

THE SOWER

Helping children to receive God’s Kingdom message, allow it to grow in their hearts, and reproduce in their lives.

Jesus said: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.”
John 15:16 (NIV)



Unit Overview:

The Bible teaches that the message of God’s Kingdom is for everyone but not everyone receives it in the same way. It must be received, accepted and allowed to grow in a persons heart if they are going to bear fruit as Jesus said. Sometimes God’s Kingdom message is like seed that lands on a hard path. Sometimes it is like seed that lands on shallow or rocky ground. Other times it is like seed that lands among the weeds. But sometimes the message of God’s kingdom is like seed that lands on good ground and reproduces 30, 60 or 100 times. Not only did Jesus teach a parable based on these facts (Matthew 13), but He also encountered people who were examples of each. This four lesson unit uses Biblical examples to focus on each type of ground represented in this parable. In each lesson a parallel is drawn between someone’s response to Jesus and one of the four types of ground.



#1 Hard Ground - If my heart is hard, God’s Word can’t grow. John 9:1-34.

Sometimes the message of God’s Kingdom is like seed that lands on a hard path. This happens when the person receiving it has a hard heart. The message is quickly snatched away by the devil and is gone. Hard hearts are unbelieving hearts that refuse to open up to God’s Word. The Pharisees had hard hearts and they refused to believe in Jesus even when they saw how He healed a man who was born blind. Their hard hearts kept them from receiving God’s Word.

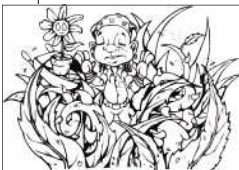
#2 Shallow Ground - If my heart is shallow, God’s Word won’t last. John 9:1-34

Sometimes the message of God’s Kingdom is like seed that lands on shallow, rocky ground. This happens when the person receiving it is excited about Jesus at first but then when trouble comes, they quickly fall away. Hearts that get excited but fall away during trouble are like a plant in the sun trying to grow in shallow ground. The parents of the blind man healed by Jesus showed they had hearts that were shallow when they denied knowing about Jesus because they were afraid of what others would say. Their hearts were shallow and God’s Word did not last.



#3 Thorny Ground - If my heart is full of other things, God’s Word will choke. Mark 10:17-27

Sometimes the message of God’s Kingdom is like seed that lands among thorns. This happens when the person receiving it has so many other things in their life that the message can’t grow because it gets choked out. Hearts that are devoted to and full of other things are like a plant trying to grow among thorns. The thorns and weeds choke out the plant and it is unfruitful. Jesus met a man called the Rich Young Ruler who wanted to follow Jesus but could not because his heart was full of something else. God’s Word was choked out and he could not bear fruit.



#4 Good Ground - When my heart is soft, God’s Word will grow & bear fruit. John 4:1-42

Sometimes the message of God’s Kingdom is like seed that lands on good ground and reproduces 30, 60 or 100 times. This happens when the person receiving it lets it grow in their hearts and then shares it with other people. Hearts that receive the message and reproduce it are like a plant growing in good ground where it just keeps on bearing fruit. Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a village well, who after meeting Jesus and receiving God’s Word, went back to her town and brought all the people out to see him for themselves. She had received God’s Word and was bearing fruit.



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Hard Ground

Lesson 1



“Life Point”

“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow.”

This lesson lets the Bible teach the Bible by using examples from Scripture to illustrate Biblical truth that has been shaped into a “**Life Point**”. The “**Life Point**” is the main idea to be learned and applied, and the lesson will have much greater staying power if the kids understand and internalize this truth. It should be emphasized throughout the lesson especially wherever the “**Life Point**” logo appears. 

BIBLE STORY:

Hard hearted Pharisees do not believe in Jesus.
(John 9:1-34 and Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23)



KEY VERSE:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.”

John 15:16 (NIV)

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GAME TIME



FREE TIME: 30 Minutes

Provide a time for all of the children to play freely as they arrive, encouraging interaction between the staff and children. You may choose to have one or more group games or allow the children “free time” to play with equipment you provide.

GAME: Speed Seed Sow Select two boys and two girls to play this game. Set out the bucket of bird seed and place two empty pots 3 feet away.

SUPPLIES:
2 buckets of bird seed
4 pots

Place the other two empty pots in such a way that you have 1 bucket and 2 pots in a row (1 seed bucket. A few feet away 1 pot without seeds. Then a few feet away another without). Girl 1 scoops bird seed out of her pot and places (sows) it into the first pot where boy 1 is taking (snatching) the seed out and placing it in the second pot. The others do the same with the boy sowing and the girl snatching. The boys try to snatch as much seed as they can from the girls and the girls are trying to snatch seed from what the boys are sowing. The team with the most seed in the first pot after 60 seconds wins.

SUPPLIES:
1 bucket of bird seed per team
Several hard hearts per team
1 cup per team

Kids Connection Option

Find The Hard Hearts

Divide the children into as many groups as you have bins of bird seed and place a cup 10 feet away from each team. Place hard hearts in each bin and allow the teams 45 seconds to dig through the seed and find as many hearts as they can find and place them in their cup. At the end of the 45 seconds only those hearts already in the cup are to be counted to determine which team has the most and is the winning team.

OPENING Hearers of the Word

SUPPLIES:
1 plastic grass seed sower
Grass seeds
1 soil sample display box



Hold up the grass seed sower and ask if anyone knows what it is. A grass seed sower is used for sowing and planting seeds. Demonstrate how it works by turning the handle and “sowing” some seed in front of them. Point out that the seeds land in many different places and not just one. Ask if they think that the seed would grow anywhere or if they think it would grow better in some places than others. When we spread seed out, one place that it might land is the hard path. Hold up the soil sample display box. Ask the children if they think that the seed would grow on the concrete sidewalk or street. It would not. Ask the children what they think might happen to the seeds that land on the hard path. An animal such as a bird or squirrel might pick it up for food. Some people have hearts like this and when they hear the Word God they are like the hard path. They hear the message but because their heart is hard, the message is immediately snatched away by the Devil and cannot grow. This lesson is about what happens to someone when their heart is hard. Say the **“Life Point”** out loud several times with the children. **“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow”.**

SCRIPTURE VERSE **“Jesus said: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.”**

SUPPLIES:
1 Scripture verse poster

John 15:16 (NIV)

Hold up the poster for all to see. Read the verse several times and then ask if there are any children who can quote it. Read the verse again, explaining any terms or concepts the children might not understand.

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BIBLE LESSON

SUPPLIES:
Bible
Story poster
Kingdom coins



This outline is NOT intended to be read word for word. Please read the following outline and lesson scriptures ahead of time and teach the lesson in your words.

Note: Take a few moments to explain quiet seat prizes to the children. During the lesson, only the best listeners are to be given a Kingdom Coin to exchange for a prize at the end of the day.

A) Jesus Teaches in Parables

- The Bible tells us that Jesus went from town to town teaching the people about God.
- One day Jesus was sitting by a lake when so many people gathered around him that he got into a boat and taught the people off the shore.
- Jesus taught the people in parables. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
- Jesus used parables to teach people about His kingdom.
- His kingdom here on Earth is the people who believe in him.
- His kingdom is also in heaven where Christians will one day join him.
- When people hear the message about Jesus, they react in different ways.
- **“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow.”**

Object Lesson #1—Hard to Understand

SUPPLIES:
2 candy bars
1 set of instructions in
Swahili and English

Have one child come to the front. Place a candy bar on the ground and tell them that if they follow your instructions they can have the candy bar and if they don’t you get it. Read the instructions (in Swahili) on the card like you understand what it means and like they should understand too. Wait 5 seconds and then pick the prize up and eat it yourself. Ask them why they did not take the prize when you told them to. Now ask them if they want another chance. Set out another candy bar and read the instructions in English. They did not pick up the candy bar the first time because they did not understand what you said. Some people when they hear the message about God’s kingdom do not understand it, their heart is hard and God’s Word cannot grow.

B) The Path. Matthew 13.

- Jesus told the people a story about a farmer going out to sow/plant his seed.
- He told them that as he was scattering the seed some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. His disciples did not understand what it meant and so later he explained it to them.
- He told them that the farmer is like a person who shares the message about God’s kingdom with other people.
- Some people are like the hard path that when a seed lands on it a bird comes and snatches it away.
- He said that, “Whenever anyone hears the message about God’s kingdom and does not understand it, the devil comes and snatches what was sown (planted) in their heart.
- When someone’s heart is hard they do not believe in God and they do not understand the message about Jesus and his kingdom.
- A person has a hard heart when they hear what God says in His Word but do not want to listen, believe, and follow Him.
- The devil then steals the message away from them and their heart remain hard.

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SUPPLIES:
1 Healing of the blind man poster



C) A Blind Man Healed. John 9:1-34.

- Jesus went from town to town teaching about God’s kingdom.
- Some people believed in him and some did not.
- Those people who heard him but did not want to believe had hard hearts.
- A perfect example of this happened one day when Jesus saw a beggar who had been born blind.
- He spit on the ground, made some mud with his saliva, rubbed it on the man’s eyes, and then told him to go wash in a pool of water called Siloam.
- When the people saw that he was healed many thought he just looked like the man who was blind but he continued to insist that Jesus had healed him.
- They took the man to the Pharisees, a group of people who were religious and believed in God, but refused to believe in Jesus.
- The Pharisees questioned the man but they did not believe him when he said that he had been born blind and could now see.
- They refused to believe him so they sent for his parents to ask them..
- They asked his parents if this was their son and if he had been born blind.
- Even when the parents told them that he was their blind son who could now see, they still refused to believe that Jesus had healed him.

D) Hard Hearted Pharisee’s.

- No one had ever heard of a man who had been born blind receiving his sight.
- It was a miracle possible only through the power of God and his kingdom.
- The Pharisee’s hearts were so hard that they just would not believe.
- Even though the man who was once blind was standing there able to see, they still would not believe.
- Instead of seeing the healed blind man and believing in the power of God’s Kingdom, the Devil came and snatched the message away from them.
- The Pharisees believed in God, but all they cared about was their rules and laws to follow.
- They had no love for God and for pleasing Him.
- Some people today are like the Pharisees.
- These people hear stories about Jesus and learn verses from the Bible, but the message never grows.
- Their hearts are hard and the Devil snatches the message away from them before it can grow.

Object Lesson #2—Plant This

SUPPLIES:
1 clay pot filled with cement
1 planting shovel
Seeds
1 hard heart



Have a child come to the front and give them a shovel and a bag of seeds. Hold up the pot being careful not to let the children see inside. Ask if they would know how to plant a seed in a pot. Select one child to demonstrate. Instruct the child to plant the seeds in the pot and then give them the pot. Ask the child why they did not plant the seed. They could not plant the seed because it is too hard inside the pot. The pot is just like many people when they hear the message about Jesus and his kingdom, their hearts are so hard (hold up the hard heart) that the message does not sink in and get planted. Some people let things like past hurts, the unwillingness to forgive, anger, peer pressure, pride and emptiness inside make their hearts hard. Just like it is impossible to plant seeds in something as hard as cement, some people’s hearts are so hard the message of Jesus and his kingdom cannot get in their heart. These people can hear all the stories about Jesus and what he did for them, but they never believe in him and never follow him. They miss out on the wonderful message of Jesus Christ because their hearts are hard. They have never learned that **“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow.”**

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E) Keeping ourselves from having hard hearts.

- The Pharisees refused to understand the message of Jesus and his kingdom and let it sink in.
- To them the message of Jesus was like a seed that had been sown on a very hard path.
- Because of their hard hearts, as soon as the seed was sown, the devil came and snatched it up.
- We have a choice because we hear the message of Jesus each week.
- We can be like the Pharisees and keep a hard heart toward Jesus.
- We can let the refusal to believe, the anger, the unwillingness to forgive, the hate, the violence, and the peer pressure, keep us from following God.
- Or we can believe in Jesus and trust in him as the king of his kingdom.
- We can receive the message of God’s kingdom without a hard heart and join God’s kingdom someday in heaven.
- God loves all of us and if our heart is hard right now, He can help us.
- The choice is ours because, **“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow.”**

SCRIPTURE VERSE

Jesus said, You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.”

John 15:16 (NIV)

SUPPLIES:

1 Scripture verse poster
Scripture verse cards

Review the verse before emphasizing the **“Life Point”** and finishing the lesson. Pass out Scripture cards.

“Life Point” Prayer Application

Hold up the **“Life Point”** Application poster revealing this weeks **“Life**

SUPPLIES:

1 “Life Point” poster

Point”. We never teach a lesson just to teach it. The main idea in this lesson comes from God’s Word and is so important that we should all take it to heart and apply it to our lives. The Bible teaches us that *God chose us and appointed us to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last* but God’s Word cannot grow in a heart that is hard. This means that we should not have a hard heart because **“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow.”**

* Repeat this phrase several times as a group, then take a few moments to lead the children in prayer, as the Holy Spirit leads you.



ACTIVITY

Heart Tic-Tac-Toe

SUPPLIES:

1 foam heart per child
10 heart beads, 5 of each color
1 craft wire
9 foam square board pieces

1. Glue 3 rows of foam squares on the heart. Glue 3 squares in each row spaced equally so that they make even rows up and down (Show the sample).
2. Put the heart beads on the craft wire.
3. Put each end of the craft wire through the 2 holes at the top of the heart.
4. While not in use the game board can be hung. When ready to play, untie one end of the craft wire and use the heart beads for game pieces.



Use this game as a reminder that **“If my heart is hard, God’s Word cannot grow.”**

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