

Get Ready!

Be a Christian Green Thumb!

By: Jennifer Wetzel



Text

Mark 4:2-20 (NIV)

Key Quest Verse

“He said to them: ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation’ ” (Mark 16:15, NIV).

Bible Background

Jesus used the method of parables to get the attention of the people by using the familiar to teach His spiritual meanings. The parable we study today was told to a crowd of people that had gone to the shore of the Sea of Tiberias to hear Him. People were so tightly pressed about Him that He got into a boat and went a little way into the water to talk to them. These probably were people from all walks of life, not unlike the different types of people we meet daily. Thus, He used an illustration to which they could relate, the common act of sowing seed.

In Palestine, every bit of land is used, including land close to the path, since there is not much territory. This practice differs from our country’s farming methods, in which we do not plant close to the road. At the time of this parable, sowing seed was far different from our modern methods and utilization of equipment to plant seed. The farmer would carry a bag of seed and scatter the seed by hand, much like we sow grass seed. He would scatter seed onto the every bit of available ground, in attempts to enlarge his harvest.

In attempts to plant as much seed as possible, some of the seed fell among the path, which was packed soil from the tread of people’s feet. Though farmers spent time gathering rocks from their soil, the terrain of Palestine is rocky. Thus, some of the seed fell into the rocks. Other seeds fell among thorns, where they were choked out, while others fell into the cultivated land. Despite the circumstances into which the seed was sown, the harvest still yielded a nice crop for the farmer, much more than what he had sown.

There are many different kinds of people, just like there were different kinds of soil. The seed that is sown is good. It is God’s Word, and wherever it falls, if given a chance, it will grow and bring forth a harvest. He was also telling us that all kinds of people have a chance; that God had his seed, or Word, given to every kind of heart. This means that the harvest does not depend on the seed or the one sowing it; but rather upon the ones who receive it. You cannot tell the condition of another’s heart. Be an abundant sower, so you have a chance to be an abundant reaper for the Lord.

Get Ready!**Lesson Quest****What I want my students to:**

- Know:** Everyone, despite his or her personal characteristics, should have the opportunity to hear God's word and know Jesus.
- Feel:** Receptive to God's Word and a desire to share it with others.
- Do:** Witness to others in both actions and words.

Leader's Devotion

Vegetable gardens – one of my favorite items! Just a small whiff of fresh dirt thrusts me back to another time and place, that of my childhood in far southern Illinois. To my young eyes, my family's backyard was heaven in the summer with Dad's strawberries growing in the cool shady corner while Mom's vegetable garden basked in the warm summer sun. How I enjoyed digging little pockets in the dirt into which Mom slipped seeds and plants! In those seeds and plants, I saw promises of juicy red tomatoes, crunchy cucumbers and fried zucchini come fall.

God's word – another favorite item! God's word speaks to us across the passages of the centuries, carrying us beyond time and location. As Christians, we are sowers of this Word, the seed. Our aim for the Lord is a good harvest, but before there can be a harvest, the seed must be planted. Our job is to witness to others in both words and actions, so that we can plant the seed in all situations. As we plant the seed, think of the promise that we spread. Promises that others may also receive God's forgiveness and know his love. What a glorious harvest – one with many shining believers!

It is hard work to sow God's seed. Just like toiling in a vegetable garden in the summer sun, unpleasant times or experiences may exist in our witnessing. However, we should continue to sow impartially, patiently and hopefully. We should allow God to give the increase while we continue to work for Him. For we know that as we sow, the future harvest will be wonderful and cause for much rejoicing.

Get Set!



Option A

CANDY FOR ALL CREATION (adapted from Kid’s Sunday School Place: Ask a Friend at <http://www.kidssundayschool.com/Object/object12.htm>)

Materials: 128 pieces of candy (or other small items such as pennies), a brown paper bag (or other bag which cannot be seen through)

Procedure: Before students arrive for class, place the 128 pieces of candy or other items into the brown paper bag. Throughout the object lesson, you will remove the candy from the bag by taking out twice as many as you did the previous time. It will only take eight times to remove all the candy from the bag.

In today’s memory verse, Jesus tells us to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” Do you think I can tell all of creation about Jesus all by myself? How long would that take me? Could we all do it together? Wait for students’ responses. What if I only told one person? Would that be a good witness? Wait for students’ responses.

Let’s see what happens if I only tell one person. Remove one piece of candy from the bag and place it on the table. **This piece of candy represents one person with whom I share God’s love. Let’s say that now this person tells the good news to their best friend.** Remove one piece of candy from the bag and place it on the table. **Now two people know about God’s love! Each of these two friends went out to tell someone else the good news.** Remove two pieces of candy from the bag and place them next to the others on the table. **Now four people are believers. Each of these four people told someone else and now we have eight believers!** Remove four pieces of candy from the bag and place them next to the others on the table. Continue in this manner, doubling the amount of candy removed from the bag each time, until all 128 pieces of candy are on the table.

Now, we have 128 believers! How many did we start with? Hold up one piece of candy. That’s right, just one believer who decided to tell someone else. Sometimes, we think that as individuals we cannot witness “to all creation.” It seems pretty challenging! But if we each just tell one person, it starts a ripple effect. Every time one person tells another person about God’s Word, we can add another believer to our harvest. We may impact more people than we think is possible! Let’s all go into the world to preach the good news.

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!



Option B

SOIL STUDIES

Materials: Four small containers, various types of soil

Procedure: Before class begins, fill each of the four containers with a type of soil discussed in the text of the parable. One container should contain hard-packed dirt, like the path on which seed fell and was eaten by birds. The second container should contain soil mixed with pebbles and stones to illustrate the rocky ground. In the third container, mix weeds and grass with the soil to represent the thorny soil that chokes out seed. Fill the fourth container with rich, tilled soil to represent the open ground where seeds will thrive.

Good morning class! Today, we're going to test our knowledge of soil. Everyone will close his or her eyes. No peeking! Then, I will pass around a container of soil. Feel it with your hands. Then, when everyone has a chance to feel the soil, we'll decide which type of soil it is. Is it good soil, rocky soil, weedy soil, or hard-packed soil?

Have students shut their eyes. Then, pass around each container of soil, one at a time. After students have an opportunity to feel one container, let them open their eyes and guess which type of soil it was. Then, confirm their guess by showing them the soil and explaining it to them. Do this for each container of soil.

Today, we're going to read about four different types of soil, just like the ones we just felt. Each of these soils reacts differently when seed is planted in it. In our Bible story, we'll find out exactly how each soil responds to seed. Our hearts are just like this soil. Some of us have open hearts, ready to respond to God. Others' hearts are hardened and not accepting. In our story, the farmer plants his seed everywhere, regardless of what type of soil it is. That's the way we should be. We should plant God's word everywhere, regardless of other people's hearts. Let's read our story and find out how we should plant seed!

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!

Bible Story

Teacher Tip: Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

Split your class into four groups. Each group will represent a different type of soil. The first group will represent the hard-packed pathway with birds. Every time their type of soil or heart is mentioned, they should all say, “Tweet, tweet, tweet.” The second group, which represents the rocky soil, will strike a fist into their palm and yell “Ouch!” each time their soil and heart is mentioned. The thorny soil will be represented in the third group, who will grab their throats and make choking noises each time their soil is mentioned. The last group, the good soil, should rub their stomachs and say “Yum” when their soil and heart is mentioned in the parable. After dividing the children into groups and explaining their parts to them, read one or two verses to make sure that everyone understands the procedures. Once everyone understands, read the entire parable of the Sower and the Seed, with each group of students responding appropriately when their type of soil is discussed.

Another alternative to telling the parable of the Sower and the Seed is to tell the parable in rhyme. The website *Bible Stories in Rhyme*, available at: http://rachelkeller.homestead.com/poetry_biblestories~ns4.html, contains rhyming verses for many Bible stories, including the parable of the Sower and the Seed. You could read this version and still allow the students to create the sound effects.

Go!

Seed Collages

WITNESS

Materials: Poster board (cut into 8 ½ x 11” pieces) or construction paper, pencils, markers, glue, seeds/beans of different varieties



Quest Connection

In the parable of the Sower and the Seed, Jesus’ lesson instructs His listeners to take God’s Word into the world and scatter it everywhere. Students should learn that witnessing should occur at all times in all situations, even in minor acts as how you respond when someone cuts in front of you. This activity will serve as a visual reminder to help them remember to witness at all times in all situations. The materials used will help them recall the parable of the Sower and the Seed.

Procedure: Prior to class, cut the poster board into 8 ½ x 11” pieces. On each piece of poster board or construction paper, trace block letters in pencil to form the word “witness.”

In class, discuss with the students what witnessing means. Explain that according to the parable of the Sower and the Seed, we should witness to everyone, regardless of the condition of their hearts. **We must plant the seed for we never know when God will cause it to germinate and grow. Thus, we should plant seeds of witness everywhere so that harvest can be greater.**

Distribute the poster board or construction paper to the students. Have them go over the outlined word in marker. Then, allow them to fill in the letters by gluing the seeds inside the letters. Students should cover every part of the letters with the seeds. Their seed collages will serve as a visual reminder to witness and as a summary of the parable of the Sower and the Seed.

Close

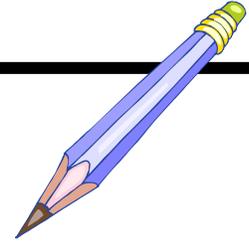
Have each student name one way in which they can witness to someone this week. Then, have the students repeat the Key Quest Verse together.

GO!

Loving Letters

CREATIVE WRITING

Materials: Paper, envelopes (at least one per student but allow for extra in case of mistakes), pens, pencils, stamps



Quest Connection

Throughout the parable of the Sower and the Seed, we are instructed to spread God’s word everywhere, regardless of the conditions. In today’s Key Quest Verse, we’re reminded to take the good news, or God’s word, into the world. Everyone must be given an opportunity to hear God’s word. Today, students will practice sharing God’s word with others. They will send letters containing God’s word to friends and relatives.

Procedure: The week before completing this activity, explain students that they will be writing a letter to a friend or relative the following week. Ask them to think of someone they would like to write to and have them bring that person’s address to class the following week. In case someone does not bring an address to class, you could prepare a list of the elderly and shut-ins from your church congregation, accompanied by their addresses. Students without someone to correspond with may choose from this list.

“We have been discussing the parable of the Sower and the Seed. What did the farmer do with the seed?” Wait for students’ responses. **“That’s right, he scattered it everywhere. Why did he do that?”** Wait for students’ responses. **“He scattered seed everywhere to increase his harvest. Even though some of the soils weren’t good for growing crops, he gave them a chance anyway. This type of sowing seed is what we should do with God’s Word. He wants us to scatter His Word to the entire world! He doesn’t care whom we share His word with because everyone should get a chance to know Him! The only thing he cares about is that we try to share His Word and love with everyone. Today, we’re going to start sharing God’s Word with people.”**

Distribute the paper and writing utensils to the students. **“Let’s write letters to share what we have learned in Sunday School. Write a letter to the person whose name and address you brought with you. Explain to them what you have been learning about in Sunday School, including what this parable means and why you are writing them this letter. Share with them your favorite Bible verse and ask them if they have a favorite Scripture. When we’re done, we’ll address our envelopes and put them in the mail!”**

Allow the students time to write their letters. As students finish, assist them in addressing their envelopes. Collect the finished letters so that you can mail them. Students who finish early could work on one of the activity sheets or journal page.

Close

Have the students gather together. Ask them who else they could share God’s Word with and how they would do that. **“Do we only share God’s Word with letters? No, we can share His word in our actions and speech too.”** Ask a student to close with prayer.

Go!



A “Holey” Example

OBJECT LESSON

Materials: old board, nails, hammers

Quest Connection

In the key quest verse, we are instructed to witness to the world. Students are learning that witnessing is more than just words--it’s also actions. This activity will show students the effect that their actions can have on others.

Procedure: Place the old board on the floor in the middle of the classroom. Give every student one nail. **“This board represents someone who has been mean to you. They cut in front of you in the lunch line, tripped you in gym class, and spread rumors about you at school. How does that make you feel? Do you get angry? Today is your chance to do something about it! I want each of you to take a turn pounding your nail into this board. As you pound your nail into the board, think about the person who makes you the maddest and how you would react when they do something mean, like shove you. That’s what your nail represents. After you put your nail in, explain to us what your action towards them was.”**

Give every student a chance to pound a nail into the board and tell how they respond, either bad or good, to the person who makes them angry. **“Did it feel good to let off some steam? Let’s see what happened to the board when all of us drove our nails into it.”** Now, make each student remove his or her nail from the board. **“Wow! That’s a lot of holes and marks! But, I didn’t want to leave a hole in the board. I just wanted to let off some steam not ruin the board. What am I going to do with this board full of holes?”** Wait for students’ responses. **“Our actions are like these nails. Everything we do and every way we respond to people, whether good or bad, leaves a mark or impression on the other person. It leaves a hole that affects them for the rest of their life and impacts how they remember us. We can choose to leave bad holes by not acting like Christians. Or, we can witness to them by leaving good marks by responding with love and kindness. We can witness by being a Christ-like example. Some people think that the only way to witness is with our words. But, our actions speak louder than our words. They are like nails driving into a person. What kind of holes and marks will you leave this week?”**

Close

To end this lesson, pair the students together. Have them pray for their partner. They can pray for the other person’s strength, witnessing, and actions.

Go!**Going, Going, Gone,.....Into the World****VARIETY**

Materials: the students, materials related to the following options

Quest Connection

In this lesson, students have been learning to become witnesses of God’s word and love. They have learned that both words and actions can witness. Now, they will be given an opportunity to put learning into practice. They will “go into the world to preach the good news to all creation.”

Procedure: Select from one of the following activities and assemble needed materials. Then, take the children on a field trip so that they may experience witnessing in the guidance of a Christian adult. Then, they can learn how to put their faith into action by having a good example.

Take church tracts to distribute in a store or on the sidewalks.

Collect food and deliver it to a food pantry.

Serve food in a local shelter or food pantry.

Take trash bags and pick up trash from the roadsides.

Bake cookies or assemble fruit baskets for the elderly and shut-ins of the church .

Make and deliver cards to people on the church prayer list.

Knock on the doors of neighboring houses and invite those people to worship at your church that Sunday.

Clean a house, wash cars, rake yards, etc. for people not able to do those things for themselves.

Go grocery shopping for a shut-in.

Serve at a local place that needs volunteer help or raise items pertaining to service agencies in your area.

Close

Have the students gather together and discuss their experiences. Were they enjoyable? Did they encounter any problems? How will they witness in the future? What are other ways that they can witness to their neighborhood? **“Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the abilities to witness to others. Help us to use our talents to spread your Word in our neighborhood. Amen.”**

Go!**Sowing Saves**MATH (adapted from <http://www.softcom.net/users/westra/horsesho.html>)**Materials:** students, copy of Teacher Resource page “Sowing Saves”, pencil, calculators**Quest Connection**

Students have been learning to spread the seed, or God’s word, everywhere. Today, they will have an example to illustrate the impact that just one person can have on sowing God’s seed.

Procedure: “Today, I have a math problem that I need help with. I’m not too good at math and just can’t seem to figure out the problem. You all seem very smart. Do you think that you can help me?” Pass out pencil, resource page, and calculators. Then read the problem and allow the students to work it.

“Choice B doesn’t sound like the better choice because the first nail is only worthy one penny. When we think about it, we think, well, that doesn’t sound like it will add up to much. But, it added up to millions of dollars! That is the power of one conversion! If we just tell one person about God’s word, and that person tells one person, and so on, we can affect millions of people! We never know the power of the seed we sow. We just need to keep sowing the seed everywhere, so that it can grow and multiply just like these nails. Let’s talk about what we have learned in throughout this lesson on the sower and the seed.

Are any unworthy to hear the gospel?

What does it mean to you to “desire” a harvest for the Lord?

Do you have a talent that can be used in sowing the seed? In what way?

What are some of your hang-ups in sowing the seed?

How can you overcome those hang-ups?

How can you be a Christian Sower?”

Close

Let’s pray together “Heavenly Father, thank you for letting me learn about being a Sower of the seed! I cannot wait to meet people and to show them your love! Help me to become a Christian Sower. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Listening Ears

Directions: How much did your ears “hear” today? See how many of the following questions you can answer correctly without looking at your lesson. Ten points for each question answered correctly.

- 1.) What happened to the seed that fell among thorns? _____
- 2.) The seed that fell _____ withered away.
- 3.) Which seed was trodden down? _____
- 4.) What happened to that which fell on the rocks? _____
- 5.) Which seed did the birds eat up? _____
- 6.) How much did the good ground produce? _____
- 7.) Which seed was choked? _____
- 8.) What did the seed stand for? _____
- 9.) What do the thorns represent? _____
- 10.) Name the four kinds of hearts. _____

Now that you are done, check your answers with the lesson’s text in your Bible. What was your score? _____

Memory Verse Match-Up

Directions: In today’s lesson, Jesus says “Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop.” We should learn to listen to and obey God’s Word. This verse is similar to a memory verse from a previous lesson. Can you fill in the blanks of that verse below? The numbers under the blanks refer to letters of the alphabet. (For example, 1 would be A, 2 would be B, etc.)

Use this code to work the puzzle. Write 1 under A, 2 under B, etc.

Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N	M	L	K	J	I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A

“Therefore whosoever $\frac{\quad}{8} \frac{\quad}{5} \frac{\quad}{1} \frac{\quad}{18} \frac{\quad}{5} \frac{\quad}{20} \frac{\quad}{8}$ these sayings

of mine, and $\frac{\quad}{4} \frac{\quad}{15} \frac{\quad}{5} \frac{\quad}{20} \frac{\quad}{8}$ them, I will liken him unto a

$\frac{\quad}{23} \frac{\quad}{9} \frac{\quad}{19} \frac{\quad}{5} \frac{\quad}{13} \frac{\quad}{1} \frac{\quad}{14}$ which built his $\frac{\quad}{8} \frac{\quad}{15} \frac{\quad}{21} \frac{\quad}{19} \frac{\quad}{5}$

upon a $\frac{\quad}{18} \frac{\quad}{15} \frac{\quad}{3} \frac{\quad}{11}$.”

($\frac{\quad}{13} \frac{\quad}{1} \frac{\quad}{20} \frac{\quad}{20} \frac{\quad}{8} \frac{\quad}{5} \frac{\quad}{23}$ 7:24)

Soil Studies

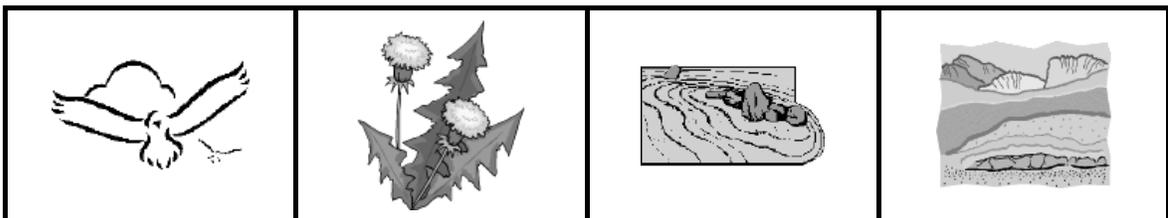
Directions: Read about the following people and decide which kind of soil their heart is like. Are they the pathway with birds, thorny and weedy soil to choke out seeds, rocky ground, or good soil? Use your Bible to remind you which type of heart each soil represents. Cut out the illustration of each soil and paste it next to the correct person.

_____ 1) Eric got a Vacation Bible School invitation in the mail. Though he had never gone before, he was much too busy playing with his friends to try Vacation Bible School. He decided it wasn't for him.

_____ 2) Andrea brought her friend Jessica to Sunday School with her. At first, Jessica enjoyed coming to Sunday School and enthusiastically participated in the activities. After a while, she found other things to do on Sunday morning and stopped coming.

_____ 3) Adam loves Jesus and wants to be in God's Kingdom. Every day, he reads his Bible and prays. He hopes that all of his friends will come to Sunday School with him so that they too can learn about Jesus.

_____ 4) Amanda loved Jesus and prayed every night before bedtime. She got a job babysitting to make extra money for clothes and shoes like the ones her friends wore. Then, she spent many nights on the phone talking to her friends about how to spend her money. Soon, she stopped praying all together.



SOWING SAVES

A man rode into town on a horse. The horse was in desperate need of horseshoes and his owner was willing to pay cash. You are the one putting the horseshoes on the horse. The man offers two payment plans to put four new horseshoes, with eight nails each, on his horse. Which would you choose?

A. The man will pay you \$10,000 to put all four shoes on his horse.

or

B. The man will pay you 1 cent for the first nail and double for each nail after that. For example, the 1st nail would be 1 penny, the 2nd nail would be 2 cents, 3rd nail would be 4 cents, etc.”

Are any unworthy to hear the gospel?

What does it mean to you to “desire” a harvest for the Lord?

Do you have a talent that can be used in sowing the seed? In what way?

What are some of your hang-ups in sowing the seed?

How can you overcome those hang-ups?

How can you be a Christian Sower?”

My Journal Page

In the space below, describe a situation in which you shared God's love and His Word to someone. How did the witnessing make you feel? If you saw the effects of your witnessing, what were they? Then, describe two ways that you can witness to people at school.

