



Sow a Seed

Goal: To practice spreading the message of God's love with others.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Jesus used common images from life to teach about the reign of God. Who would think a farmer sowing seeds in a field, with the birds of the air, the sun, and the soil, could be a parable about God's kingdom and how it emerges?

Jesus' parable about the sower and the seed indicates that the "seed"—the message of God's reign in Jesus Christ—falls on different types of "soil," with different results. The interpretation of the parable given later (Matthew 13:18-23) urges those who receive the message, the "good soil," be those who hear the word and understand it (v. 23). In the parable itself, the smallest "seeds" can bring a great harvest (v. 8).

The grace of God's reign is proclaimed by those who "sow seeds." We proclaim the message of Jesus. We trust God for great results in the future. These outcomes, in their various ways, depend on God's grace.

We receive the "seed"—the message—with gratitude. We hear and understand, living the message of God's grace. The fruit we "bear" is gratefully received as God's gift of grace.

God graciously allows us to "sow seeds." Let us do so!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Most children have some experience with planting seeds or bulbs and watching them grow. They probably also know that, with the right light and the right amount of water, seeds grow well. The parables that Jesus told invite us to think about our own lives, and this is certainly true for the parable of the Soils. Children can understand how seeds of God's love are planted inside each of us; sometimes they don't grow well, because we don't try very hard or we forget to give them enough light or water and to let our love grow. But when we remember to take care of the seeds of God's love, amazing things happen.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This is the second Sunday in Lent. You have an excellent opportunity to invite children to think about the season of Lent as a time of personal reflection to consider how Jesus wants us to live. As you tell the story, notice how it focuses on each child being like the different kinds of soil at different times in their life. If you invite them to provide examples from their own experience, you will probably be wonderfully amazed at what you hear about how they have failed to help, or have helped, God's love grow in the world.

Dear God, with humility, I thank you for planting seeds of faith in me. May I be good soil and a faithful sower. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2022–2023

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 1, 20, 22, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

e-book or story audio
(see p. vii)

purple cloth

white candle

seeds

dry, rocky soil

weed with soil

potting soil

medium cardboard box

Responding

Celebrating

plastic cups, permanent markers, potting soil, grass seeds, water

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1, copies of GN 2

Extra

copies of GN 3

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

A B M L

Play “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”—**MM 22; SCM 22**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the response, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help set the scene. On a table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and a candle to signify the light of Christ. Add the large piece of cardboard from a box. On the cardboard, place a small pile of dry, rocky soil; a weed with some soil; and a small pile of potting soil. Tell the children that this is the second Sunday in Lent, a time to think about how Jesus wants us to live. Explain that today you will be learning about how we can be open to God’s message of love and how we can spread that message.

Ask the children to draw a large stem and leaves on mural paper. Write “God’s Grace Grows Here!” across the mural paper. Have them cut out large heart shapes from construction paper. Ask the children to write their names on the heart petals, and glue them around the top of the stem to make a flower. Hang the mural in your area.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Singing

A B T D SD

Listen to “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**MM 19; SCM 20**. Help the children learn the song and sing it with confidence. Add rhythm instruments to accompany the music.

D *Children who cannot hear can enjoy music by feeling vibration. Allow children to take off their shoes or play drums and other rhythm instruments to feel the vibrations.*

Praying

MS

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus’ presence with you.

Invite the children to sit in silence for a few moments, then have them repeat after you, saying the words and doing the motions as you do:

Jesus said, “Anyone who has ears, (*touch both ears*) /
let them hear.” (*cup hands behind ears*) /

Repeat two or three times. Then pray: “God, help us to listen to your Word. Amen.”



Preparing to Hear the Story TD

Draw the children's attention to the worship table with the soils. Show the children the seeds. Wonder with the children about times that they have planted seeds. Ask them what they think a seed needs to grow into a strong and healthy plant. Suggest that the cardboard represents a hard, dry path. Knock on the cardboard. Invite a volunteer to pick up some of the dry, rocky soil and describe it. Next, have another volunteer describe the soil with the weeds. Finally, have a volunteer describe the potting soil. Ask the children which soil(s) they think plants would grow best in.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story L

Invite a child to find Matthew 13 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Read the story again while volunteers play the role of the farmer. Prompt the farmers to drop a few of the seeds first on the cardboard box, then on the dry, rocky soil, then on the weedy soil, and finally on the potting soil.

Reflecting on God's Grace L

Tell the children that Jesus' story about farmers, seeds, and soils is a *parable*. Explain that the words in a parable are a kind of code, where one thing stands for another thing. Jesus doesn't often explain his parables, but he did explain this one. There are often several different ways to understand parables, so it's all right to understand it from different perspectives.

Wonder together who plants the seeds. The story says, "God joyfully plants the seeds of love everywhere," so God could be the farmer. Jesus tells about God's love to all he meets, so Jesus is also the farmer. We are to be like Jesus, following his example, and we tell others about God's love, so we, too, are sowers of the message of God's love.

Ask the children what they think the seeds represent. The seeds are a code for the words that tell about God—like "God loves you."

Wonder together what the soils are. The soils are the hearers of God's message. Each soil is about the heart and mind of a person who is listening. This could be different people or even different times in the lives of the same person.

Explain that, every time the children show kindness and follow in God's loving ways, they can know that the seeds of God's love are growing within them in good, fertile soil. Their hearts and minds are open to God's message.



Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play, listen to, clap, and sing “Jesus Bids Us Shine”—**MM 23; SCM 23.**

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace



Invite the children to stand in a circle. Tell the children that Jesus told this parable to people who knew about seeds and plants, so they could understand it. Comment that we may not know a lot about seeds and plants, so we are going to change the code and play a game about an exercise program that is healthy for us.

- ▼ Explain that everyone will do some exercising because it is so good for us. Tell the children that, sometimes when we exercise, we are like the seeds that fell on the road. We refuse to listen and do not even start to exercise. Have them lie down and not move for about thirty seconds.
- ▼ Have everyone stand up and direct them to march in place, swinging their arms for about ten seconds. Pretend to be winded and tired. Tell the children that, sometimes when we exercise, we are like the seeds that fell on rocky soil. We start exercising right away, but soon get tired and quit. Have them stop exercising and sit down for about thirty seconds.
- ▼ Have everyone stand up and resume marching in place, swinging arms for about thirty seconds. Then start looking around distractedly. Tell the children that, sometimes when we exercise, we are like the seeds that fell among the weeds. We start exercising right away, and we like it, but we get busy, and our favorite TV show is on, and we want some ice cream, so we quit. Have them stop and be distracted from exercising (look around, sit down, wiggle, and so forth) for about thirty seconds.
- ▼ Have everyone resume marching in place, swinging arms for about thirty seconds. Tell the children that, sometimes when we exercise, we are like the seeds that fell on good soil. We start exercising right away, and like it, and keep doing it as part of our daily routine. It makes us feel good and healthy. Invite the children to express joy and happiness using their bodies for a few seconds.

Wonder together how exercising our bodies is like exercising our faith. Ask how we might exercise our faith so that we grow in Jesus.



Celebrating God's Grace

TD

Children will plant seeds and talk about ways to plant God's love in the world.

Give each child a cup and provide permanent markers. Invite the children to draw a silly face, with eyes, nose, and mouth only, on the side of their cup. Explain that the hair will come later!

Have the children fill their cups a little more than three-quarters full with potting soil. Distribute the grass seeds generously. Talk about how small the seeds are and how much they will grow. Have the children sprinkle the seeds on the soil in their cups. Guide them to spoon a little more soil over the seeds. Encourage the children to moisten the soil, one spoonful of water at a time, without making a muddy mess.

Imagine together how different seeds may eventually provide food, beautiful flowers for people to enjoy, shade from a tree, and so much more.

Wonder aloud how the children might plant a seed of God's love this week.

Tell the children to take their cups home, water the seeds just a little each day, and watch the grass grow. Soon, their silly faces will have "hair" growing above them!

TD *Touching potting soil may trigger feelings of nausea or anxiety.*

Provide options such as using spoons so children do not have to touch the soil. Do the same for all children so no one is singled out.

Offering God's Grace

LD LG

Tell the children they will be sowers of God's message by making seeds to go in seed packets to give to others. Brainstorm some simple messages of God's love and write them on a sheet of newsprint. Some ideas might be:

- ▼ God loves you.
- ▼ Follow Jesus.
- ▼ Love one another.
- ▼ Talk with God.
- ▼ God is always with you.

Give each child a copy of **GN 1**. Invite them to choose a different message to write on each seed. Assist younger children with writing as necessary. They may color their seeds as they wish. Have them cut out the seeds and set them aside to put in their seed packet.

Then give each child a copy of **GN 2** and have them cut out the seed packet pattern along the solid lines. Fold along each of the dotted lines. Glue the side and bottom tabs to the inside of the packet, leaving the top tab open.



Tell the children to place their seeds in the packet, fold over the top tab, and give it to someone as they sow the message of God's love.

GN 3 Solution:

B, E, G

Extra Activity

Describe to the children that, sometimes, the smallest change can make a big difference. When the seeds fell any place except the good soil, the plants could not grow. When the sower threw the seeds on the good soil, the plants could grow. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and pencils. Have the children see if they can tell which of the pieces below exactly match the picture above. If time allows, hand out markers or colored pencils to color the scene.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

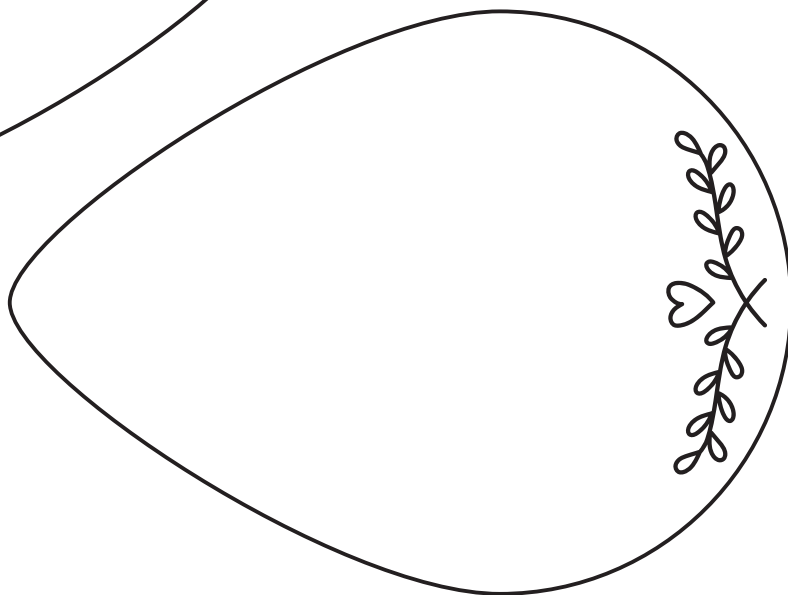
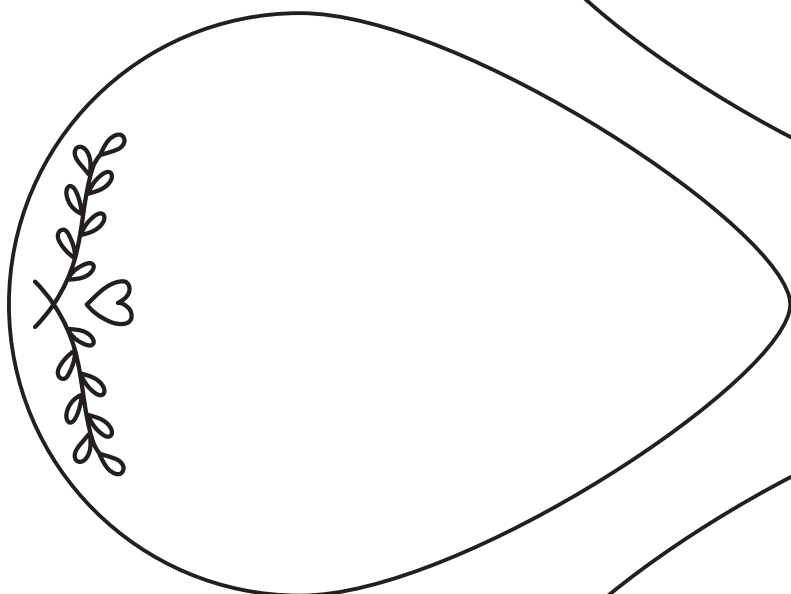
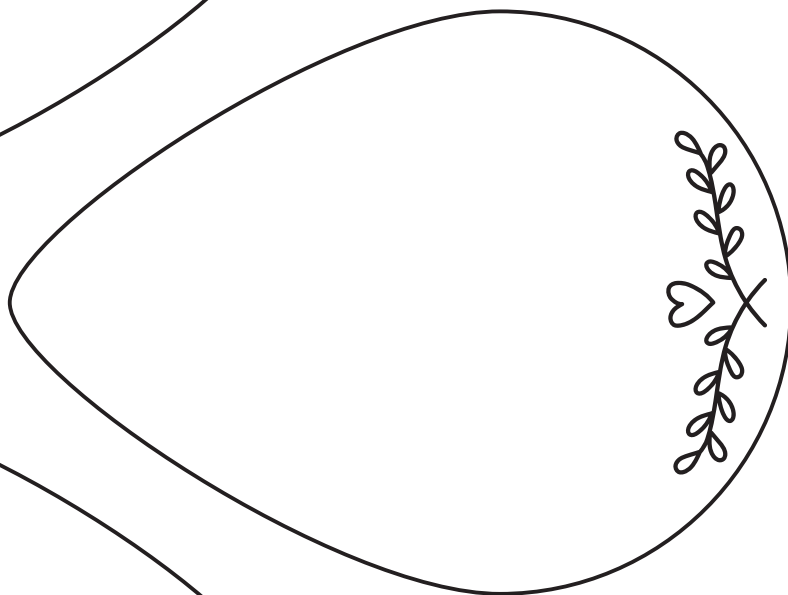
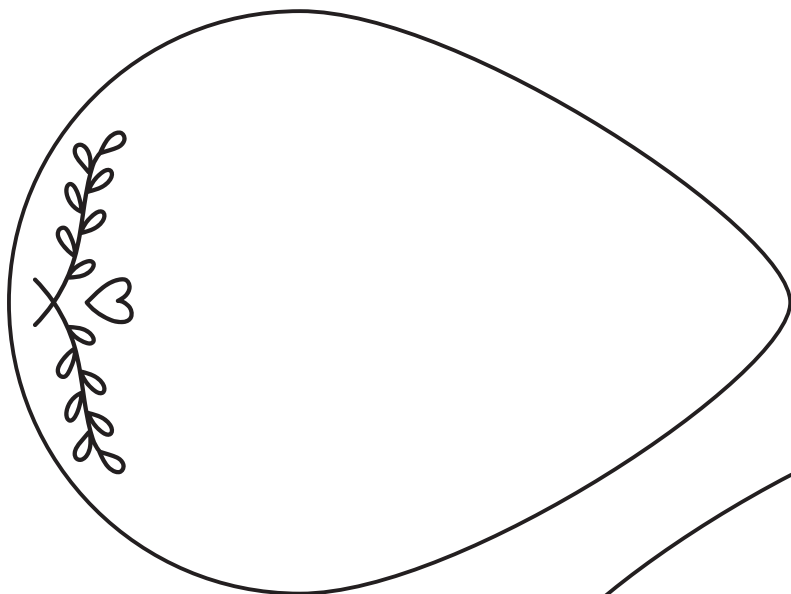
Gather in a circle and wonder together how having open hearts and minds would be a helpful practice during Lent. Point out the mural made in "Welcoming and Preparing," the flower with heart petals and "God's Grace Grows Here!" Ask the children to name ways and places they will plant a seed of God's love this week. Pray:

Dear God, we thank you for the people who have sowed your seeds of love in our lives by teaching us about you. We thank you that we have the chance to grow strong, like the seeds in good soil. Help us be sowers too, telling other people about the message of your love. Help them have open hearts and minds so they can grow too. Amen.

Bless each child as they leave, saying, "(Name), God's love has been planted in you. Go in God's grace."

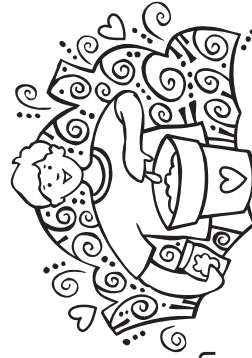


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (see p. vii).





Messages of God's Love Seeds



Yield: More than enough
to share with others!

A large rectangular area with a dashed line border, intended for writing notes. The top-left corner is rounded.

