



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, 21, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

bag of cotton balls or
several small crumpled
paper balls

clothespins

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: potting soil,
seeds, water

choice 2: flower puzzle
parts from **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1, envelopes

choice 3: oranges with
seeds, quart-sized
ziplock bags, spoons

Exploring

choice 2: copies of
GN 2

choice 4: copies of
GN 3

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto 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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, make templates for the flower-part patterns on **GN 1** for use in “Guided Play” choice 2. Cut out flower parts from construction paper. Put pieces for one flower in one envelope per child.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Welcome the children by name as they arrive and say, “You are God’s beloved child.” Prompt the response, “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.” Be sensitive to any children who might be visiting for the first time. Explain to the parents/caregivers that the children will hear a story about a farmer who plants seeds.

Invite the children to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

1. **Plant a Seed**—Fill small cups with potting soil. Let the children plant the seeds, cover them with extra soil, and water them. Write each child’s name on his or her cup. Wonder how God makes seeds grow into plants. Send the cups home with the children.
2. **Make a Flower**—Give each child a sheet of paper, a glue stick, and an envelope with the flower parts. Help the children arrange and glue the flower pieces on the paper. Wonder aloud how God makes flowers grow from seeds.
3. **Juice an Orange**—Cut the oranges in quarters and place several slices in quart-size ziplock plastic bags. Seal the tops. Have the children press the orange pieces with the palms of their hands or squeeze the bags in their hands to make juice and loosen the seeds. You may want to provide smocks. Pour the juice from each bag in cups for the children. Observe how many seeds are in each piece of fruit. Take out the seeds with a spoon and enjoy the juice. Wonder what is needed for the seeds to grow into oranges.

T *Waiting in line to wash hands may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Hello, Hello! How Are You?”—**MM 24; SCM 21.**

Harvest Game

TD M MS

Give each child a handful of cotton balls or crumpled paper balls for “seeds.” Invite the children to walk around the room, “planting” the seeds by dropping them one by one on the ground. While they walk, sing these words to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”:

We are planting seeds,
We are planting seeds,
Hi, ho, we hope they grow,
We are planting seeds.

Continue until all the “seeds” are “planted” around the room.

Tell the children that now that the seeds are planted they need certain things to grow. Suggest that the seeds need warm sun (*raise arms above head and join hands to form a circle*) and cool rain (*slowly lower arms, wiggling fingers on both hands*). Have the children repeat your actions several times.

Tell the children that the seeds are now ready to pick.

Help each child find a partner. Give each pair a bag and each child a clothespin to pick up the cotton balls or paper balls and put them in their bag. If the clothespins are too difficult for some children to use, they can use their fingers.

When all the “plants” are collected, give one another high fives.

Growing a Garden

L MS

Invite the children to gather in the story corner and follow your cues.

- ▼ Let’s pretend that we are a seed being planted in a garden. (*jump up and then sit on the floor*)
- ▼ We are deep in the dirt. (*curl up into a ball*)
- ▼ We begin to grow slowly sprouting upward. (*raise head and move arms upward*)
- ▼ We feel the rain on our small stem. (*wiggle your fingers on your head*)
- ▼ We sprout one leaf, and then two. (*stick out one arm and then the other*)
- ▼ We feel the sun on our face. (*raise your face and look upward*)
- ▼ We grow tall and strong. (*stand up, arms up*)



Luke's version of 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 C

Open a Bible to Matthew 13. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God's people. Tell the children that they will hear a story about Jesus teaching his friends about how planting seeds can remind us of God.

Read **SCM 1**. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Read the story again and let the children pretend to be:

- ▼ the birds, swooping down to eat their seeds on the road.
- ▼ the plants, stretching upward, but wilting in the sun.
- ▼ the weeds, crowding out the good plants.
- ▼ the seeds on good ground, growing up straight and tall.

Wonder what God does to help make the seeds grow.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Playing with the Story

B MS

Gather the children around you and tell them that you will pretend to be a farmer sowing seeds and they will be the seeds. Explain that when you pretend to sow seeds and toss them one direction, the children should move to that side of the room. When you pretend to sow seeds to the other direction, they should move to that side of the room. When you say, "Let's see which seeds grow," they should move to the middle of the room and squat down. When you call out a type of area (road, rocks, weeds, or good soil) where the seeds were sown in the story, they will do the corresponding action. Teach them these actions:

Road—Lay flat on the ground.

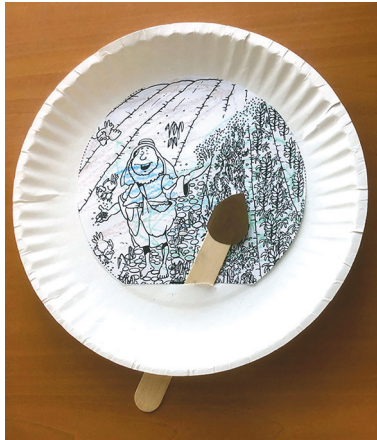
Rocks—Try to stand up and grow. Place arms tightly to sides because there is very little room to grow.

Weeds—Slowly stand up but then fall back down, as if being choked out by weeds.

Good soil—Slowly stand up, spread arms out wide, and shout, "I love God!"

As you pretend to throw seeds out one direction and then another, say, "Sowing seeds, sowing seeds." After a few tosses, say, "Let's see which seeds grow." The children should run to the center. Give several of the commands, then sow seeds again. Repeat until you have gone through all of the actions a few times. End with "good soil." Wonder how growing seeds can remind us about God's love and grace.

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities.*



2. Telling the Story

FM C L T

Tell the children that they will make a story-telling helper.

- ▼ Distribute copies of GN 2 and crayons.
- ▼ Allow time for the children to color the picture.
- ▼ Provide a paper plate and craft stick to each child. Make glue sticks available.
- ▼ While the children are coloring, cut teardrop-shaped seeds from construction paper, one for each child. Have the children glue the seed to the end of a craft stick to make a seed pointer.
- ▼ Help the children cut the picture from GN 2 and glue it to the inside of a paper plate.
- ▼ Cut a slit in the plate where indicated by a dark line at the bottom of the picture. Show the children how to poke their seed pointer through the slit.

Help the children recall and retell the story using the seed pointer to point to the different kinds of ground where the seeds landed. Suggest that the children practice telling the story to one another, then to their families.

3. Praying, Growing, and Thanking

L C MS

Lead the children in a prayer of thanks for people who tell them about God. Encourage them to name people such as their teachers, parents, grandparents, older sisters or brothers, the pastor, and other people in the church. Then remind them that, as we pray, we can use our bodies to thank and praise God.

Have everyone stand in a circle. Ask all to bow their heads and to think about people they just named as you pray this sentence:

Dear God, thank you for the people who tell us about you.
(Invite the children to name someone to thank God for.)

Then, with heads still bowed, walk slowly around in a circle as you pray the following:

Help us to listen and grow like plants in good soil.

Repeat this several times. Then close by saying:

Help us to tell other people about you. Help us to spread the seeds of God's love to others. Amen.



Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

Say a personal word to each child. It might be no more than “I’m glad you were here” or “I’m sorry you have such a bad cold,” but let each child know you paid attention to him or her today.



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).

4. Coloring Page



Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Why is the farmer just throwing seeds?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How do we grow like plants?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we plant seeds of God’s love?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands, stretching, and so on.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



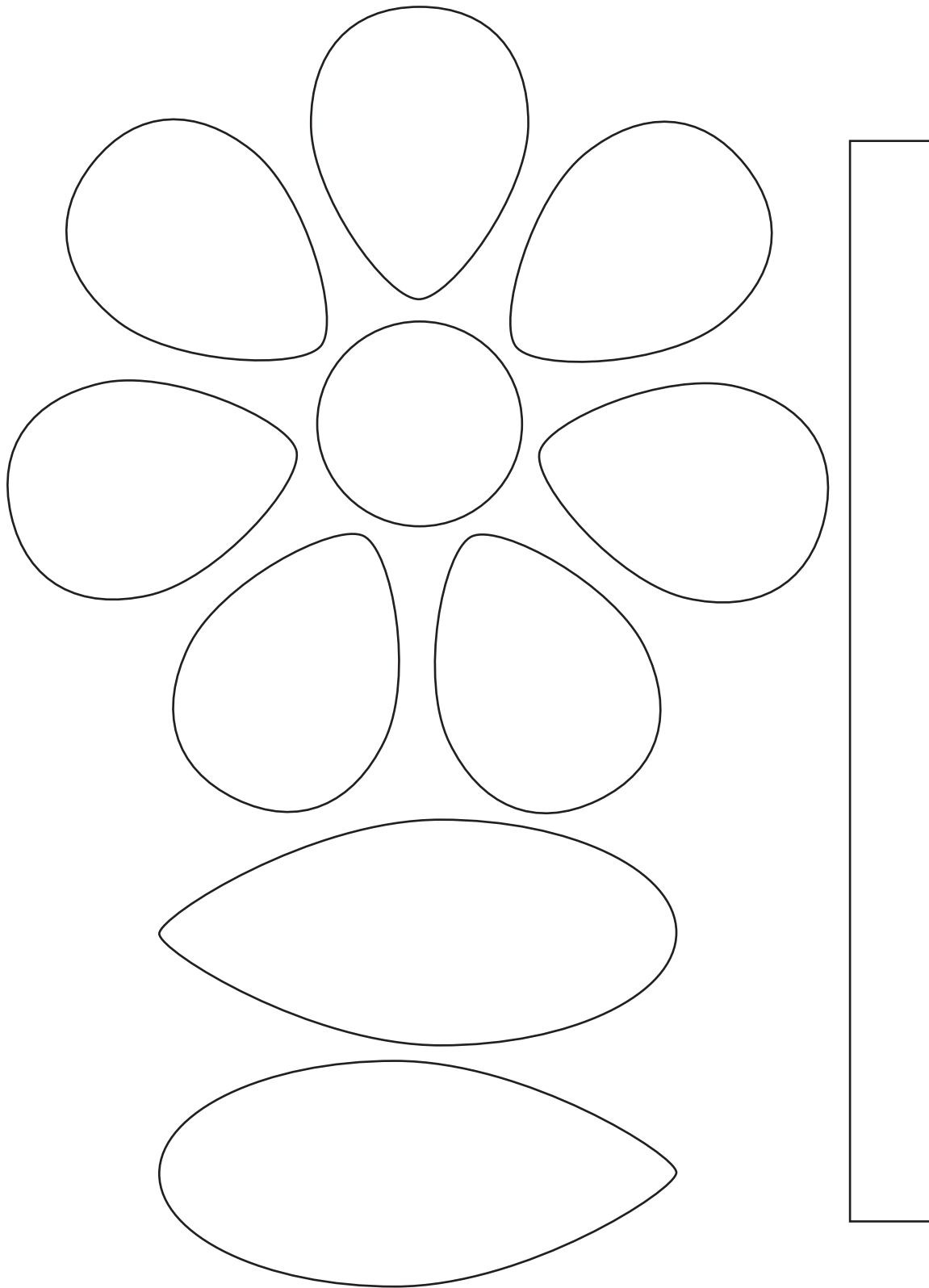
Call the children to snack time, singing “Thank You, Jesus”—**MM 30**; **SCM 24**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor.

Ask the children what they will tell their families about today’s story. Accept all responses. Comment that, when we think about God, when we know God is with us, and when we love others because God loves us, we are like growing seeds.

Enjoy a snack.

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), share God’s love with others. The grace of God is with you.”





Sow a Seed



The farmer plants seeds that land on a dry path, rocky soil, weedy soil, and good soil.

