**1. Motivate**

What is something you have completed on your “bucket list”?

* Alaska cruise
* ride the vertical roller coaster that goes up 300 ft and back down in 18 seconds – Cedar Point *Top Thrill Dragster*

A video introduction to the Bible Study is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_b6judthf> If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/32xewwa9>

* see the Grand Canyon
* visit Times Square in NY
* ride the subway (The Tube) in London
* go around the world
* go to the top of the Empire State Building
* visit Ground Zero where the twin towers came down
* see the Golden Gate Bridge
* ride in a race car
* rebuild an antique car
* paint a mural on a building
* direct a 300-voice choir
* learn to play the piano

**2. Transition**

When we look back on our lives, we’ve had some interesting experiences.

* No doubt we’ve met some interesting people and had interesting conversations along the way.
* We can share Christ in many different contexts, but we will leave the results to God.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Share Jesus Wherever You Are

Listen for good results.

Matthew 13:3-8 (NIV) Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Our verses stated that Jesus taught in parables. What is a parable?

* an earthly story with a heavenly meaning
* a story with a plot.
* a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson
* often incorporate elements of surprise and exaggeration
* force the listener to make a decision or come to a moment of truth.
* Synonyms: fable, tale, folktale, legend, allegory moral tale

What was the purpose of teaching in parables?

* refers to a real-life scenario that would have been familiar to Jesus’ audience.
* is for the purpose of instruction, not entertainment.
* teaches one truth. It is not an allegory with many truths hidden inside of it.

What are the benefits of using stories to reveal truth?

* it’s not a direct statement of what you should do
* the listener is forced to draw his/her own conclusion or decision – they will *own* the decision they make, the application
* the surprise or twist in the story drives home the point

Think about important lessons have you learned through stories. What are some examples of children’s stories that teach a moral concept?

* Tortoise and the Hare – slow and steady wins the race
* The Boy Who Cried Wolf – when the wolf really does come, no one believes him
* The Ant and the Grasshopper – busy ant gathers food, grasshopper plays, goes and goes hungry
* The Lion and the Mouse – mouse removes the thorn in the lion’s paw … no matter how small you are, you can still help others

There is a significant effort today to similarly communicate the gospel to oral cultures.

* Evangelize through story telling

See <https://internationalproject.org/making-disciples-oral-learners/>

* Disciple through telling Bible stories
* Adapt evangelization to oral traditions of various cultures
* Apply truth of redemption as an oral story
* Actual application also to Western groups that no longer read but only watch images and listen to iPods – tell spiritual stories through video and audio

Let’s outline the details of the story Jesus told.

* a farmer walks through his field scattering seed
* the seed falls on a variety of ground surfaces – a path, stony areas, weedy and thorny areas, well prepared soil
* in the first three areas, little or no growth results from the seeds
* in the well-prepared ground, seeds grow and reproduce

3.2 Not Everyone Accepts the Gospel Message

Listen for Jesus explanation.

Matthew 13:18-22 (NIV) "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

Consider whether the parable is about the seed, the sower, or the soil—or all three? What is the significance of each?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Seed – the Word of God | Sower – those who witness | Soil – hearts of the hearers |
| * Truth that people need
* only way to receive spiritual life
* no seed, no crop
 | * sow/share the seed liberally
* faithful to plant … no planting, no crop
* sow repeatedly, monthly, yearly
 | * shared to all kinds of people
* what they do with it is their choice
* *you* get to choose what kind of “soil” *you* will be
 |

Jesus talks specifically to the disciples, focuses on the “soil” … the hearts of the hearers. How do you see each of the three soils on display in our culture?

Path: In what ways does Satan “snatch away” Truth of the Gospel message?

* outright rejection of Truth, minds already made up
* Satan has hardened their hearts
* temptations thrown at our minds
* accusations that scripture is just a bunch of stories, myths
* repeated rejection, hardening of one’s heart

Rocky places, limited soil: What “rocks” make our hearts shallow, so God’s Word doesn’t take root?

* people who have some interest in spiritual things … but …
* yet they are not willing to receive the Truth
* deep seated doubts
* disappointing experiences with religion
* not willing to take the step of faith

Thorny ground: What “thorns” choke out the growth of God’s Word in our lives?

* might hear the Truth … but …
* too many other interests
* job responsibilities
* bad habits, addictions … tobacco, gambling, sports
* multiple distractions which take their minds off the Truth
* Truth is that which aligns with reality … some people don’t see Truth for what it is because of other (false) “realities” in their lives

We might think that the farmer wasted a lot of seed on unproductive ground. But … what does the story tell us about God when we see that He continues to communicate the Gospel message to people who will likely not receive it?

* God loves *all*  people
* He died to provide salvation to *all*
* He always and repeatedly wants them to know how much He loves them
* we are called to continue to engage all peoples abundantly with the Gospel

3.3 Abundant Growth of the Gospel

Listen for what happens in “good soil”.

Matthew 13:23 (NIV) But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

What does the situation described in verse 23 have in common with the situations described in verses 19‑22?

* farmer spread the seed
* happened at the same time for all the different soil types
* same weather, same seed

What appears to be the difference?

* soil was right to encourage seed growth
* soil was “receptive”
* person’s heart was ready to hear and believe God’s Truth
* the Gospel message not only was received, it resulted in spiritual multiplication
* that person also shared the Gospel to others around him

What is the significance of the multi-fold increase?

* exponential growth
* that person also shared the Gospel to many others who responded in faith
* they in turn did likewise
* if the cycle continued at the 30-fold rate, after 4 cycles, 810,000 people would make professions of faith
* first step, 30 new believers … those 30 share the gospel … second step, 900 new believers … those 900 share … third step, 27000 new believers … etc.

When have you experienced the gospel landing on good soil?

* teaching a Bible Study where people “got it”
* our church sponsored a week of ministry by “Heavens Gates and Hells Flames”
* VBS when kids respond to the message of salvation
* when doing door-to-door visits , someone responds positively to the Gospel
* when the Samaritan’s Purse Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts are handed out and kids and families respond to the teaching of the Gospel

How can trusting God with the results impact your attitude toward evangelism?

* I don’t need to feel like a failure when someone rejects the message
* realizing the responsibility to convince the person accept Christ is not my responsibility
* knowing it is the Holy Spirit that convicts/convinces the person who hears the Gospel
* it’s our task to spread the seed, “water” it with prayer and encouragement
* it might be someone else who “harvests” the profession of faith

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Grow.

* If you’ve been distracted or challenged in your walk with Christ, renew your commitment to Him.
* Ask God to work in your life and help you produce fruit for Him.

Share.

* Identify opportunities God gives you during the week to “sow seeds” in the lives of others.
* Pray for boldness and take advantage of the opportunities God places in front of you.

Care.

* As you share Christ, “work the soil”, do more than speak words; show care and concern.
* Display the love of Christ in your actions; invest time in someone’s life and let God use your words and actions to prepare the soil.

Clueless Crossword

My sister, the Word Search Lady says you can’t do a crossword without clues. But you’ve got the words, all you have to do is put them in the right squares. Piece of cake! Pshaw! You can do this. (And don’t pay any attention about that book report assignment.) If you get stuck go to <https://tinyurl.com/32xewwa9> You’ll find other growth exercises there also.

CROP

FARMER

HEART

MESSAGE

PERSECUTION

ROCKY

ROOT

SEED

THORNS

UNDERSTAND

WEALTH

