could not understand. Only those who already accepted the truth and desired to know more truth could understand the lessons. Jesus called these lessons parables. A parable is a story that uses everyday things to explain a spiritual truth (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning).

Jesus taught His first parable while sitting in a boat on the beach of a sea called Galilee. There was a large crowd gathered to hear what He had to say. This parable was about a man who was sowing seeds in order to grow a crop. He took a handful of seeds and tossed them onto the ground. Some of the seeds fell onto the hard packed dirt. This was like a pathway where people walked. These seeds never had the chance to grow up and become a plant because the birds came and ate them up. Some of the seeds fell onto soil that had a lot of rocks just underneath the ground, so the soil was not very deep. These seeds did take root and grow, but their roots were not very deep because of the rocks in the ground stopped them from growing. These plants looked good at first, but as soon as the sun came out and it got hot, they were scorched, so they withered away. Some of the seeds fell onto the soil that had thorns in it. These seeds took root and started to grow, but so did the thorns, so the thorns eventually choked the plants. The rest of the seeds, however, fell onto the good soil that was deep and rich in nutrients. These seeds grew deep roots and were healthy, so they were able stay strong and keep growing, and they all produced more than what was planted to begin with. Jesus ended this parable by saying, "He who has ears, let him hear!" (13:9)

The disciples were confused. They did not understand why Jesus was teaching the crowds stories that they would not understand. "Why do You speak to them in parables?" they asked Jesus (13:10). Jesus explained to the disciples that the crowds had been given understanding about the kingdom of heaven, so the parable was not meant for them. Jesus was only teaching those whom God the Father had chosen to allow to understand. No one else would understand, because they had hardened their hearts. That is what Jesus meant by saying "He who has ears, let him hear"; only those whose hearts are open to hearing God's truth will actually understand what He means.

Jesus went on to explain the meaning of the parable to the disciples. The hard soil, where the seeds were sown, is like a person who hears the gospel message, but

does not believe it. Satan comes and snatches away from their hearts and minds what they heard, just like the birds that came and ate up the seeds. The rocky soil where the seeds were sown is like the person who hears the gospel message and is full of joy when they hear it. They grow a little bit in understanding, but when they face hard times because of what they believe about God, they give up, just like the plant withered when the hot sun came out. The thorny soil where the seeds were sown is like a person who hears the gospel message, but the cares of the world and money and possessions are more important to that person, so the gospel gets pushed out of the way, just as the thorns choked out the plants. The good soil where the seeds were sown is like the person whom God has given ears to hear, and he hears and understands the gospel message, and the truth grows deep within his heart and his life shows it. Just as the plant in the good soil had a lot of fruit. Every person is like one of the four soils. If anyone wishes to have a right relationship with God, he must look at his own heart and see if there are “rocks” or “thorns” preventing God’s truth from taking root. Those who do believe in and obey God must look at their own lives to be sure that they are “bearing fruit,” that the way they live their lives shows that they love and obey God.



## Lesson Questions

What was Jesus doing in today’s lesson?  
*Jesus was teaching the people.*

What story did Jesus teach about?  
*Jesus taught the people the parable of the sower.*

What did the disciples ask Jesus?  
*They asked Him why He taught in parables.*

What does it mean to have “ears to hear”?  
*The people with “ears to hear” are those who God allows to understand His message.*

## Presentation Ideas



### A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.

### Make an Announcement

Make an announcement in another language and wait for the children to respond. Repeat it a few times and watch their reactions. After a few minutes give them instructions they understand. Then talk about what happened. Explain what it means to hear but not to understand, and when you do not understand you cannot do what you are asked.



### Choose to Reveal

During story time or an earlier discussion time show the whole class a picture. Then, show a second picture, this time only showing half the class the picture.



Next, show a third picture to one or two children of your choice. Talk about how God chooses to whom He will reveal the truths of His Word.



### See the Soil?

Bring in some seeds and a plant. Tell the children that when the seeds are planted in soil and watered, they grow into the plant. But the type of soil in which the seeds are planted will make the difference whether the seeds will grow and produce fruit. To illustrate this concept, bring in four clear containers and fill three with one of the following: soil with rocks, soil and weed plants, and good soil. Also bring in other props for gardening: trowel, fork, gardening gloves, watering can, etc. Explain to the students that each of these environments impact if the seed will grow.



### The Sower

Explain to the students how seeds were sown in biblical times. Dress up in the time period clothing and sow seeds. You may want to even set up a situation like the one found in today's lesson. A road could be created with butcher paper; rocks could be made with paper bags, etc. After sowing some seeds discuss with the students how some of your seed fell in each type of area illustrated in today's lesson. Conclude by talking to the students about what may have happened to each seed on each type of soil.



### Seeds and the Soils

To illustrate the impact of different types of soils on plants prepare a few situations for the students to observe. Place lima beans in between wet paper towels and into plastic bags. Leave them in a warm place such as a windowsill. Once the plants have begun to sprout, place them in each of the situations from the lesson. For the thorny soil use pipe cleaners or wire to show what a vine choking the plant may have looked like. For the seeds by the road, place possibly some gravel with no seeds (because the birds ate them). For the stony soil, pebbles could be used. For the good soil, use a soil with fertilizer such as potting soil. The students will be able to observe first hand what effect each type of soil has on the seeds.



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### Read and Respond

While teaching the lesson, give the students the opportunity to participate. Break the class up into four groups. Each group will represent one of the types of seeds. As the teacher reads the part of the lesson that represents their seed have them make their noise and action. When the seed that fell on the roadside is spoken of the students can make a bird noise and flap their wings. When the students hear about the seed that fell among stony soil have the students clap their hands once and say "ouch." When you talk about the seed that fell among thorns the students should make a choking sound and hold their throats. Finally, when you read about the seed that fell on good soil have the last group say, "aaaaaah" and pretend that they are growing big and tall.

### Praise and Worship

*Jesus, Draw Me Close*

*Jesus, Name Above All Names*

*Lord, I Lift Your Name On High*



## Some Seeds

Some seeds that fell were eaten up by birds,  
*(make bird beak with thumb and index finger, pretend to eat seeds off opposite palm)*

Those who don't believe in God's words.  
*(hold hands like a book and shake head back and forth)*

Some seeds on rocky ground were cast,  
*(pretend to throw seed)*

Those with false faith that would not last.  
*(draw an X across chest while shaking head back and forth)*

Some seeds fell all among the thorns,  
*(poke index finger onto palm of hand)*

Those who to the world conformed.  
*(make a large circle with hands)*

But some seeds grew in a good place,  
*(slowly raise hands over head, then wiggle fingers up high)*

Those who obey and trust God's grace.  
*(fold hands together over head and slowly lower while nodding head)*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7*

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.

## Snack Time

For snack time give the students some samples of edible seeds. Beware of any children that might have food allergies.



## "Ears to Hear"

Materials Needed: copies of "Ears to Hear" craft pages, construction paper, scissors, tape

Directions: Make a headband out of construction paper for each child that fits his or her head. Give the students the "Ears to Hear" craft page. Students may decorate their headband and ears. Have them cut out the two ears and the Scripture verse and tape the ears to the sides of the headband. Finally, have the students tape the verse card to the front of the headband.



### **“The Parable of the Soils”**

Materials: craft pages, glue, seeds, dirt, pebbles, pipe cleaners, crayons

Directions: Instruct the students to cut the double-sided sheet along the solid lines. Have them fold each double sided rectangle along the dotted line and glue the bottom portion in the correct order to the base sheet. Finally, instruct the students to decorate and color the top sheet with the above materials to represent each type of soil.



### **The Good Soil**

Materials: Styrofoam cups, lids, potting soil, verse cards, glue, seeds or small plants, large piece of plastic

Directions: Give each child a Styrofoam or paper cup and a pencil. Ask them to punch several small holes in the bottom of the cup with a pencil. Glue a verse card with Matthew 13:23 “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit...” on the side of the cup. Give each child a small plant (or a several seeds). Over a large piece of plastic pour potting soil into each cup until it is 2/3 full. Instruct students to place their seeds on top of the dirt. Give each student a lid to take the cup home. Instruct them to dampen the dirt and leave the cup in a warm place for a few days. Within several days the students should have small plants to remind them of the lesson.



### **Seeds of the Sower**

Materials: copies of “The Parable of the Sower” craft pages, seeds, glue, crayons

Directions: Instruct students to decorate their sheets with drawn pictures of the lesson around the words. Tell them not to fill in the letters with any colors because they will be doing something special with that area. Give the students a bottle of glue and ask them to put glue only inside the block letters. After they have spread around the glue give them seeds to sprinkle onto the glue to cover it completely. The seeds should stick and be left to dry.

### **Coloring Pages**

Give each child a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



### **MEMORY VERSE**

“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces.” —*Matthew 13:23a*



# Ears to Hear



***“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” —Matthew 13:9***



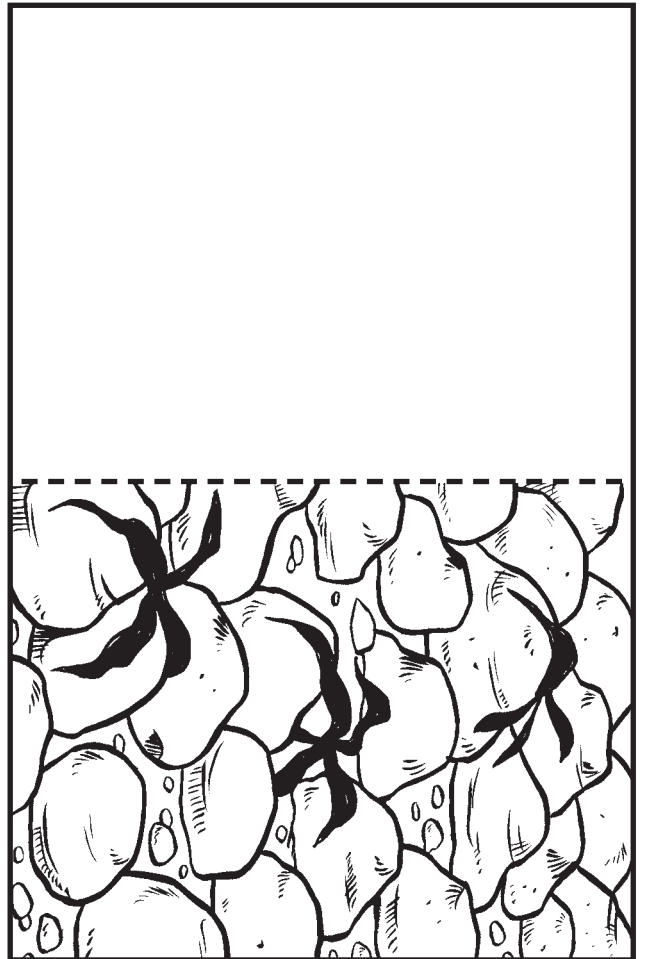
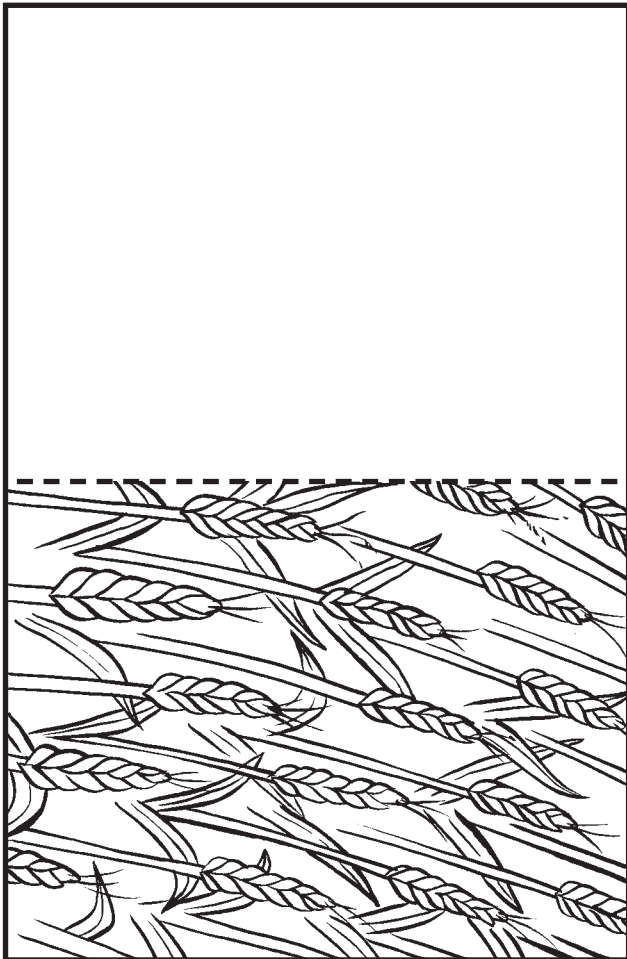
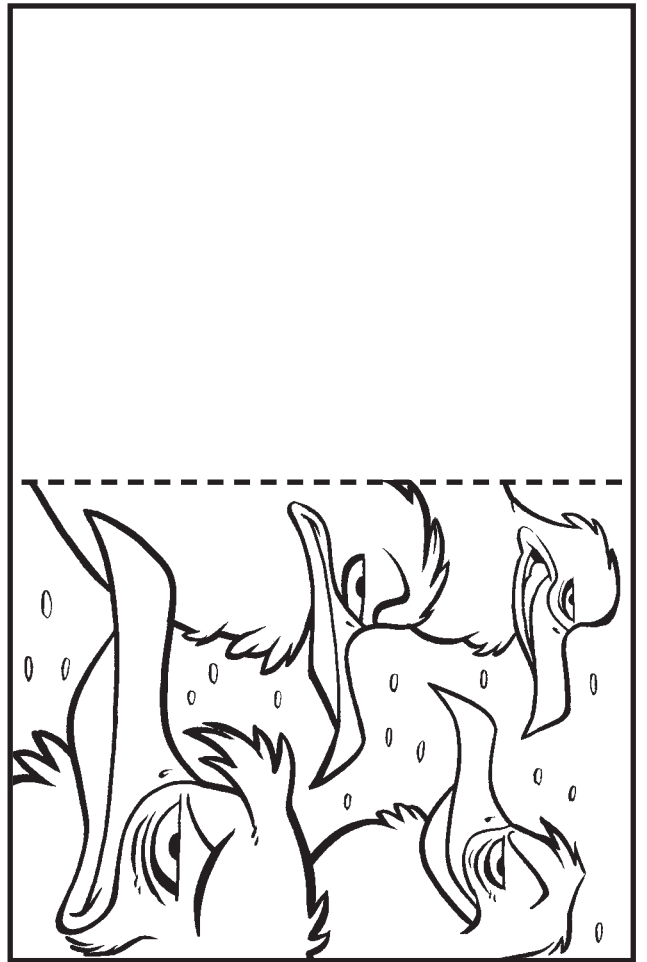
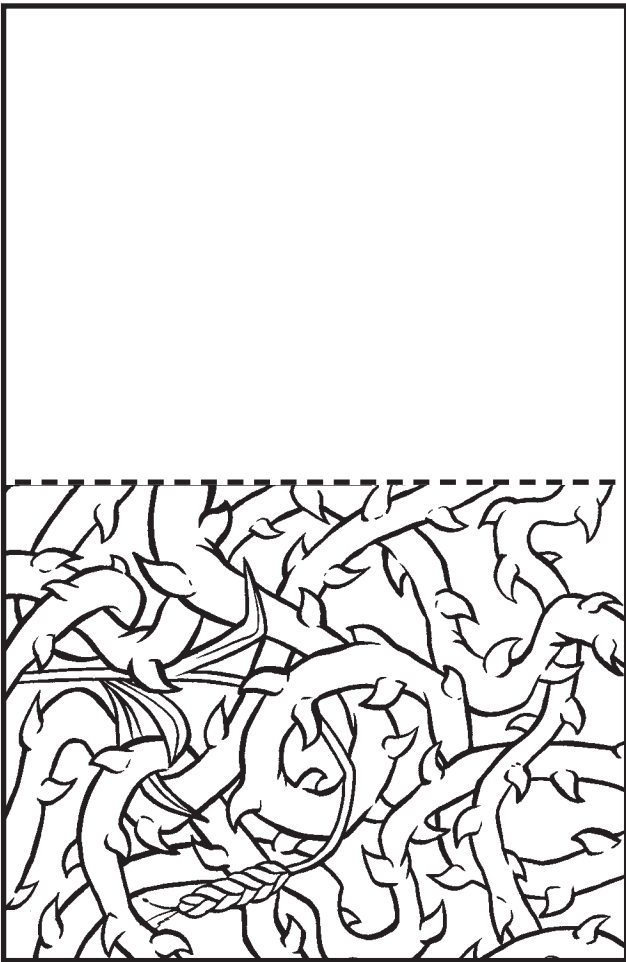
# The Parable of the Soils

Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23

The seed is the gospel of the Word of God.  
What kind of soil are you?







“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for awhile. For when persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”

—*Matthew 3:20–21*

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.”

—*Matthew 3:19*

“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

—*Matthew 13:23*

“Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”

—*Matthew 13:22*

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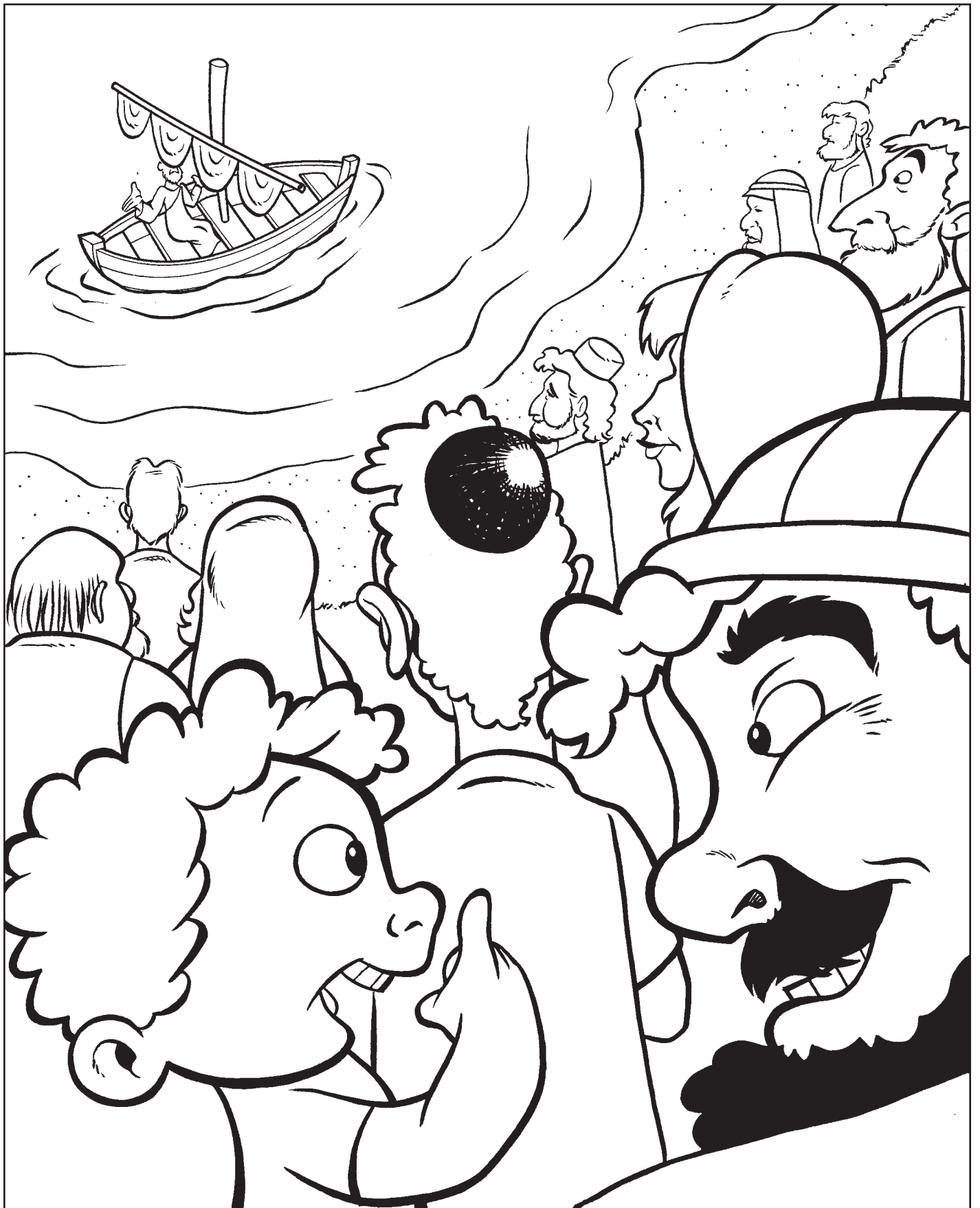
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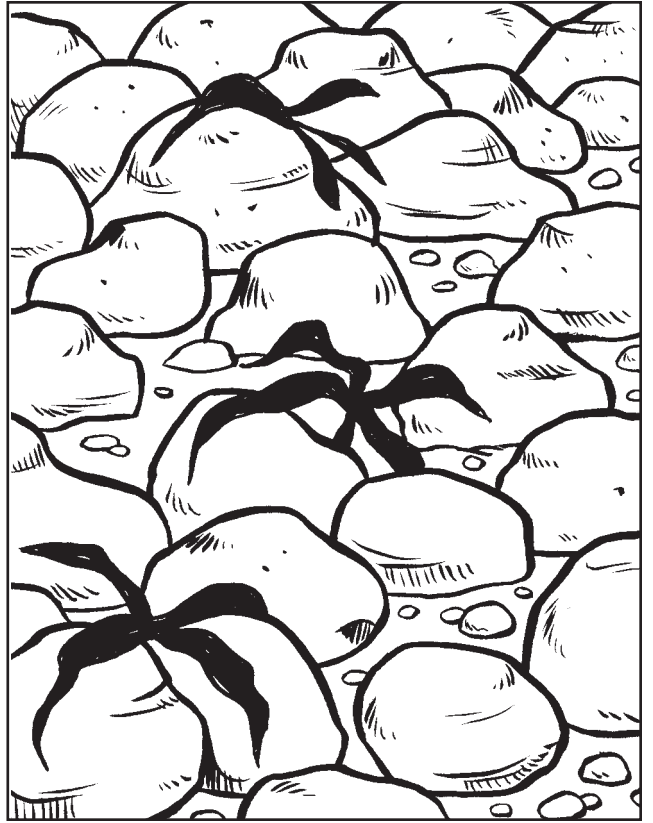
**“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” —Matthew 13:23**





**“On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.” —Matthew 13:1-2**





**“The Parable of the Sower”**  
**Matthew 13:1–23**

