

## STORY 61

# A Story about Soils

## MARK 4

### BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Mark 4.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

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### THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

One day a big red dragon with seven heads flew from his lair and landed in front of King Frederick the Great's great castle. The dreadful dragon spread his scary wings, and with his fiery breath blew down the front door. The castle guards fell dead and the princess was captured.

Jesus told stories. But *not* stories like that. He told a lot of stories a lot of the time. Some of his stories have scary endings, but none of his stories are about red dragons. He told simple, short stories about ordinary people and everyday events—a woman baking bread, fishermen casting their nets, a shepherd watching his sheep, a farmer sowing seed. These stories are called parables. Jesus often ended his parables, saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). He wanted people to listen and learn about the kingdom of God through

1  
Read

2  
Teach

his stories. But he knew that people needed his help to understand what he was saying. The parable of the soils, which we will listen to today, teaches us about the ways people either accept or reject Jesus’s teachings. Listen up!

## TELL THE STORY

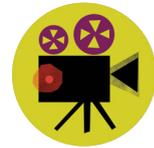
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the  
Bible passage  
together



Read from  
*The Biggest Story*  
Bible Storybook



Play *The*  
*Biggest Story*  
video

## TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

**Big Truth**  
Jesus’s true  
followers accept  
his word and  
bear fruit.

One day Jesus told a parable about four kinds of dirt. Dirt that was really hard. Dirt filled with rocks. Dirt overgrown with thorns. And dirt that was good for growing seeds. Do you want to hear the short story? Do you promise to *listen*?

Once there was a farmer who went around his farm and threw seed everywhere. Some seeds fell on the hard dirt pathway, and birds quickly swooped down and swallowed the seeds. Some seeds fell on rocky ground, and because the soil was so shallow, the hot sun quickly wilted the seeds. Some seeds fell among thorns, and when the seeds started to sprout, they were choked by the thorns that wrapped around the seedlings. But some seeds dropped down deep into good soil. Those seeds got all the nutrients they needed. And sure enough, after a few days, the tiny seeds sprouted. They produced thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times more than what the farmer first planted.

Jesus’s disciples heard Jesus’s parable, but they didn’t understand it. They needed Jesus’s help. Thankfully, Jesus explained. The seeds represent the good news about Jesus and his kingdom (the gospel). Each soil represents how people respond to the message. Some people hear the gospel, but before it can change them, Satan (like the birds) comes and snatches it away. Like the seed on the hard path, the truth of the gospel never takes root. Other people are happy to receive the gospel for a while, but when hard things come and they

start to suffer for following Jesus, they don't want it any more. They are like the seeds thrown on rocky ground that have very small roots and don't get enough water. Then there are people who hear the gospel, and they start to think and act like Christians, but worries about life and money become more important than pleasing God. They never grow and produce any fruit. They are like the seed sown among thorns. Finally, there are the seeds that fall on good soil and produce a huge harvest. This soil represents those who hear the gospel, let it soak into their hearts, and their lives are full of fruit—like caring for the needy, loving the unlovely, and teaching others about Jesus.

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

*Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}*

Some people think there are only two responses to the good news about Jesus. You either accept it or reject it. But Jesus teaches us that there are some responses where someone seems like they are accepting the good news, but it ultimately doesn't bear any fruit in their lives. They liked Jesus for a little bit, but they weren't changed by him.

But Jesus taught that when we really believe the real gospel, it changes us. Not always in one quick swoop overnight, but steadily over a long time—like a farmer with his field. Does that mean that if we decide to be a Christian, we have to work really hard to be good enough for God's farm? No, if that were the case, none of us could be saved. Instead, we have to hold onto that gospel and let it go down deep into our hearts. The more we know the Jesus who died to rescue us from sin, the more we know the Father who sent his Son to rescue us, and the more God will bring change in our lives. Let's have good soil and hold tight to Jesus's gospel.

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### DISCUSS THE STORY

*Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}*

**1. QUESTION:** What kinds of stories did Jesus tell? Why did Jesus use parables to teach people?

**TAKEAWAY:** Jesus taught in parables to help separate good and bad listeners.

**2. QUESTION:** In the parable of the soils, where was the seed thrown? When Jesus explained the parable, what did he say the seed represented?

3

Engage

**TAKEAWAY:** The gospel is heard by hard and soft hearts.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened to the seed thrown on the hard pathway? What about the seed thrown on rocky soil? And what about seed thrown in the thorns? What does the parable teach us about how the gospel might not take root in our hearts?

**TAKEAWAY:** If our hearts are hard or we are distracted by hard things and worries, the gospel won't take root in our hearts.

4. **QUESTION:** What happened to the seed thrown on the good soil? How much fruit did it produce? What does the parable teach us about how the gospel can take root in our hearts?

**TAKEAWAY:** If our hearts are soft and ready to receive the gospel, it will take root and produce much fruit.

**Memory Verse**

I am the vine; you  
are the branches.  
Whoever abides in  
me and I in him,  
he it is that bears  
much fruit, for  
apart from me you  
can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5

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**ACTIVITIES**

Download coloring pages and activity pages from [TheBiggestStory.com](http://TheBiggestStory.com), or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

**Option 1: Pathway Relay**

*Supply List: paper, scissors, cups, obstacles (plastic toy hoops, cones, etc.)*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Print and individually cut out the words path, rocks, thorns, and good. Put the words in a cup (one set per team). Make identical, simple obstacle courses using cones, hula hoops, and the like (one course per team).*

Divide children into teams of four. Have each child draw one word from the team's cup. If the word is *path*, the children must complete the obstacle course on all fours. If it is *rocks*, they must walk on their knees. If it is *thorns*, they must hold one arm behind their backs while crawling. And if it is *good*, they have no limitations. When the leader says, "Grow," the first child on each team races through the course according to the word he or she drew, then tags the second person. The first team to have all team members finish the course wins.

## Option 2: Who's Got the Seed?

*Supply List: large seed*

*Before Class: Gather supplies.*

Have children sit in a circle with their hands behind their backs. Choose one child to go to the center of the circle and close her eyes. Hand a seed to one of the children in the circle, then have the child in the center of the circle open her eyes. Have the children discreetly pass the seed from person to person. The person in the center guesses who has the seed. If she is correct, the person with the seed trades places with the person in the middle and the game continues. Remind children that as we hear and obey the word of God, we bear much fruit.

3rd–5th

## Option 1: Rocks and Thorns

*Supply List: none*

Divide children into two teams. Have teams line up facing one another in the center of the room. Identify one team as “rocks” and the other team as “thorns.” Explain that their respective bases are the walls behind their team. The leader will call “rocks” or “thorns.” If rocks are called, the thorns must turn and run to their base before being tagged by a rock (and vice versa). If someone is tagged, he must join the team who tagged them. Play continues until all children are on one team. Remind children that Jesus used a parable to explain that some people stop obeying God’s word when life gets difficult, thorny, and rocky.

## Option 2: Tossing Seeds in the Soils

*Supply List: paper, marker, tape*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Write path, rocks, thorns, and good on four pieces of paper and tape one word on each wall in the room.*

Choose one child to stand in the middle of the room, to close her eyes, and to count down from ten. Have the remaining children choose a sign to stand by. On zero, with eyes still closed, the person in the middle calls out one of the four words. The children by that sign are out. Play continues until one person remains. Remind children that Jesus told a parable that compared different soils to how people respond to God’s word.

## CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

### Option 1: Healthy Soil Bloom

*Supply List: coffee filters, muffin liners, craft sticks, markers, pom-poms, glue, spray bottle with water*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.*

Give each child a coffee filter, muffin liner, and craft stick. Set markers, glue, and pom-poms on tables. Have children color their coffee filters with markers. Teachers then lightly spray the outside edges of the filter to blend colors. Have children glue muffin liners to the center of their filters, then glue pom-poms to the middle of the muffin liners. Have children color the craft stick green and glue to the flower as a stem.

### Option 2: Story of the Soil Wheel

*Supply List: paper, scissors, marker, crayons, brass fasteners*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out 8-inch-diameter circles (two per child). Divide half the circles into four equal sections, and label them Path, Rocky Ground, Thorns, and Good Soil. In the other half, cut out a section one-fourth the size of the circle. Write the Big Truth on the remaining portion. Make a sample craft.*

Provide children with crayons and the circle divided into four sections. Have them draw something that illustrates each of the four sections, then help them fasten the circle with a section cut out of it on top with a brass fastener.

**Option 1: Good Soil Flower**

*Supply List: tissue paper sheets, scissors, string, green pipe cleaners*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut string into 8-inch lengths (one per child). Make a sample craft.*

Have children choose six to eight pieces of tissue paper and lay them on top of one another. Place remaining supplies on tables. Have children accordion-fold their stacked tissue paper into 1- to 2-inch folds. Help them tie the string tightly around the middle to secure the folds. Have children use scissors to shape both ends of the tissue paper (curved, fringe, etc.). Have children fan out both sides of the tissue paper and gently pull up each layer toward the string, one layer at a time. Have children create stems and leaves with pipe cleaners and attach by twisting them around the flower. Remind children that being hearers and doers of God's word helps us grow strong and beautiful in him.

**Option 2: Careful Where You Plant**

*Supply List: paper, glue, colored pencils, large seeds*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Print Mark 4:14–20 (one per child). Make a sample craft.*

Set glue and colored pencils on tables. Give each child a blank paper and four large seeds. Have children fold the paper in half twice so it has four sections. Have them label the sections *Path*, *Rocky Ground*, *Thorns*, and *Good Soil*. Have them glue one seed in each section, then draw pictures to illustrate each section's label. Have children glue the Mark 4:14–20 paper to the back of the drawings, facing outwards.



Visit [TheBiggestStory.com](https://TheBiggestStory.com) for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.