Good soil, growing faith

Grades 1–5 • 60 minutes • Mark 4:1–20

What children are learning

Children will learn why Jesus told a story about four kinds of soil. The seed stands for God’s word. The good soil stands for people who hear his word, welcome it and let it change what they do.

Before class

For you. Find Mark 4:1–20 in your Bible before class. Keep a bookmark there for the reading. You’ll also use Mark 4:20 for the memory verse.

Print before class. Print pages 5 and 7 for each child. Keep an extra copy of page 7 to demonstrate. Print one family page (page 6) per household.

For the table. A Bible, pencils and crayons. Give each child a scrap of paper to tear into four pretend seeds.

Words children may ask about. A parable is a story Jesus tells to teach something. The sower in this story is the farmer who scatters the seed.

Teach with care. Paper soil pictures keep Jesus' comparison about responses to his message rather than labels for individual children. Learning difficulties are not a measure of openness to God; seeds can remain optional visuals.

A note for the teacher. This outline is here to help you prepare and teach. As you teach, feel free to adjust the pace, change an activity, or spend more time on a child’s question as the Holy Spirit leads you.

When the children arrive, begin on page 2. Teach pages 2–4 in order.

Good soil, growing faith

0–5 min · Welcome the children

Begin. Have children hold out one hand like a patch of ground. “Imagine a farmer scatters seed. Where might a seed land besides the soft dirt?”

5–10 min · Worship and opening prayer

Worship together. Sing a familiar song of praise. If you are leading without music, invite each child to finish “God, thank you for…” aloud or quietly.

Pray. God, thank you for bringing us together. Help us hear what you want to teach us today. Amen.

10–23 min · Open the Bible together

Lead into the reading. “Jesus told a crowd about four places seed landed. Listen for what happened in each one. Later he explains what the seed stands for.” Read Mark 4:1–20.

Read aloud. Read Mark 4:1–20 aloud from your Bible. Pause briefly before you ask the first question.

Background for you. From a boat, Jesus told the crowd a story. A farmer scattered seed. Birds ate the seed on the path. Green shoots in rocky soil dried up. Thorns crowded other plants so they could not grow a crop. In good soil, seed grew and produced many more seeds.

Jesus explained that the seed stands for God’s word. The soil pictures what happens as people listen. Some forget the word or turn away when following it gets hard. Sometimes worries or wanting more things crowd it out, like the thorns.

When Jesus says good soil bears fruit, he means that people welcome what God says and it changes the way they live. Someone who hears Jesus say to love a neighbor might make room for a child who has been left out.

Good soil, growing faith

23–31 min · Talk about what you heard

Ask. What was different about the seed that landed in good soil?

Listen for. It grew and produced many more seeds. Jesus says that when people welcome God’s word, it changes what they do. For example, someone who hears Jesus teach about loving a neighbor might invite a lonely child to play.

Keep talking. When the disciples needed help understanding the story, what did they do?

Connect to Jesus. Jesus wants us to hear his good news and live by it. We can ask his Spirit to help us do what he teaches.

31–47 min · Show what happened to four seeds

Give out the materials. Give each child page 7. Read the boxes aloud together. Start with the one labeled “Path.”

Try it together. Tear four tiny pieces from scrap paper for pretend seeds. Set one on each printed soil label. As a partner names a soil, move or mark its seed to show what happened. At the good soil, add several pencil dots for the crop. Ask partners to think of one thing Jesus teaches that they could put into practice today.

For younger children. Show a child where it says “Path.” Read it aloud and try that part together. They can point, say a few words, or ask you to write for them.

For older children. What happened to the seed among the thorns? What does Jesus say worries can do to someone listening to his word?

Tidy up. Keep the pencils or crayons out for page 5. Ask children to set their finished work beside them.

Good soil, growing faith

47–51 min · Give children a moment to respond

Offer the student page. Hand out page 5 and read the choices aloud. Each child can answer one. Take a spoken answer, or give them a quiet minute to draw or write.

51–55 min · Remember a verse

Read and echo. Read Mark 4:20 in your Bible. Invite everyone to echo one short phrase at a time. Ask which word or phrase they would like to remember.

55–60 min · Take it into the week

Ask. When something Jesus says puzzles you, what could you do so you can understand and live it?

Pray together. Lead the children in a prayer about what they learned today.

Example prayer. Jesus, help us welcome your Word and let it grow into loving actions.

At the door. Send home each child’s work. Give one Family Connection page to each household.