



Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work
so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource
and how to use it as a launch pad for your
engagement with children and families, please
use this link: www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet

Title: Matthew 13: 3 - 9, 18 - 23

Theme: Hearing, responding and sharing God's wise words

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

The Parable of the Sower is a familiar story to many and is one of seven stories Jesus told on the theme of the kingdom of God. It's also one of the few stories that Jesus gave the interpretation for. Jesus explained that it was a story about people who hear God's words and how they respond differently. This session explores what it means to hear God, respond, and to share God's words with others.

It is an opportunity to also explore how we share stories with and without words in a diverse and creative world.

It can provide an opportunity to think about how the voices of children are heard as disciples in the church.

The session might be a trigger for children who are not listened to or are even silenced, or children who may have communication differences.

Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

**Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,
adventuring together with you wherever we may go.**

Amen

Active game – Hungry hippos

The balls are the seeds, and the catchers are like birds, thorns, rocks and good soil gathering or scattering the seeds.

You will need:

- small balls (ball pit balls work well)
- skateboards (optional if you have them) – you want cycle helmets as well to prevent injury
- baskets

What you do:

Split the group into teams. The teams race to collect as many balls as possible. This can be on foot, on skateboards, or even by doing wheelbarrow walking. (If you are using skateboards, have some cycle helmets to hand so the children can be protected against bumping heads.)

In the centre of the room place 50-100 balls. You could mark out a circle to place them in. Ideally, create four teams of three to five people but work with the numbers you have in your group. They should be an equal distance away from the centre. Give each team a bucket or a hula hoop as a collection bin.

On the signal, they each in line race to the centre, grab a ball, and bring it back.

Next player in line goes once their teammate has returned etc, etc, until all the balls have been taken from middle. Count the balls to see who wins!

Play again. Each time you play, add in new rules as you go along e.g. only take specific-coloured balls, have someone scattering balls, teams are allowed to share balls to another team.

Here's a clip of the game being played by wheelbarrow walking.

https://youtu.be/URDQDPeVK_Y?si=3Ca8BmTc-h6taryS

Here is the game played using skateboards.

https://youtu.be/W-xPyqPC_NY?si=irnciTddMGm8KZCu

Quieter game - Danger Word**You will need:**

paper and pens

Write nine random words on separate pieces of paper.

One player leaves the room. The group secretly picks one word to be the danger word. The player returns and picks up the words one by one. Their aim is to collect as many safe words as possible *without* picking the danger word.

If they pick the danger word - the round ends.

If they collect all the safe words - they win.

Repeat with a new player and a new danger word.

Use this game as an introduction to lead into thinking about the power and impact of words.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the Easy-to-read Version <https://bit.ly/MattheW13>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Bible Stories for Toddlers by Saddleback Kids

<https://youtu.be/ZSS8huDbriM?si=WG4dUJk6wGFYjOFQ>

Five to elevens: Parable of the Sower by Max7

<https://www.max7.org/en/resource/ParableSower>

Songs to support the story

Under-fives: Sow the Seeds by Little Blessings Network

<https://youtu.be/nFEssloabVk?si=ojAH2jxduLI4KWcm>

Five to elevens: Grow, Grow, Grow by Jana Alayra

<https://youtu.be/HqmwCWUiI8A?si=LWRQNGJfTSk4V94x>

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

Have some creative fun by retelling the story of the sower but without using spoken words. Consider your group and how you might do it with them; choose the method best for you. You could start by reading the story from a Bible or sharing one of the video options (the Max7 story link doesn't use words). This will help familiarise the group with the story. Then explain that we are going to hear the story again but without using words. Here are a few examples:

Under-5s. If you have a lot of this age group you might find it easier to use the 'What's in the box?' section.

Visual storytelling using pictures. We have provided a selection of images to use in sequence. Sometimes this is more effective if you play some gentle music in the background as you slowly place each picture down in the narrative order.

Sign language. If you have someone in the church who can sign or use Makaton, utilise them if possible. Or you could have a go at sharing the story using sign or sign supported English. This example that could be used: <https://youtu.be/rceVtg2wvVs?si=LZCI1T87Sfy7Wz7>. A mime version could also be effective

Soundscape. This method uses the sounds only without the narration. The group close their eyes and listen to the story in sound. Consider the sounds of the story in order, e.g. feet walking, seeds in a bag, seeds landing on different surfaces, birds flying and pecking, growing sounds, choking sounds, thirsty sounds, and a growing and flourishing sound.

Draw and tell. If you have someone who is good at drawing, invite them in to draw the story in different quick scenes.

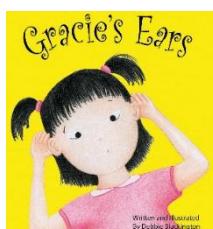
There may be other ways you can share the story without using spoken word.

Once the story has been shared, discuss how different it felt to 'hear' a story without spoken words. Does it help you to notice different parts of the story? Do you prefer it? Use the wondering questions in the session to explore further.

The children might also want to recreate the story without using words in their own way as an activity.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).



Gracie's Ears by Debbie Blacklington (2021: Pebbleton Press)

A simple story about Gracie who has hearing difficulties. Her world is made a happier place when she gets hearing aids. A great way to explore difference as well as thinking about how we hear the words of God and others.

<https://youtu.be/cjzdbqQez18?si=zR-Yd0T8LkONHCwd> from 1.05

- I wonder who or what helps you to hear God's voice and to help others to hear it too.

Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- Who are you in the story and why?
- Consider each element in this story. What does each one mean to you, seed, farmer, weeds, stones.
- Where/how have you heard God this week?
- What is God saying to you in this story today?
- Can you remember any other stories that Jesus has told that are similar to this?

Wondering reflection on the theme

- How are you listened to in your church, as children who are speaking God's words?
- What is your favourite story that has a hidden message or wisdom?
- How do we hear without words?
- Is there a time when you have misheard or misunderstood somebody. What happened?

What's in the box? (for under-fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag?" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- A packet of seeds – I wonder what these seeds will grow into.
- Farm objects, like a farmer, some wheat, or images for crops growing in a field. Some of our food comes from farms – can we think what might grow on farms?
- A seed growth chart – this is how a seed grows. Look at the roots where it gets water from. Chat about how the shoot grows tall and becomes a plant.
- Have some images of rocks, weeds and the sun – talk about how seeds grow and what they need to be healthy.
- A set of the story cards – tell the story using the cards.
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!).
- A set of play people to act out the story, or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc).

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity – Seed prayers

You will need:

- paper and pens

What you do:

Give everyone a piece of paper and invite them to draw a large seed in the centre of the page.

Write or draw your prayers for yourself in the seed.

Now draw some roots coming down from the seed. Write or draw your prayers for others, especially those who help us, around the roots.

Finally draw a plant with a green leaf sprouting up out of the seed. Write or draw your thank you prayers or things you want to celebrate.

Planting seed prayer

A simple prayer activity that encourages us to pray at each step of planting a seed.

You will need:

Plant pots, soil, seeds (google which seeds are suitable for planting at this time of year)

What you do:



Take a pot

Put yourself into God's hands, pray that you will be open to hearing God.



Half fill the pot with soil

Pray for the situations or people that are on your mind.



Place three or four seeds in your pot

Pray for the things you are asking God for.



Top up the pot with soil

As you finish the pot, we also finish our prayer by thanking God for hearing us, and saying “Amen”.

Take your pot home. Take care of it, watch the seeds grow, enjoy the flowers that will come.

Spoken prayer

Dear Lord,

Help us to HEAR and listen to your word.

(Finger on lips – SHHHH!!! Then pause for a moment of quiet.)

Help us to actively RESPOND to your word.

(Run on the spot)

Help us to SHARE your word with others

(Walk around and give a High-5 to others, or greet others with a wave)

Lord, help us to HEAR, RESPOND and SHARE your word everyday.

(Hands together and raise arms)

AMEN

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage the children to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Wise grass heads

You will need:

- old tights
- grass seeds
- compost or soil
- a yogurt pot, or cup, or any small container to hold the grass head
- googly eyes, fabric scraps, markers, or any other materials to create a face
- a piece of card in the shape of a speech bubble



What you do:

Cut a section of the nylon stocking, about 18 cm long, and place it over a cup to make filling easier. Pour a tablespoon of grass seeds into the toe of the stocking.

Pour compost or soil into the nylon stocking until the stocking is shaped like a ball. Tie off the open end securely, making sure nothing falls out. Attach your decorations to make a face.

Think about the wise words your grass head is going to share with the world. Attach the speech bubble to the head and display it, sharing your wise words to everyone.

Place the grass head in a sunny spot and water it regularly. As the grass grows you can trim it, like hair, and you could change the wise words regularly too.

Here is a video of how it is made.

<https://youtu.be/HQhLGX0MmpQ?si=CmU6xHAXMvaGYinZ>

Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

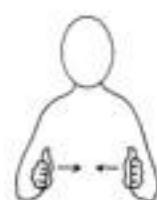
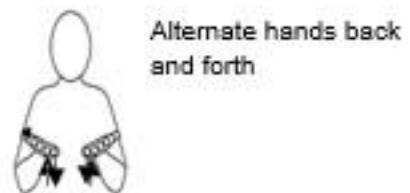
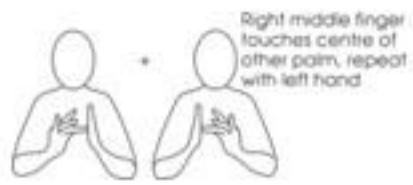
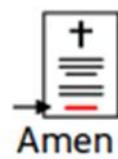
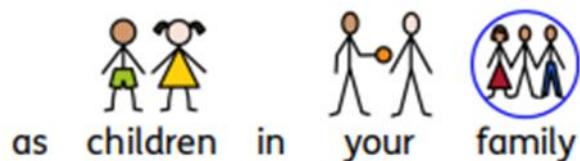
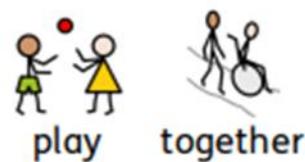
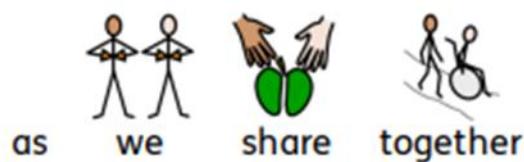
What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to share with you an example of when someone listened to them and an example of when they didn't.
- Could you spend five minutes each day just sitting and listening. It helps if you close your eyes. What can you hear? How can you respond to what you have heard? You could try this out in different environments, e.g. outside, bedroom, at school.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of the **Parable of the Sower** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing
sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group bit.ly/FACT_FB
 Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Wise words of Psalms**





The Lord's Prayer









Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.








Thy kingdom come, thy will be done






on earth as it is in heaven.






Give us this day our daily bread











and forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us









Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil







For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory






For ever and ever. Amen



Illustration by lambsons.co.nz via freebibleimages.com





Explore Flash Cards

