



## SOW WHAT?

This activity aims to show that the farmer is the most important person in the food system. It is based on the technique of Godly play where the children are told a Bible story and then given time to wonder about the meaning. It's quite unusual in that you may feel that the children have not 'got' the point at all, but this activity will enrich the experience of the children if you use it alongside one of the other resources.

### RESOURCES

- Background info for you to share with the children
- Script for the story
- Resources for the story
- Resources for the children to play with afterwards

### BACKGROUND INFO

In the developing world farmers are really left with very little of anything – they have little choice in what they plant, little choice about how they can spend the small amount of money they earn, and little or no say in how they are treated by those that sell their produce on, for a big profit.

However, if the farmer did not plant the seeds and look after them until the crops have grown, what might happen?

Here is a story that Jesus told about a farmer.

### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER – GODLY PLAY OUTLINE

*This material is from The Complete Guide to Godly Play Vol 3 by J. Berryman (2002), published by Living the Good News. Based on many years of research, Godly Play is an imaginative method of presenting Scripture stories to children of all ages. For more information about the Godly Play approach to Christian Spiritual Education (further scripts, resources, storyteller training courses) see [www.godlyplay.org.uk](http://www.godlyplay.org.uk).*

## LESSON NOTES

### FOCUS: THE SOWER AND THE SEED (MATTHEW 13:1-9)

- Parable
- Core Presentation

### THE MATERIAL

- Location: Parable shelves
- Pieces: Parable box with light brown dot, gold box of birds, 3 earth images (rocky soil, thorns, good earth), 3 bags of grain, 1 sower
- Underlay: Light Brown

### BACKGROUND

This parable is found in all three Synoptic Gospels and in the Gospel of Thomas [Mark 4:1-9; Matthew 13:1-9; Luke 8:4-8; Gospel of Thomas 9]. The parable, which describes Jesus' promise of abundant harvest, is followed by an allegory that expresses the concerns of the first-century Church.

### NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

Find the material in a gold parable box with a light brown dot, located on the top shelf of one of the parable shelves. The underlay is a long strip of brown. There are three individual pieces with images representing the rocky soil, the thorns and the good earth. As you tell the parable, lay out the matching image for the kind of soil being described.

Three bags of grain, in increasing sizes, represent the harvests of thirty, sixty and one hundred measures. There is also a little gold box full of birds and the figure of the sower.

### SPECIAL NOTES

**Storytelling Tip:** You'll find the introductions to each parable very similar. You need not repeat the words exactly the same each time, but do try to make your introductions similar. This repetition serves in the same way as the phrase 'Once upon a time' in many stories. Familiar words signal that something out of the ordinary is about to happen.





GODLY PLAY SESSION



MOVEMENTS	WORDS
<p><i>Go to the parable shelves and pick up the parable box. Point to the light brown dot on the box. Bring the parable box to the circle of children.</i></p>	<p>Watch where I go to get this material.</p>
<p><i>Sit back and reflect for a moment about what might be inside. This is not a hypothetical exercise on the part of the storyteller. You have no guarantee that what you take out will be a parable. As you say to the children, parables can be easily broken when people are not ready. Even if you are ready, there are days when you do not find the presentation to be a parable.</i></p>	<p>Look, the box is the colour gold. There may be a parable inside because parables are as valuable, or even more valuable, than gold.</p> <p>The box also looks like a present. Parables are presents. They were given to you before you were born. They are yours, even if you don't know what they are.</p> <p>This box looks old, and parables are old. Maybe there really is one inside.</p> <p>Do you see the lid? It is like a closed door. Sometimes parables seem closed to us, even if we are ready to enter them. You need to keep coming back for them, and one day they will open.</p>
<p><i>After using some or all these introductions, sit back a moment and reflect again on whether there is a parable inside the box. After a moment or two, you seem to have an idea.</i></p>	<p>I know what we'll do. Let's look inside and see if there is a parable there.</p>
<p><i>Move the parable box from in front of you to your side. Remove the lid and lean it up against the box on the side where the children are sitting in the circle. This will help them keep focused on what is presented rather than what is to come out of the box, and it helps keep the box more mysterious.</i></p>	

<p><i>Take out the underlay. Leave it in a crumpled heap in the middle of the circle. As you talk about it, begin to smooth it out.</i></p>	<p>I wonder what this could really be? It doesn't look like much now. Hmm, it is certainly brown. It is all brown. Everywhere there is anything, there is brown.</p> <p>Let's see if there is anything else in the box that can help us get the parable ready.</p> <p>There are many things here to help us tell the parable, but nothing else to help us get ready. All we can do, then, is begin.</p> <p>There was once someone who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things that people followed him. As they followed him, they heard him speaking about a Kingdom. The Kingdom was not like the one they were in. It was not like one that anyone had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom anyone had even heard about. So they had to ask him, 'What is the Kingdom of Heaven like?'</p>
<p><i>Take the sower out of the box and place him on the underlay at your right facing toward the children.</i></p>	<p>One day when they asked him that, he said, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like when a sower, someone who scatters seeds, goes out and scatters seeds along the path.'</p>
<p><i>Move the sower along the brown strip, scooping seeds from his basket with your hand, and sowing them along the underlay from your right to left. The sower stops.</i></p>	
<p><i>Take the gold box full of little birds from the parable box. Place it on the underlay between you and the 'path'. Remove the lid carefully.</i></p>	<p>'As the sower sowed seeds along the path, the birds of the air came...'</p>



GODLY PLAY SESSION



Take out the birds one by one and place them along the underlay farthest from you from your right to left. These are the birds who have come to eat the seeds.	'...and ate the seeds.'
Take out the figure for the rocky ground and place it to the left of the birds that you lined up along the underlay farthest from you. Move the sower along that piece, scattering seeds from the bowl among the stones.	'The sower also sowed seeds among the stones.'
The pushing down of the roots can be expressed with your hands by opening them and trying to push your fingers down among the stones.	'When the seeds tried to put their little roots down among the stones they could not push their way into the ground. 'When the sun came out it scorched the seeds and they died.'
Place the figure of the thorns to the left of the stones. Move the sower along the thorns, sowing as he goes.	'The sower also sowed seeds among the thorns.'
The choking can be expressed by your hands. Clench both and twist them.	'When the seeds tried to push their little roots down among the thorns, they could push them part way in, but the thorns choked them, and they died.'
Place the figure of the good earth to the left of the thorns. Move the sower along the good earth and scatter seeds with your hand, scooping seeds from the bowl the sower carries.	'The sower also sowed seeds in the good earth.'
Use your fingers again to show the roots going down into the earth.	'When the seeds pushed their little roots down into the good earth, they could go all the way in. They grew and grew.'
Move your flat hand across the top of the figure showing the good earth, to show the cutting off of the ripe grain during the harvest.	'When they were all grown up, they were ripe for the harvest. Then they were cut off and gathered up.'

Take out of the parable box the figures for the thirty, sixty and one hundred bushels and piece them from your right to your left in ascending order along the underlay farthest away from you. 'Fill them' by scooping up the harvest with your hand and 'pouring' it into the containers, being sure the picture side is toward the children.  Pause for a moment after piecing the containers of the harvest. Prepare yourself for the wondering. When you and the children are ready, begin.	'The harvest was thirty, sixty and one hundred bushels.'
Move the sower to the middle.	Now, I wonder if the person had a name. I wonder who the person could really be. I wonder if the person was happy when the birds came and ate the seeds. I wonder if the birds were happy when they saw the sower. I wonder if the birds have names.
Move the sower from your right to left as you wonder.	I wonder what the person was doing when the little seeds could not get their roots in among the stones. I wonder what the person was doing when the little seeds were choked by the thorns. I wonder what the person was doing when the little seeds were growing in the good earth. I wonder what the harvest could really be.



GODLY PLAY SESSION

<p><i>Move the thorn figure above the stone figure and then put the good earth above the thorns. Then move the thirty bushels to the left of the stones, the sixty bushels to the left of the thorns, and the one hundred bushels to the left of the good earth.</i></p>	<p>Was it like this?</p>
<p><i>Put the thirty bushels by the good earth and the sixty by the stones and the one hundred by the thorns. Continue moving the harvest baskets until all possible combinations are completed.</i></p>	<p>Or could it really be like this?</p>
<p><i>Move everything back to its place. Then move the harvest bags to the middle between you and the soft strips. Touch each bag as you wonder how the harvest was used.</i></p>	<p>I wonder what the sower used for seed. I wonder what the sower sold. I wonder what the sower kept for food. I wonder if the sower was surprised at the harvest. I wonder what part surprised the sower most.</p>
<p><i>When the wondering winds down, begin to put all of the pieces of the parable carefully back in the parable box. Name the things as they are put away. Ask the children to begin thinking about what work they are going to get out during the response time.</i></p>	<p>Here are the birds. Etc.</p>
<p><i>When all is put away, replace the parable box on the shelf. Return to the circle of children and help them decide what work they would like to get out.</i></p>	

### WONDERING QUESTIONS

You will need to be careful not to correct the children if they are not answering the questions as you might like them to – it’s their opportunity to think out of the box. Generally just agree with what the child says or reflect what they say back to the group.

What did you like best?

Which part is the most important?

Which part could we leave out and still have everything we need?

The children will be able to respond to the parable by continuing to play with the story artefacts, draw a picture, write a story in their own words, paint, make something from clay or play-dough .