

**7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)****Lesson Plan:** Parables (Parable of the Sower)**Learning Goals:** Students will be challenged to see not only the obvious allegorical reading of Jesus' parable of the Sower that focuses on the hearer, but an alternative reading that focuses on the abundant grace of the sower (God)**Question:** What characteristics do you think a good farmer might have?

Prayer

Discuss Questions

**Read Matthew 13:1-9**

Every once in a while, we come across a parable that Jesus gives us an interpretation for. This is one of those parables.

**Read Matthew 13:18-23**

What is an Allegory?

“a story in which each character or event really stands for something else.”

Everything in the story has a 1:1 relationship to something else.

He's telling a story about seeds and soil and plants, but really he's talking about something else.

Allegorical interpretation:

What are the four types of soil?

1. Seed falls on path - birds come and eat = spiritually ignorant - hearing but not understanding, Satan steals it away
2. Rocky soil = shallow people/faith - hear the gospel but there are no roots
3. Soil with thorns = distracted people - faith grows, but there are many other things growing in a person's life as well (money, riches, busy-ness - work, family, little league, music lessons, gymnastics, vacations, hobbies, friendships, and on and on and on) - these thorns choke out faith
4. Good soil = good harvest

This is a perfectly valid way of reading this text.

In fact, we've started talking about the fruit of the Spirit in chapel.

Some of you might be wondering why you don't see more spiritual fruit in your life and I might ask - which soil are you?

Alternative reading:

- This is not a story about soil, but about a sower.  
It doesn't say - “One day there was diverse land.  
Some of the land was rocky,  
some had weeds and thorns,  
some was beaten down into a well-worn path,  
and some was good farm land.

One day, a sower went out to plant on this land..." You get the picture.

- The land is not the main character of Jesus' original story. Instead, it reads, "A sower went out to sow..." There is no such thing as a "sower." Sowing is just one of the many tasks of a farmer.
- The sower scatters his seed recklessly. We know that if you really want to see things grow, you have to get the ground ready. (you till, you aerate, you plow, etc.)
- Seed can be expensive
  - You can't just run down to Lowes or Home Depot or the Feed and Seed and pick up a few packages.
  - In the 1st Century, if you wanted seed to sow, you had to get from last year's harvest (to separate the seed, dry it out, store it throughout the winter). Seed was a precious commodity.
  - Historians record at least twice in the first Century where the Israelites went into debt to their neighbors because they did not have adequate seed and had to borrow from others just to plant.
- This is the way of the Kingdom. We are called to be sowers.
  - We are called to sow seeds of the gospel.
  - We are called to sow seeds of Christ's love,
  - seeds of the kingdom of God
  - seeds of hope
  - seeds of reconciliation
  - seeds of healing
  - seeds of lives transformed

And we are called to do so every where we go.

Too often, we approach sowing like any good farmer  
 We start looking for what we think is the best soil  
   the flattest, most fertile ground  
   the places where we think the seed will take hold the best

We send a lot of time and energy preparing the soil  
 plowing and tending the ground before we plant the seed.

If we are going to evangelize,  
 we plow by doing demographic work  
   determining our target audience  
   developing a communication strategy to fit the target audience

But according to this text, our job is to sow seeds.  
 We can spend all day sitting around in meetings,  
   crafting wonderful mission statements, vision strategies, and planning events.

These are not bad things. But we were called to sow seeds.

The best strategies in the world, however, cannot  
tell you the quality of the soil beneath the surface.

Our church spends a lot of time ministering to people on the fringe of society.  
We spend a lot of time in the homeless shelter,  
in the jail and prison,

We have been asked before,  
Why waste your time? Of course they want Jesus in Jail - everyone has jailhouse religion.

Or, why do you waste seed on those people in the homeless shelter?

Or, why do you waste seed going downtown to spend time with those weirdos?

Or, why do you waste seed on drug addicts who are just using you?

Or, why do you waste seed helping people find good housing  
when all they will do in tear it up and abuse it?

Why waste seed on those single moms with six kids from six different dads?

Why waste seed helping ex-convicts that may take advantage of you?

Because we serve a God who sows recklessly  
and we are called to sow with abandon.

We don't know about the soil in a person's life.  
We don't know what seed will take root and what want.  
We are to sow as if all of it is potentially good soil.

Make sure you don't miss the ending.  
"some seed fell on good soil and it produced a harvest - 30, 60, 100 fold"

I read one commentator that said that a typical harvest was somewhere around 7-fold.  
And yet, despite this guys reckless sowing,  
he gets a miraculous harvest.

This is what Jesus is saying - you sow the seed  
and leave the rest up to God.

This sower sowed - throwing seed everywhere - in good places and bad  
and yet, he still brought in a harvest as much a hundred times what he planted.

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**Lesson Summary /Review:**

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- In the Parable of the Sower, (1) what are the four types of soil and (2) what do they represent?