



The Sower and the Seeds

Matthew 13:1-13, 18-23

Welcome to 'Together, Apart', free intergenerational resources to help us be church together while we cannot meet.

All the sections explore the same Bible passage in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you, and remember that 'All Age' does not mean 'only for the kiddies'!

You can find lots more free resources like this at www.reflectionary.org

Here is what you will find in each resource pack:



A Word in Your Ear

A Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age.



Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage.



Inner Space

A blank space for you to record your thoughts, whether that is worries, dreams or a shopping list.



Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes a creative approach.



I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study, perfect for younger children and those who like to immerse themselves in the Bible world.



Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passage so that you can listen while resting your eyes.



Creation Station

A craft for children (or young-at-heart adults!)



All Together Now

Suggestions for activities throughout the week that link with the Bible passage.



High 5

Suggestions for spending time with God.



A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this extract from our Bible passage. Ask God to help you hear. You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

Matt 13:3-9

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

(NIV)



Food for Thought

There's a proverb (or meme depending on your age) which says 'give a man a fish and you feed him today, teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'. As a teacher I experience this everyday: My students could get full marks every time if I give them the answer sheet to each test, but they would not learn anything. So instead I give them the skills to solve the problems on their own.

Sure, it takes longer. Sure it means the students have to work at it and apply brain. Sure, it means they won't get 100% all of the time, but thinking it through makes it their own knowledge. However, from the perspective of a student, wouldn't it be a lot quicker and easier if I just gave them the answers? Yeah, it would.

Jesus is using a similar method when he teaches in parables. A lot of the time his hearers don't get what he's saying, not straightaway. Even his disciples are as perplexed as the rest of the crowd, and they ask Jesus about it. "Why are you always talking in parables?" they ask. "Why can't you just give a straight answer?" Jesus replies with yet another enigmatic saying.

Q: Read his reply in verses 11-13. Why do you think Jesus replied like this? How could you paraphrase it in modern speech? What do you think determines whether some one 'has' or 'does not have'?

Jesus explains why he is using parables by quoting from Isaiah 6, the chapter that describes Isaiah's commissioning. The part that Jesus quotes comes right after the famous "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah is told to speak God's message, but it will fall on ears that have been deaf for centuries, and Isaiah's words will only make them deafer.

Q: Read Isaiah 6 and look out for Jesus' quote. Where else in Isaiah do we find passages that relate to Jesus f that Jesus quotes? How much does Jesus repeat the ministry of Isaiah, and what is different?

Jesus explains the allegory of his parable to his poor, bewildered disciples, with the soils representing people's attitudes to his message. I'm sure there was a lot of "Ah, I see!" going on, followed by some thoughtful "I wonder which soil I am?"

Of course, we all read this parable and cosily assume that we are the good ground. But Jesus' words were often directed at those who were assured of their righteousness, and many were caught off balance. Am I certain that I am always the 'good ground'?

Perhaps I can all be different soils at different times. Sometimes my mind is too full of the busyness of life for me to hear God's voice – I am being thorny ground. Other times I am being the path or the rocks. But by God's grace, sometimes (I hope) I am the good ground, and then, oh my! What a harvest!

Q: What kind of ground have you been in the past week? Why do you think that is?



Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?



Looking Closer

Jesus told this weird story about a silly farmer, and everyone was scratching their heads. Huh? Why would a farmer waste three-quarters of his seed by scattering it all around everywhere, even in places it would not grow? How daft is that?

And why was Jesus giving everyone a lesson about farming, anyway?

Even Jesus' disciples did not know what he was talking about, so they came to ask him afterwards. Jesus did not think they were daft for asking.

**What things would you like to ask Jesus?
What do you find difficult to understand?**

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Jesus explained that his story was not really about a farmer and the soil, it was about people. This is called an allegory – a story where one thing stands for another.

We often use allegories to help us understand things. Perhaps you know the one about the tortoise and the hare. They are having a race, and the hare is sure that she will win so she does not bother trying, and even lies down for a nap half-way round. The tortoise, although slower, keeps going and does not give up, and he ends up winning the race.

Jesus explained his allegory in the second half of our readings. Can you find what all the different parts are about?

Jesus was talking to the crowds at the lakeside, but he is also talking to us. "If you have ears, listen!" he says.

Imagine you were in the crowds back then. What are you thinking? Do you understand what Jesus is saying?

What kind of soil do you think you are today? What might you be tomorrow?

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for students to write their reflections or answers.



I Wonder...

Read or listen to the passage a few times and let it sit in your mind.

Which words, phrases or ideas do you notice? Does anything stand out for you? Hold that in your heart and listen to what God might be saying.

I wonder what part of the story is the most important.

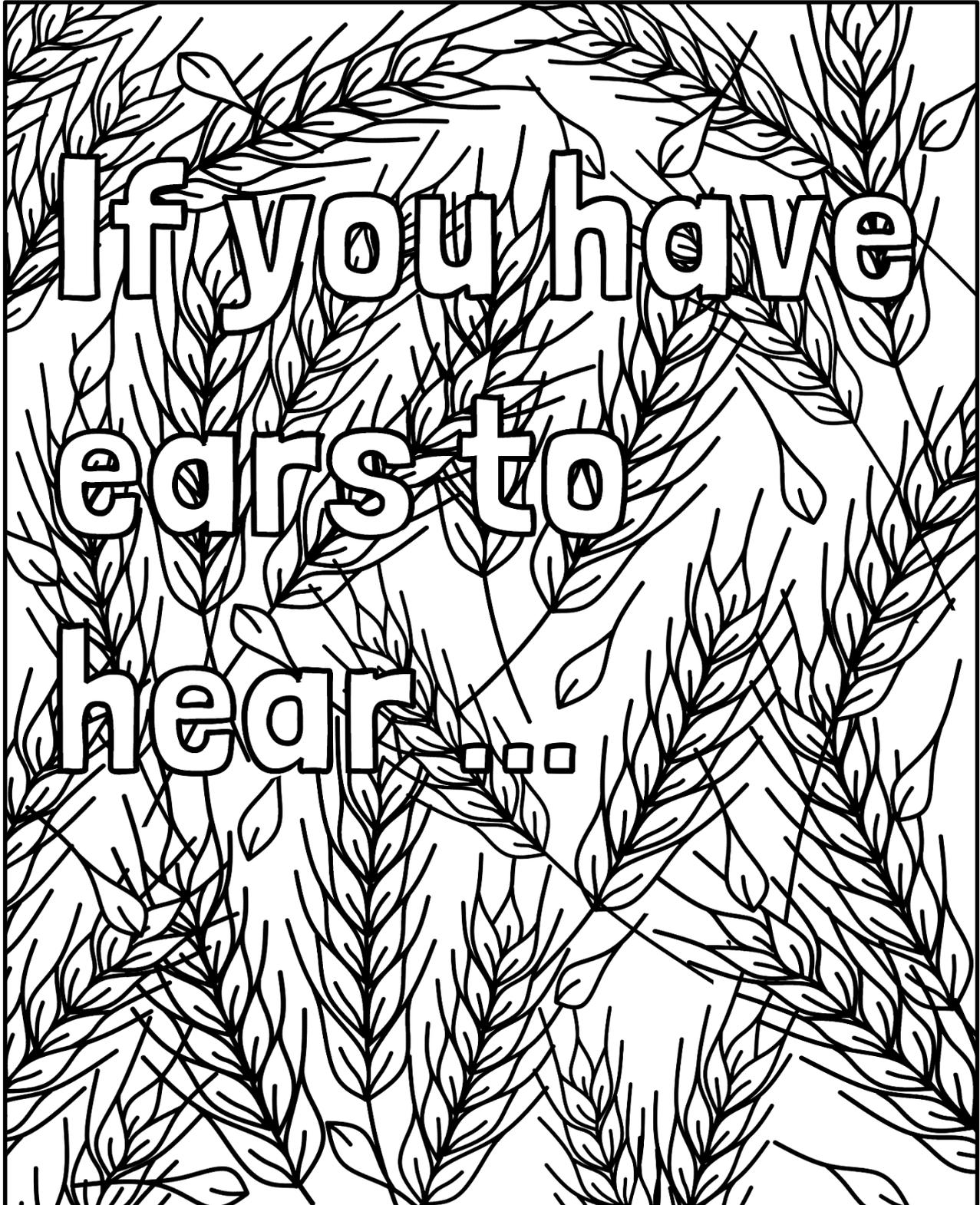
I wonder where you would be in this story.

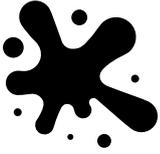


Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

Matthew 14 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [Message](#) – [NIV \(Dramatised\)](#) – [NIV \(Suchet\)](#)





Creation Station – Growing Grain

Make a puppet show with a magical bowl of growing grain and use it to tell Jesus' parable of The Sower and the Seed.

What other stories could you tell?

You will need:

- Paper bowl
- Card in yellow or pale brown
- Thick black pen
- Penne pasta
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Yarn or string
- Peanuts (for some other seed)
- Drawings of a stick man (the farmer), a bird, the sun and some thorny weeds

What to do:

1. Draw four or five heads of wheat on the card with the thick black pen. Each should be about 10cm and 3cm wide. Cut them out and use the hole punch to make holes at the top and bottom.
2. Now cut a long length (at least 2m) of yarn for each growing stalk and tie a piece of pasta at one end. Thread more pasta on until you have nice long stalks, and then finish each off with the head of wheat. Leave plenty of yarn spare at the top.
3. Tape the bottom ends of the yarn inside the bowl, and lower your grain stems gently down so that they fold over neatly into the bowl.
4. Take the long ends and loop them over the top of a door, or a chair, or something else that is above the bowl, so that when you pull the ends, the grain rises up.
5. Now you are ready to tell your story. Get your pictures ready and have someone read out the passage. Throw some peanuts into the bowl every time the farmer sows some seed, and use the pictures to show the birds, sun and thorny weeds.
6. Pull the strings so that the heads of the wheat just peep out of the bowl for the rocky ground and thorns, but let them fall back when the sun comes out or they get smothered by the weeds.
7. Finally, for the good ground, pull the strings all the way so that the plants grown up tall and strong. Brilliant!



All Together Now

Here are some ideas for activities you could do during the week to remember Jesus' parable of the Sower and the Seeds. What else can you think of to do?

- Grow some cress on four different surfaces and see if you can replicate Jesus' parable. You will need four small bowls, some cress seed, and various things for the seeds to grow in:
 - The first plate is the path. Just put the seeds straight in the bowl, sprinkle on some water and leave them to it.
 - The second plate is the rocky ground. Put a layer of small stones or beads in your bowl, then sow the seeds among them. Add some water and see how they do.
 - The third plate needs some weeds, so dig up a patch of weedy soil and put that in the bowl. Sprinkle on some seeds and keep it watered.
 - The fourth plate is the good soil. Add a layer of compost, pat it down and plant the seeds according to the instructions on the packet. Hopefully, you should have a nice crop of cress for your sandwiches in a week or two.
- Plant something and see if you can get it to grow – either in your garden, or in a plant pot on your window ledge.
- Take a walk around some fields if you have any nearby, or a park, or just along your road. What plants and trees can you identify? (You can find spotter guides on the internet.)

My ideas:

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a double-line black border. It is intended for the user to write their own ideas for activities.

Which will you do this week?



High 5

Spend five minutes talking and listening with God. Here is one way:

We can use the different types of soil that Jesus described to pray for people in our world.

Hard Path

Pray for people who have not heard about Jesus, or do not know that God is kind and merciful. They might be far away, or people in your own school, workplace or street.

Dear God,

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.....

Amen.

Rocky Ground

Pray for people who are being persecuted for their faith, for their colour or for any other reason. Pray for peace and reconciliation, and for wisdom for our church and national leaders.

Lord Jesus,

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Amen.

Thorny Weeds

Pray for people who have a lot of worries and concerns. Pray for people who are ill, frightened or in danger. Pray those whose jobs are affected by coronavirus.

Loving Father,

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Amen.

Good Soil

Pray for those who look after us and who show us what God is like. Pray for your family, friends and neighbours, and for Christian leaders everywhere. Finally, pray for yourself.

Holy Spirit,

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Amen.