

9. The seed is the same in every case. What changes from one example to the next?
10. Jesus says the evil one "snatches away" the word before it can take root. What are some modern ways God's Word gets snatched away from people?
11. Jesus describes people who receive the word "with joy" but fall away when trouble comes. Why do hardship and opposition often reveal the depth—or shallowness—of faith?
12. What "thorns" are especially common in our culture today?
13. When you hear the phrase "good soil," what images or qualities come to mind?
14. What kind of farmer is this, who throws seed on the beaten path, among the weeds, in thin, rocky soil? What does this say about God and his economy of grace?

John Ortberg describes this parable as being about “Overcoming Growth Barriers.” But I’m not convinced that “personal growth” is what Jesus is talking about here. Nevertheless, we may well ask:

15. What role do we have in allowing/helping/encouraging the seed (the Word of God) to grow in and among us?
16. There is a medical designation for babies who are not growing and developing as they should be. Doctors will write on a chart “FTT” which means “failure to thrive.” What is true medically is true spiritually: God wants us to thrive, to flourish spiritually. What are some of the barriers Jesus identifies in this parable that can cause a person to “fail to thrive” spiritually?
17. How do these four kinds of soil describe you and your coming to faith, you and your walk with Christ? Are their seasons in your life when you were more like the beaten path or like the weedy ground, choking out the life of God’s Word? What kind of soil are you now?
18. The sower scatters seed generously, even where it appears unlikely to grow. What does this teach us about evangelism and sharing our faith?

Family Bible Study

7/12/2026



Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

¹ Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And Jesus told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.”

¹⁸ “Hear then the parable of the sower” ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Questions to Wonder with Kids

- Jesus liked to tell stories. Do you like stories? What makes a good story?
- I wonder why Jesus liked to tell stories...
- This story is about a farmer who sows a field—throws out seed so that the seed takes root and grows into wheat so as to make bread. Have you ever seen a wheat field, or maybe a corn field?
- It's a lot of work to sow a field. But the farmer doesn't care where he throws it—he throws some on the road, some in the rocky ditch, some on the path where the birds eat it. What kind of farmer do you think this sower is? What does he care about?
- What happens to the seeds that the farmer throws? There are four things that happen to the seeds...
- When Jesus tells stories, he does so not just to entertain but to make a point. Here he explains the story, what it means. What does he say is the hard path? What is the rocky ground? The ground that is full of the weeds and thorns? What is the good soil?
- I wonder what the seed is...
- Are the different places the seed falls different kinds of people? Do you think that the same person could be different "soils" at different points in their life?
- What happens to the seed that falls on "good soil"?
- Who waters the seed in the story? Who shines sunshine on the sprouting seedlings to help them grow? How does the seed of God's Word grow in us? Who helps it to grow?

Questions for Adults

1. What is a "parable"? A riddle? A fable? A "story with a moral"? An illustration? Or something else? 'Parable' in Greek is the same word as 'parabola', which, you'll remember from Math class, is a shape made by two lines that begin and end at the same points, but diverge in the middle. How does this math analogy help to understand a parable is?
2. Thinking back to high school English, what do you remember is the definition of an "allegory"? What is the difference between a "parable" and an "allegory"?
3. Why did Jesus use parables rather than teaching about God and heaven and grace more directly? Is there something about stories that make them more effective tools for education than straight instruction?
4. Read the story of Nathan and David from 2 Samuel 12: 1-15. What about this story allowed Nathan to get around David's defenses? How is this story like the parables Jesus taught?
5. The priest and writer Robert Farrar Capon observed that "the purpose of parables is to conceal as well as reveal." What do you make of that claim?
6. What do you make of Jesus' explanation of the use of parables, quoting Isaiah in v14-15? Do you find it puzzling? Disturbing? Is it judgment or explanation, prescriptive or descriptive, that is, how things should be or just the way things are?
7. Read Jesus' explanation for why he teaches in parables in v10-17. What do you make of the fact that, despite Jesus' comment about not understanding his teaching, he goes on to interpret the parable for the disciples? Doesn't spelling it out for them as he does here indicate that he *does* want them to understand?
8. So what, in your words, is the Parable of the Sower about?