

WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

God helps us know what's true.

BIBLE

The Parable of the Sower:
Matthew 13:1–23; Luke 9:28–36

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Movies aren't just fun stories that entertain us, they also can teach us a little more about ourselves and how we relate to the world around us. This week, we'll hear Jesus tell a story about seeds that fall on different soils. Jesus helped his followers understand the truth about how to grow closer to God because

God helps us know what's true.

LARGE GROUP TIME

Hey there, imagine you're watching a super cool movie on a giant screen. But instead of looking at the whole screen, you only see a tiny bit. That's like looking at just one piece of a puzzle instead of the whole picture.

When Jesus was around, he told stories called parables to help us understand how amazing God is. Those stories are like the missing pieces of the puzzle that make everything clear. So, get ready to watch Jesus' awesome stories—like a movie that shows us how great God is. *Roll film!*

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Popcorn Relay

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, crumple up a bunch of yellow and white paper to resemble popcorn and dump them in a large container in the middle of the room. Circle the teams around this "popcorn maker." Give each team of kids a paper grocery bag. One at a time, each player must come grab "one popcorn" to add to their team's "popcorn bag." The first team to fill up their bag wins.

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Make this activity more challenging by having kids use a [scooper](#) (no hands!) to scoop up one "popcorn." You could also give each kid a scooper, and teams must pass their popcorn down the line from player to player, only using their scoopers, to get the popcorn into their bag.

- Jesus was the master storyteller. He just knew what stories to communicate the message of God's kingdom to everyone. I bet listening to Jesus speak was like settling in for a movie you couldn't wait to see!
- So, it's time to go to the movies! I love movies that make us laugh and movies that make us cry, but my favorite part of going to the movies is the snacks. Fill up your popcorn bags before the movie starts.

ACTIVITY | Motion Pictures

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, create teams of two to six kids and have them work together to act out a

Bible story (Noah's Ark, Moses and the Red Sea, Jonah and the Big Fish, Jesus Walking on Water, David and Goliath, Mary and the angel Gabriel) or a movie your kids might have seen (Super Mario Bros, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Frozen, The Little Mermaid, Spider-Man, Toy Story).

✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Play a movie characters matching game with the kids. Print pictures of each character in a pair, like Mario and Luigi from Super Mario Bros, Mirabel and Antonio from Encanto, Mulan and Mushu from Mulan. Spread out one half on a board or the floor, and put the other half in a pile upside down. Have kids get a character from the pile and find their match on the board. This can also be played on a screen if you compile the pictures together on a slide.

- Most movies are make-believe stories about make-believe people and lands. Even though the story might not be true, we can still learn valuable lessons about things like friendship, bravery, and trust.
- Jesus sometimes told stories, called parables, that might not have actually happened either, but still told some big truths about God.

QUESTION | What was the last movie you saw?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask the following questions. You can have every kid shout their answer but then ask a few kids to share their answers with everyone. Comment briefly on their answers—and have fun with this!
- **What was the last movie you saw?** Those are all great movies. **Thinking of those movies, what is something from the movie that is true? What is something from the movie that is not true?**
- Movies are stories on a big screen for us to experience. Sometimes movies are pure fun, but they often teach us about ourselves or the world around us.
- Jesus used stories to teach us incredible truths as well. And today's story is no exception. Let's grab our seats and get ready for the lights to lower as our movie begins.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 13:1–23 (The Parable Of The Sower)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Set up your space like a movie set, with a director's chair, megaphone, and [clapper board](#) (or [make your own](#)). You will be a movie director every week and invite kids up to pantomime as you tell the story. Don't worry about it being sloppy or awkward—the whole point is for the director to tell the kids what to do during the storytelling. Feel free to ad-lib and make it funny. Use the clapper board to signal the "acting" sequence. This week, you will need four kids to be the different seeds.
- Okay, everyone, quiet on the set! Let's pretend you are all part of a filmmaking crew. Everyone has a role to play. For example, I am your director. Some of you will be actors, and some of you will help provide sound effects. Everyone will work together to make today's movie awesome.
- Our movie is based on the teachings of Jesus called parables. Jesus would use these stories to help explain things about God ... think of them as ancient movies.
- **Let's start by reading our script in Matthew 13:1–9.**
- Now, to turn this into a movie ... I need my four seeds to take center stage. Is the rest of the crew ready? Perfect. The Parable of the Sower, take one. Action!
- So, in this parable, a farmer threw some seeds on the ground.
 - **Seeds, jump up, then sit on the ground.**
 - **Everyone else, snap your fingers together to mimic the sound of seeds falling on the ground.**
- The seeds that fell on the path were in the open and didn't take root anywhere. Birds swooped in and gobbled them up.
 - **Crew make bird noises. Caw! Caw!**

- **Seed on the path, fly away to your seat.**
- The seeds that fell on the rocks grew a bit, but since the roots weren't that deep, when the sun came out, they withered and didn't grow anymore.
 - **Crew, put your hands in the air like you are rays of sunlight.**
 - **Seed on the rocks, start to grow a little bit and then give up. Show us your tired face.**
- The seeds that fell among thorns grew okay for a little bit, but then the thorns strangled the plants.
 - **Seed in the thorns, hold your throat. The thorns are choking you!**
 - **Crew, point your finger toward the seed. Poke, poke!**
- But the seeds that fell on good soil grew healthy and strong. It produced a good crop!
 - **Seed, stand up tall with your hands all the way up.**
 - **Crew, clap your hands together for the seed on the good soil!**
- Jesus told this parable about how the farmer sowed the seeds to show that people respond to God's words in very different ways.
- **Let's see what he said in Matthew 13:18–23.**
- So, the seeds are like God's words, being sprinkled to every listener. All of us are like different soil.
 - Sometimes, we can be like the path, where God's words don't really sink in. We don't really understand and we don't really try to, either.
 - Sometimes, we are like the rocks, where we receive God's words with joy but we don't hold on to what we heard. No roots! So we forget the message very quickly.
 - Sometimes we are like the thorns, where God's words are covered up by the things that make us worry or fearful.
 - But the best kind of soil we can be is the good soil, where we can receive God's words, understand them, and put them deep in our hearts so that our actions show that we believe and remember what we heard!
- Jesus came to earth to help people grow closer to God. Because Jesus explained this parable, more people were able to understand the truth. We can all try to be like the good soil and grow the way God wants us to!
- *End scene!*

BIG IDEA | God helps us know what's true.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use the [video provided](#) for this week to reveal this week's Big Idea, like you're announcing the winner of a movie award.
- The nominees for this week's Big Idea are:
 - God helps us know what's true.
 - We can give back to God.
 - God sends us helpers.
 - God gives us second chances.
 - We belong in God's family.
- And the Big Idea is ... **God helps us know what's true!**

VIDEO | A Clip From "The Good Dinosaur"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show [this clip](#) (from 0:00–1:32) from the movie "The Good Dinosaur" to show how they cared for their farmland. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
 - ✳ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** This month is all about movies! Kids from the Deaf or Hard of Hearing community experience watching movies differently. One simple accommodation you can make is to always turn on closed captioning when showing videos.

- I love using our imaginations, but sometimes watching a movie helps us visualize something much more clearly.
- **What did the “farmer” in this movie do to take care of his crops?** He planted it in soil and made sure each seed had room to grow properly and had plenty of sunlight and water.
- Many things go into making sure seeds grow into fruitful crops. In the parable, Jesus said that all the seeds had the same conditions and even the same farmer, except for one major difference—they were on different soils. The soils in the parable represent our hearts and attitudes toward God’s words.
- If we follow God’s instructions, listen to God’s words, and apply what Jesus teaches us to everything we do, our faith will grow strong and big! Just like a seed planted in good soil will grow into a large crop.
- Listen to God. **God helps us know what’s true!**

ACTIVITY | Acting Challenge

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, teach kids four different actions based on today’s Bible story (see below). Then ask a volunteer to come to the front and hide behind a large blanket. Use an old movie countdown video (like [this](#)), and at the end, everyone must freeze with their selected pose. Drop the blanket to reveal what the volunteer has chosen. Have the group applaud anyone who matched the volunteer’s pose exactly and tell them they passed the acting challenge. Keep playing, with new volunteers each round, until only a few kids remain, at which point, have the remaining players demonstrate all four poses together before resuming their seats.
- Movies can’t happen without the actors who appear on the screen. Let’s put our own acting skills to the test by pretending to be the seeds on different soils.
 - **Path:** Squat and curl up into a ball.
 - **Rocks:** Hunch over limply with arms down at your side.
 - **Thorns:** Hold your arms up and make claws with your fingers (thorns).
 - **Good Soil:** Stand strong and tall with your hands at your waist.
- Great job acting like each of the four seeds. You passed the challenge when you chose the “true” pose for each round by matching the volunteer. But when it comes to knowing God, we don’t have to guess or leave it to chance. We can go straight to the source—God’s words.
- **God helps us know what’s true.**

SCRIPTURE | Luke 9:28–36

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the passage aloud or invite a volunteer to read.
- Like any big picture, today’s first story showed us that something true was hidden inside the story. It was a story about seeds and soil, but it had a much bigger meaning. This next big-picture story is about the truth of who Jesus is.
 - **Jesus took three of his disciples up a mountain to pray in Luke 9:28–29.** Whoa—Peter, John, and James saw Jesus’ appearance change and his clothes became so bright, they were like lightning. Jesus was transforming into his true self.
 - **Not only that, they saw even more in Luke 9:30–31.** They saw Moses and Elijah, who had died centuries earlier, but here they were, talking to Jesus. Was this real or were they dreaming?
 - **They knew they weren’t dreaming in Luke 9:32–33.** But then, just when they were looking at Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus, they disappeared.
 - **Yet another truth about Jesus appeared in Luke 9:34–36.** Jesus was revealing his hidden identity—his true identity—as the Son of God. His friends might have guessed that
- Jesus was more than an ordinary human, but this was the moment when they learned the truth once and for all.
- **God helps us know what’s true.**

VIDEO | *Big Picture*, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | Big Picture Storyboard

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Prepare a corkboard, black foam board, or any board, really! Provide large index cards and writing utensils for kids to use. Have kids write or draw according to the prompt, and then stick it on the board using pins or tape. Try grouping similar responses in the same area. Prepare multiple boards if you have a large group.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Help preteens dive deeper this week by prompting them to think of what "thorns" (worries and fears) may be covering up God's words in their lives. Encourage them to talk with God and reach out to a trusted grown-up when they feel overwhelmed by their worries. Spend a brief time declaring the memory verse over them.
- A storyboard is created before a movie goes into production so everyone can see the big picture. This ensures everyone is on the same page and knows what this movie is all about! Let's pause and storyboard what we learned today!
- **Think back on the Parable of the Sower and write or draw one thing about the story that stuck out to you most.** Afterward, put it up on the storyboard, and those of you who are willing can share with us why that part was most memorable for you.
- Okay, now that we have our big picture storyboard up and running, let's talk a little more about what this parable teaches us about God and our life with God.
 - **Why is it important to know what is true?**
 - **Is it also important to know what is true about God and Jesus?**
 - **If you don't understand something, who can you ask?**
 - **What is something you learned that is true about God today?**
- God loves each of you very much. God wants us all to know the truth, how much God loves us, what Jesus did for us, and how we can be with God forever. **God helps us know what's true.**

RESPONSE | Make It Reel

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Pass out a copy of the [printable](#) provided to each kid where kids will write or draw one action step for the week in the space provided. Feel free to send the printables home or hold on to them so that by the end of Week 5, kids can make "reels" by taping or gluing their weekly film strips together.
- A long time ago, motion pictures—movies—were recorded on film. Each frame held a piece of the action. Then, all the film would be wound around a reel that would turn and be projected onto the big screen!
- Let's say the story of your life is playing on a reel. What happens next? Why don't we create our own film of what we can do about what we learned today?
- Today's Bible story taught us that we should strive to be like the good soil by paying attention to what God teaches us and remembering how to apply it to everything we do.
- **Write or draw one thing you can do this week that will help you be the "good soil."**
- I hope what we talked about today helps you know God more! **God helps us know what's true.**

MEMORY VERSE | Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."**

PRAYER

- Jesus, thank you for always helping us know what's true. Help us understand God's words so that we can know God more. When we are confused and unsure of things, we know we can always find the truth in you. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

● SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS

- **What were the four different kinds of soils in today's Bible story?** *Path, rocks, thorns, good soil.*
- **What do the seeds represent?** *God's words.*
- **What did Jesus do to help people understand this parable? What was the parable about?** *He explained it. The parable was about how different people receive God's words.*
- **Read Luke 9:35. What truth did God reveal to Peter, John, and James?** *Jesus is God's son.*

● APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- **Why is it important to know what's true?**
- **Who can we turn to when there is something about God's words we don't understand?**
- **What habits can we follow to help us be like the good soil in Jesus' parable?**

ACTIVITY | Good Soil Art

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, give each kid a regular piece of copy paper and a brown paper bag opened at the seams (construction paper works too). Match the brown paper to cover a little less than half of the page and tear the paper unevenly to give the appearance of soil. Glue the brown paper on, then glue on popcorn kernels to make them "seeds" (use actual seeds if you have kids with allergies). Then have kids draw a corn stalk, plant, flower, or tree stemming up from the seeds! See a worked example [here](#).*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Have preteens fill a small keychain like [this](#) with soil as a reminder to be the good soil, where we can receive God's words, understand them, and put them deep in our hearts so that our actions show that we believe and remember what we heard.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Include the use of coffee grounds or actual dirt instead of brown paper for an added sensory component. Have kids apply glue then sprinkle the coffee grounds on top.*
- **Does anyone else love to have popcorn while watching a movie? Who knows where popcorn comes from?** *Corn! Did you know that one corn seed, if planted in good soil, can grow a large stalk full of corn?*
- Create your own good soil to help you remember today's Bible story and everything else from God's words because **God helps us know what's true.**