

# Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

## Parables Jesus Told





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Unit Overview and Connecting page written by Elizabeth F. Caldwell

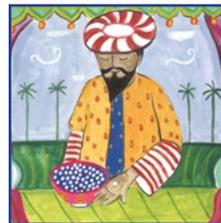
Sessions written by Jennifer Ikoma-Motzdo

### Parables Jesus Told

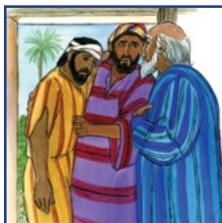
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The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at [www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum) or [www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum](http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum). Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

© 2020 Westminster John Knox Press

First edition

Published by Westminster John Knox Press  
Louisville, Kentucky

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Printed in the United States of America

## Introduction

How do you get to know someone and form a relationship? You meet them. Get to know them. Ask questions. Discover things about them. Talk with each other. Share stories. Wrestle with what you learn. Discern your place in the relationship, with others, and with the world. Repeat.

One of the first ways we begin to understand God's self-revelation is to hear, engage, and wrestle with the written Word. In other words, it is through the stories of the Bible that we get to know God. It is through the stories of the things Jesus did and said that we get to know Jesus. It is through the Holy Spirit that we live and learn together. We get to know ourselves as beloved children of God and our place in the faith community.

In this curriculum, children will:

- read and hear stories from the Bible, adapted and told as age-appropriate stories using *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*;
- pause to let each story find its way into their hearts and minds;
- engage their curiosity and imagination with the Bible story through wondering questions and activities exploring God's presence, actions, and grace in the story; and
- wrestle with how they fit in the story, what God is calling them to do, and how they follow God's way of loving and living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

### The Benefits of a Multiage Setting

*Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum* is intentionally a multiage children's curriculum. Multiage curriculum places spiritual development in a church family model and recognizes that age and development are not synonymous. It can appeal to all church sizes, with "family groups" spanning the various ages found in larger groups. There is the opportunity for the development of skills and character through encouraging disciples who support and care for one another; providing leadership and mentoring occasions; and supporting cooperation, rather than competition, as well as patience, tolerance, and compassion for those who are of different age or ability. Multiage curriculum provides a change from the typical school day and model of education. It offers open-ended materials that can challenge children and allows for developmental diversity and individual

differences. Children can develop a strong sense of community as they offer and receive support and encouragement.

### Note about Supplies

Basic supplies, such as paper, newsprint, card stock, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, colored pencils, glue, glue sticks, scissors, and tape, will not be listed in the "Gathering Supplies" section. These items are considered general supplies to have on hand. Specific items required for the lesson will be noted in each session.

### Flyaway Books

Flyaway Books ([www.flyawaybooks.com](http://www.flyawaybooks.com)) is a children's picture book imprint from Presbyterian Publishing Corporation and the publisher of *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. It features books that reflect themes of diversity, inclusivity, kindness, compassion, self-esteem, and care for our world and that retell familiar religious stories in new ways. Flyaway Books titles are available at [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Including Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Create an environment that helps children of all abilities experience God's grace by making a space welcoming and accessible. You can adapt an activity by process, product, or environment—the way something is done, what is done, or where it is done. If you think a child may struggle with an activity, ask the question "How can I help this child be successful?"

*Adapting the Process:* Giving extra support to complete activities is an example of changing the process.

*Adapting the Product:* Having children make or do something different is an example of changing the product when the original plan is inaccessible for a child.

*Adapting the Environment:* Thinking about the room where you gather helps children feel welcome and included. Considering lighting, space, and furniture; displaying children's projects; and using liturgical seasons and symbols help children feel that the room is a place where they belong.

## Unit Overview: Parables Jesus Told

### Remembering These Stories

After his baptism by John in the Jordan River and after he called people to be his disciples, Jesus began to travel to cities and villages. Wherever he went, he paused. He took time to meet people and to teach them. Remembering all the things he had learned at home and at the temple, he began his teaching by telling stories. He used people and examples from nature in these stories—stories that we call parables. When we read the parables Jesus told, we get clues about the things he thought were important, such as helping others or wisely deciding the best thing to do in a given situation. He was also concerned about the significant gap between those who were rich and had a lot and those who were poor and had very little. And he was very interested in helping people think about how they lived together with friends, family, and neighbors. He used images and stories from life to help people think in new ways about living.

There's one more thing you need to remember about parables: They invite us to think, to imagine life differently. They ask us to look at our own lives, to think about how we are living in the way that Jesus teaches. They help us to think about the choices we can make. Parables are not very tidy! Hearing them, we are invited to play with them, ask questions, and “mess around” with the story so as to understand what it meant to Jesus' original audience and what it might mean for us today.

### Remembering How These Stories Connect with One Another

This collection of parables helps us focus on things Jesus thought were important: how we hear and live in response to God's love (“The Sower”), how we help someone else (“The Good Neighbor”), how faith and love grow in our hearts (“Something Big from Something Small”), things that are most important to us (“The Pearl”), and generosity (“The Generous Landowner”).

### Remembering Why These Stories Are Important to Our Faith

Jesus challenged people to think, to hear in new ways, and to imagine life lived in faithful response to God's hope for the world. To this end, Jesus used the literary form of parables frequently. There are forty-nine parables told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, of which nine are in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. Others are unique to Matthew or Luke or shared by them. Our faith grows when we read a text, wonder about it, ask questions, and read what others have written about it. Parables are meant to disturb our way of thinking and change the ways we live in the world. They invite us to see in new ways. In the liminal space offered by a parable, we resist easy and quick answers as we live into new realities of faith.



### Remembering to Wonder

- As you read this overview, what are you learning about parables that you didn't know before?
- Which of these parables is most familiar to you? What new ideas do you get about its interpretation as you read the background information?
- If Jesus were teaching a parable today, what illustrations do you think he would use to help us understand about living in the world?

## The Sower—Luke 8:4-15

### Worship

- Making a Joyful Noise with Seeds
  - ✦ Before worship, fill empty plastic water bottles with seeds, securing the bottle caps tightly. Distribute to worshipers and invite the children to lead the congregation in singing “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in my Heart” as they shake their rattles. Watch the YouTube video “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy” ([bit.ly/IveGotTheJoyVideo](https://bit.ly/IveGotTheJoyVideo), 2:10) for words and music if needed.

### Education

- Exploring Plant Parables
  - ✦ Jesus told several parables about plants. Form small groups and assign the following passages:
    - Parable of the Weeds—Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43
    - Parable of the Mustard Seed—Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19
    - Parable of the Barren Fig Tree—Luke 13:6–9
    - Parable of the Growing Seed—Mark 4:26–29
    - Parable of the Fig Tree—Matthew 24:32–35
  - ✦ Have the groups share what they learned about their parable. Wonder together:
    - Why do you think Jesus told so many parables using plants?
    - What connections, if any, can you draw between having access to fresh food and one’s ability to hear and respond to God’s love?

### Connections

- Becoming Sowers
  - ✦ Make seed balls, or bombs, together. Seed balls are small balls made of seeds and compostable materials, in this case paper pulp. They can be scattered (but only if there is a good rain in the forecast for the seeds to get the moisture they need) or planted and watered. Go to [bit.ly/MakingSeedBombs](https://bit.ly/MakingSeedBombs) for simple directions. Note that if you don’t have a silicon mold, you can make the balls with your hands and place them to dry in an egg carton. As you create together, discuss:

- What do you think the optimal growing conditions will be for these seeds?
- What steps can you take to help nurture these seeds?
- What are the optimal conditions for God’s love to grow in your life?
- What steps can you take to help nurture God’s love growing in you?
- ✦ To sow the seeds, scatter the balls in grassy or wooded areas or plant them in a garden and let nature take care of the rest!
- Listening to Music
  - ✦ Watch the YouTube video “Andrew Peterson, The Sower’s Song: ([bit.ly/TheSowerSong](https://bit.ly/TheSowerSong), 4:46). Play the video again and invite people to create motions to go along with the song. Young children may enjoy dancing along to the song. Talk together about the song:
    - How do the song’s lyrics connect with the parable? Who is the sower? What seed is being sown? Where?
    - How does the word of the Lord “not return void”?
    - What do you think is meant by the final line, “And the sower leads us”?
  - ✦ Invite people to consider how they would illustrate the following lines: “What is sown in the garden grows into a mighty tree / So the Lord plants justice, justice and praise.” Provide drawing and/or painting supplies and invite people to make a picture. People could make individual pictures and then join them together for a mural, or you can provide mural paper and have them illustrate their ideas together.

### Service

- Planting a Church Community Garden
  - ✦ If you do not have a lot of space or own the property where you worship, consider an herb garden or tomato planters. Donate produce from the garden to neighbors, soup kitchens, or food pantries.

## The Good Neighbor—Luke 10:25-37

### Worship

- Taking a Seat and Making a Friend
  - ✦ In preparation for use of this activity before or during worship, watch the YouTube video “Take a Seat, Make a Friend—SoulPancake’s Street Team” ([bit.ly/TakeASeatVideo](https://bit.ly/TakeASeatVideo), 4:52).
    - Project similar “ball pit” questions onto a screen or print them in the bulletin. Invite people to pair up with someone who they do not know well to answer the questions.
    - Recreate the video in your church! Make two ball pits next to each other using kiddie pools or even two chairs with a bin of balls by each one. Write some of the questions, or those of your own choosing, on the balls. Set it up in your narthex or fellowship hall or for your next church retreat. Invite participants to “take a seat and make a friend.”

### Education

- Breaking Down Walls
  - ✦ Ephesians 2:11–22 describes how Jesus broke down barriers between people. Read and wonder together. Build a wall together out of interlocking plastic blocks, toy blocks, or bricks, or even by hanging a sheet between chairs. Invite people to sit on both sides of the wall. Have a conversation about walls—things that divide us, that are between people—using the following questions:
    - What do walls do?
    - What are some walls that divide people?
    - What are some walls that you see or feel in your life?
    - What walls do you notice around the globe?
    - How can you, your family, and your church community help take down the walls that separate people?
- Embracing Empathy
  - ✦ Watch the YouTube video “Brené Brown on Empathy” ([bit.ly/BreneBrownEmpathy](https://bit.ly/BreneBrownEmpathy), 2:53). If your group is primarily younger children, you may want to stop the video at 1:30. Suggest one or two situations that the fox might say and how the bear would respond with empathy and the gnu would respond with sympathy. Wonder together:

- What is empathy?
- How does empathy make a hurting person feel? How about sympathy?
- Imagine that the beat-up man in Jesus’ parable kept a journal. What might his journal entry include the day he got beat up?
- How did the good neighbor show empathy?
- When have you been shown empathy?
- When have you shown empathy to another person?

### Connections

- Exploring Picture Books
  - ✦ Read children’s books that explore (some explicitly and others implicitly) this parable’s themes.
    - *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Amy-Jill Levine. (Flyaway Books, 2019) or watch the YouTube video “Who Is My Neighbor?” ([bit.ly/WhoIsMyNeighborBook](https://bit.ly/WhoIsMyNeighborBook), 8:10).
    - *Love Your Neighbor (Just Like Jesus Said)* by Melody Carlson (B & H Kids, 2002) or watch the YouTube video “Love Your Neighbor by Melody Carlson” ([bit.ly/LoveYourNeighborBook](https://bit.ly/LoveYourNeighborBook), 8:06).
    - *Leo: A Ghost Story* by Mac Barnett (Chronicle Books, 2015) or watch the YouTube video “Leo: A Ghost Story by Mac Barnett, Read by Inky Blinks” ([bit.ly/LeoAGhostStory](https://bit.ly/LeoAGhostStory), 8:46).
  - ✦ Wonder together:
    - What do the illustrations tell you about the parable of the Good Neighbor?
    - After reading, what thoughts or questions do you have about the parable of the Good Neighbor?

### Service

- Connecting with Faith Neighbors
  - ✦ Partner with another house of worship in town to care for the vulnerable in your neighborhood.
  - ✦ Learn about local ecumenical partnerships. How could your family or group participate in building relationships with people of differing beliefs?

## Something Big from Something Small—Mathew 13:31-33

### Worship

- Distributing Mustard Seeds
  - ✦ Purchase mustard seeds at your local grocery store. Give one seed to each person.
    - Use glue or place clear tape over the seed to adhere it to a piece of cardstock or bulletin cover or place the seed in a small plastic ziplock bag.
  - ✦ Draw the congregation’s attention to the tiny seed during worship, emphasizing how big the mustard tree is in comparison.

### Education

- “Something Big from Something Small” Stories
  - ✦ Read some more stories in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*:
    - In “Moses and the Special Holy Place” (Exodus 3:1–12), p. 90, God used a small bush to begin a big, big miracle.
    - In “David Meets Goliath” (1 Samuel 17:1–58), p. 112, God makes a huge victory out of a small rock.
    - In “The Widow of Zarephath” (1 Kings 17:8–24), p. 84, God makes one day’s food last for many, many days.
    - In “A Boy and His Lunch” (John 6:1–15), p. 264, Jesus makes a feast for many out of one small lunch.
  - ✦ Discuss: What other Bible stories come to mind?
  - ✦ What connections can you draw between these stories and the yeast and mustard seed parables?
  - ✦ How can these stories encourage you and others that big things can come from the faith and love growing in our hearts?

### Connections

- Making Slime
  - ✦ Watch the YouTube video “Best Kid-Friendly Slime (No Borax)” ([bit.ly/SlimeRecipeForKids](http://bit.ly/SlimeRecipeForKids), 3:10) for an easy slime recipe. As the saline or contact solution is added, explain that this is the special “activator” ingredient. Just as yeast activates the flour to make bread, the contact solution activates the other ingredients to make slime. Wonder together:

- As your faith and God’s love grow inside you, what changes might you see in your life?
- What can God’s love activated inside of you motivate you to do?
- How can our small actions activate big change in our communities?

### Reading a Picture Book

- ✦ Read and enjoy the children’s book *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Amy-Jill Levine (Flyaway Books, 2018), or watch the YouTube video “PrayerCast for Children The Marvelous Mustard Seed” ([bit.ly/MustardSeedBook](http://bit.ly/MustardSeedBook), 5:22).

### Service

- Creating a Flour Arrangement
  - ✦ Display flour bags totaling sixty pounds in the worship or fellowship space.
  - ✦ Distribute the flour to friends, family, and church members.
  - ✦ Invite participants to take a bag home and bake goods for a church event or to share with others.
- Working to End Global Hunger
  - ✦ Learn about the organization Bread for the World by exploring their website, [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org).
    - Read at least one article in each of the four main categories: “About Hunger,” “How to End Hunger,” “Our Impact,” and “Get Involved.”
    - Try one of the ways to get involved.

## The Pearl—Mathew 13:45-46

### Worship

- What Is Your Pearl?
  - ✦ Distribute pieces of paper with the image of an oyster and a very large pearl. Invite people to write about or draw a picture on the pearl of what is of great importance to them. Suggest that they consider what they would go to great lengths to find and obtain a precious pearl, as one person in the Bible did.

- ✦ After reading Matthew 13:45–46, allow people to silently reflect on their “pearls” and consider the question, “What is of great importance to you?” After a few moments, suggest that Jesus described God’s kingdom as even more precious than this.
- ✦ Invite worshipers to bring their papers forward or place them in the offering plates and present their “pearls” as an offering to God. Pray, asking that God receive our most cherished desires and give us one even more precious: God’s realm of love.

## Education

- Considering Value
  - ✦ If you have a group with older children, youth, and adults, watch the YouTube video “The Value of Things—How Do We Determine It?” ([bit.ly/TheValueOfThings](https://bit.ly/TheValueOfThings), 4:36). Ask if there are words that are difficult to understand. Wonder together:
    - How does this concept of value apply—and not apply—to aspects of your life?
    - What does our society consider valuable even though it doesn’t actually add value to your life or the life of others?
    - How is understanding value in terms of money like or unlike the values Jesus teaches?
- Reading Stories about Valuable Things
  - ✦ Read stories in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*:
    - “The Most Important Thing to Remember” (Deuteronomy 6:4–9), p. 168
    - “Visitors from the East” (Matthew 2:1–12), p. 196
    - “Ten Coins” (Luke 15:8–10), p. 216
    - “The Rich Man” (Luke 18:18–30), p. 246
    - “The Short Man” (Luke 19:1–10), p. 242
  - ✦ Discuss together:
    - What is valuable in each story?
    - What are the most important things to you and your community?
    - How do you live showing what you value?

## Connections

- Making Merchandise Collages
  - ✦ Discuss what it means to be a merchant. Invite participants to imagine that they are merchants.

- ✦ Encourage each person to create a collage of things they are selling by drawing pictures or cutting out images found in magazines or catalogs. Allow time for everyone to share what is on their collage. Ponder together:
  - Why was the merchant willing to sell everything to purchase the pearl?
  - What will he do now that he has the pearl but no merchandise left to sell?

## Service

- Planning a “Standing Ovation”
  - ✦ Watch SoulPancake’s “A Boy Who Saved 17 Lives Gets a Big Surprise” ([bit.ly/StandingOvationVideo](https://bit.ly/StandingOvationVideo), 5:48). Engage in conversation using the following questions:
    - Who in your community embodies what’s most important in life?
    - How might you create a standing ovation for that person?
    - In what other ways can your community acknowledge this person?

## The Generous Landowner—Mathew 20:1-16

## Worship

- Using the “Gratitude Not Grumbling” Responsive Reading
  - ✦ Before worship, invite participants to make three large signs: “Thanks be to God!” “That’s not fair!” and “Thanks be to God?” Form three groups and instruct them to hold up each sign to cue the congregation’s response during the reading. Use the Common English Bible version of Matthew 20:1–16 and have the participants hold up the signs as follows:
    - “Thanks be to God!” after verse 2
    - “Thanks be to God!” after “And they went” in verse 5
    - “That’s not fair!” after “. . .they replied” in verse 7
    - “Thanks be to God!” after “. . .go into the vineyard” in verse 7
    - “Thanks be to God!” after verse 9
    - “That’s not fair!” after verse 10
    - “That’s not fair!” after verse 12
    - “Thanks be to God?” after verse 16

## Education

- Making a Time Line
  - ✦ Form three groups and explore the Bible passages that come right before the parable. Invite groups to make a time line in a way they choose: make a drawing, act it out, or make a sculpture out of pipe cleaners. Have them consider the questions posed below and include their thoughts as they present their part of the time line to the larger group.
    - Matthew 19:13–15: Who approached Jesus? What was the disciples' reaction? What was Jesus' reaction to the disciples? To the people who approached him?
    - Matthew 19:16–22: Who approached Jesus? What was Jesus' reaction to this person?
    - Matthew 19:23–30: What was the disciples' reaction to what Jesus says? What was Peter's reaction?
  - ✦ Have the groups report back to the large group. Ask them what threads or connections (if any) they find between these passages and the parable.

## Connections

- Considering Fairness
  - ✦ Read together *Looking after Louis* by Lesley Ely or watch the YouTube video “Looking after Louis” ([bit.ly/LookingAfterLouis](https://bit.ly/LookingAfterLouis), 5:08). Have a conversation using the following questions:
    - How do the adults treat Louis differently from the other students? Why do you think the student who complains to the teacher changes her mind about what is “fair”?

## Service

- Planning Generosity Surprises
  - ✦ The landowner surprised the workers with his generosity. When he could have paid less, he paid more! God loves us with the same extravagant generosity as that the landowner showed to his workers! Think of the people you come in contact with daily. How could you surprise them with your generosity? Maybe you could:
    - Tip your server twice as much as usual?
    - Go above and beyond when you do your chores?
    - Give a larger than normal gift to someone you love?
  - ✦ Make a plan to surprise someone generously as a group. Afterward, explore:
    - Was the recipient of your generosity surprised?
    - How did you feel being able to give or help so much?
    - How was this experience like or unlike the way God loves us?

🌱 **Goal:** To explore how we receive and radiate God's message of love.

## Connecting with the Biblical Text

Jesus frequently used parables in his teaching. He wanted to make us look at the things that are important in our lives, and the best way he knew to do so was to use this literary form, which would have been familiar to him from Hebrew Scriptures. Parables, as used by Jesus, are meant to disturb us, to make us think. For the purposes of teaching and reading this parable with children, be aware that some scholars think the editorial comments on the meaning of the parable (Luke 8:9–15) were added by Luke. If you read this parable in your Bible, you will see that the interpretation in *Growing in God's Love* is different from other Bible storybooks. What do you think the seed represents? Luke 8:11 suggests that the seed is God's Word. What words of God would be contained in seeds? "The Sower," as told in *Growing in God's Love*, suggests that the seed that the sower wants to spread is the message of God's love. Following this interpretation, God's love may not be able to grow in our hearts if they are full of hate, anger, or mean thoughts. God's love may not be able to grow in our hearts if they are dry and never watered with kindness. God's love may not be able to grow in our hearts if we are worried about so many things we don't have time to love or be loved.

## Connecting with the World

- 🌱 Bread for the World is an organization working to fight world hunger. Visit their website ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)) to see how seeds of hope and action can help. Pay particular attention to their action tool kit.
- 🌱 What community groups are your church involved with that have as their mission sharing seeds of love and kindness?

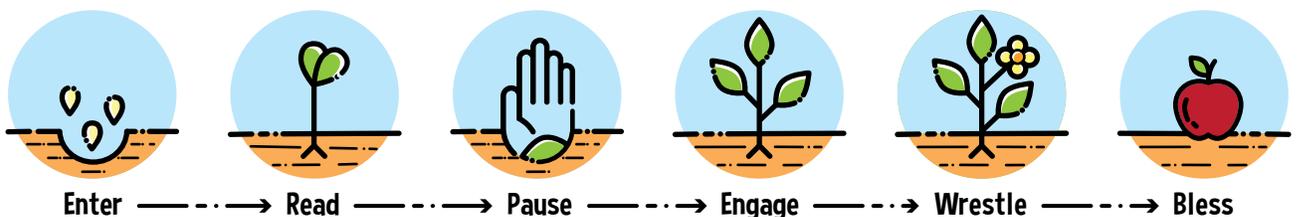
## Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

This parable invites children to think about themselves and how God's love either thrives in them or not. Children can see how plants grow or don't grow depending on how good the soil is and how much water is given. If they help plant a seed, tuck it in the dirt, water it, and give it light, they can watch it grow. God's love in our hearts grows just like this. Spiritual practices that tend to this seed are many, varied, and growing with us. Children can participate in the practice of hospitality and generosity. When we are kind to others, when we offer to help, the seed of love in our hearts grows.

## Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

Agronomists have measures to check the health of the soil where seeds will be planted. People of faith also have ways of checking in about the spiritual health of their souls. Do you take time to pause, to take up a spiritual practice like prayer, reading the Bible, walking in God's world, listening to a neighbor, or sharing a meal? Seeds of faith mature in our souls when we take time to be intentional about nurturing them. We all must attend to self-care—including nutritious eating, exercise, time for play, and time for family and friends—in order to live healthy lives. What attention do you give to your spiritual health? In what ways is God's love growing in you?

*Creator God, you plant seeds of love, kindness, and hope in our hearts.  
Help us remember to water and feed these seeds carefully so that they will grow. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Sketchbook, or an alternative, for each child
- ✓ Drawing supplies, such as pencils, pens, crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ✓ Bible
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ Sea bean or nut beads, pre-drilled
- ✓ Waxed thread or flexible jewelry string
- ✓ Super glue
- ✓ Shelled sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, or other edible seeds, or freshly popped popcorn with some unpopped kernels

## Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, Luke 8:4–15. As you read, make notes of questions it raises for you. Then read “The Sower” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 210).

As you engage with the passage, consider these questions:

- ✓ What are the farmer's actions in this parable? How do they reinforce or challenge your notions of God?
- ✓ Can you recall a time when your life was like the hard ground/path? The dehydrated rocky ground? The weed-infested ground? The good soil?
- ✓ What circumstances or people in your life have helped nurture your soil?
- ✓ As God's message of love is scattered throughout the earth, in what ways can you be part of nurturing the soil of the children you will be leading? Of the people you encounter daily? Of the stranger you encounter today? Of people you may never meet?

As you prepare to lead, is there anything blocking God's message of love from taking root in your life? Go to God in prayer, knowing that God loves you and loves the children whom you will be leading. Seek God's wisdom in how you might demonstrate God's love to these children through both words and actions this week.

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Gather sketchbooks or prepare alternatives to sketchpads by using any notebook, steno pad, or three-ring binders with paper to create the parable sketchbooks. Or simply fold five sheets of paper in half, cover with cardstock or pieces cut from cereal boxes, and staple them together to make your own sketchbooks.

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Before children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs in a circle.



### Enter into sacred space together.

Encourage the children to gather in the seating area. Turn on the candle.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, author of life, /  
thank you for your words of life. /  
May your stories live in and through us. /  
Amen. /

Distribute sketchbooks to each child and introduce them to their “parable sketchbooks.” Each session the children will have an opportunity to write, sketch, and draw in them as a way of engaging with the parables. At the end of the unit, they will be able to take home their sketchbooks. Have everyone write their name on their book. Invite them to use the drawing supplies for their sketchbooks throughout the session.

Explain that parables are stories Jesus told to teach people. Introduce the title of today's parable as “The Sower” and invite ideas about what this word means. Some children may understand the word as someone who sews. Help make the distinction between sewing and sowing.



### Read a story of God's people.

Open the Bible to Luke 8:4 and place it next to the candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. Explain that today's parable comes from the New Testament book of Luke. Invite the children to listen to today's parable. Read “The Sower” (p. 210).

## Leading

After reading the first two sentences in the story, invite the children to respond to the questions raised before proceeding with the rest of the story.

- ✎ Have you ever planted seeds in a garden?
- ✎ Did you notice that some seeds grow well while others struggle?

Then continue with the story.



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to imagine God's message of love being planted inside them. You may wish to watch the YouTube video "I Could Watch Time Lapses of Seeds Growing All Day" ([bit.ly/TimeLapseSeeds](https://bit.ly/TimeLapseSeeds), 1:33, stopping at 1:18 to avoid ads).



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Wonder together:

- ✎ What are the different soils in this story?
- ✎ What happens to the seeds in each soil?
- ✎ Why do you think Jesus compares God to a farmer?
- ✎ Why do you think Jesus compares people to different types of soils?

#### ○ Sketchbooks

Invite the children to draw a picture of today's parable in their sketchbook. After children have had an opportunity to draw, have them turn the page to write their responses to the following prompts. Assist with writing, or encourage children to help one another, as needed.

- ✎ You are a seed. What kind of plant will you be? Begin with, "I am a . . ."
- ✎ Write the word *path*. The farmer has tossed you and you fell on a path. What does it feel like? What do you see?
- ✎ Birds are coming. What do you feel?
- ✎ Write the word *rocky*. Now imagine that you fell in rocky ground. What does that feel like?
- ✎ The sun comes out. You begin to dry up. What does that feel like?

- ✎ Next, you fall in soil. You begin to grow. Weeds grow all around you. What does that feel like?
- ✎ Finally, you are planted in rich soil. Describe this soil. What does it look like? What does it feel like? How do you grow?

Invite the children to share any pictures or words from their sketchbooks as they wish.



### Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Engage the children in conversation about how God's message of love is like a seed planted in them.

- ✎ How is God's message of love growing in you?
- ✎ What do you need to keep it growing?
- ✎ Who in your life has shared God's love with you?
- ✎ What are some ways you can radiate God's message of love to others?

Choose one or both options:

#### ○ Sketchbooks

- ✎ Invite the children to write about or draw a picture of how God's message of love is growing in them. Suggest that they think about the group's recent conversation for some ideas. Invite the children to share their work with the rest of the group.

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Older children may enjoy writing from the point of view of someone in the parable, such as the sower or a seed that fell on good soil. Encourage them to think about what ways they see themselves in the character.

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#### ○ Watching the Parable

- ✎ Watch the YouTube video "The Parable of the Sower—Animation" ([bit.ly/ParableOfTheSowerVideo](https://bit.ly/ParableOfTheSowerVideo), 2:56). Wonder together:
  - What can make it difficult for people to hear and receive God's message of love?
  - Removing weeds and watering improves the soil in the ground. What can we do to help nurture and improve the soil in people's lives and in our own lives?



## Bless one another with God's grace.

Close with the following blessing from Ephesians 3:17–18 (CEB), inviting the children to repeat your words and motions as you say each line:

I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through  
faith. (*place hands over heart*) /  
As a result of having strong roots (*point to the  
ground*) /  
in love, (*create heart shape using two hands*) /  
I ask that you'll have the power to grasp (*grasp  
hands together*) /  
love's width and length (*stretch out arms to the  
sides*) /  
height and depth, (*reach up and then reach low*) /  
together with all believers. (*everyone hold hands  
in a circle*) /  
Amen. (*drop hands*) /

Turn off the candle. Ask children to leave their sketchbooks to use next session. Assure the children that you will keep their sketchbooks safe.



## Grow with more.

- Prayer Bead Bracelets
  - ✦ Sea beans or nuts with drilled holes make nice beads for making a bracelet and can remind children of this parable. If you'd like to learn more about sea beans, go to [www.seabean.com](http://www.seabean.com).
  - ✦ Explain that people all over the world and across religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, use prayer beads to aid them in praying. Wonder together:
    - How can wearing our seed bracelets remind us that God's message of love is planted inside us? What other reminders can you think of?
    - In what ways can we use our bracelets to help us pray?
  - ✦ String sea beans or nut beads to create a bracelet. Double knot the thread to close the bracelet. To secure the knot more fully, place a drop of super glue on it.
- Seed Snacks
  - ✦ Share a snack of shelled sunflower seeds or other edible seeds, such as pumpkin or pomegranate seeds. If edible seeds aren't available, serve freshly popped popcorn, setting aside a few unpopped kernels for the children to see. Wonder together:
    - What plant could this seed grow into?
    - Which part of the plant produces seeds?

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Be mindful of any dietary restrictions and food allergies.

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## Connecting with the Biblical Text

Here's a very familiar parable, often alluded to in news stories in reference to a feel-good story about someone helping another person. The interpretation of this beloved story needs updating. A lawyer comes to Jesus with a question. Jesus realizes that the man knows the law and the commandments to love God and love neighbors. When Jesus tells him to "do this" and he will live, he's not referring to a one-time action of a good deed he can check off his list. Jesus is talking about something more, and so he tells him the parable often called "The Good Samaritan," or here, "The Good Neighbor." Important to remember in this parable is that Jews and Samaritans were long-time enemies. The priest did not stop to help the injured man. Likewise, the Levite, another religious leader, did not stop to help—but the Samaritan did. He not only stopped to help but also provided continuing care for the injured man, getting him to an inn where he could recover. This is the challenge of the parable, the place where we are invited to wrestle. What does it mean to be a good neighbor? In her commentary on this parable, Dr. Amy-Jill Levine writes, "The issue for Jesus is not the 'who' but the 'what,' not the identity but the action" (*Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* [New York: HarperOne, 2014], 104).

For additional background reading, visit [bit.ly /Luke10Commentary](http://bit.ly/Luke10Commentary) or read the chapter on this parable in *Short Stories by Jesus* by Amy-Jill Levine.

## Connecting with the World

- What ministries of caring and helping others are offered in your church? How can children be involved on a regular basis?

**Goal:** To broaden our understanding of loving others.

- Look into organizations in your community that are involved in feeding programs, refugee resettlement, or caring with and for elderly or differently abled persons. Make a list of those organizations that welcome help from children and families and share this list with parents of children in the church.

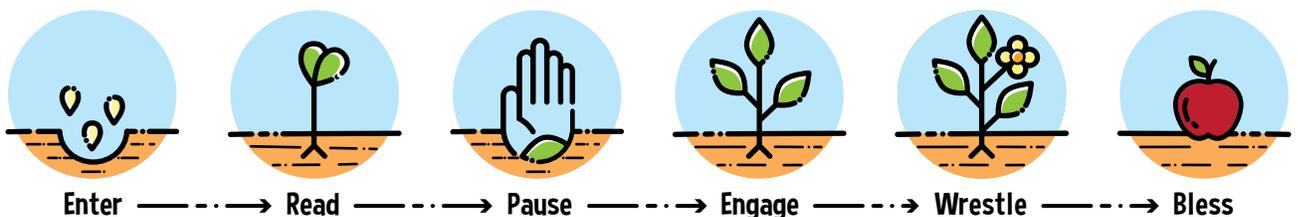
## Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Young children love repetition. It's how they learn, by hearing the same stories over and over again. We also repeat things we want them to remember: please, thank you, make smart choices, eat healthy snacks, be kind to your friends. Children grow in their faith as they witness and are involved in continuing acts of kindness toward others.

## Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

"Well, I've done my good Samaritan deed for the day." It's so easy to check a kind and generous action off our list. Doing good makes us feel good. More than doing good, though, we are called to be generous and thoughtful in our approach to life. Our spiritual lives are nurtured as we wrestle with how to be good neighbors to others. Don't be overwhelmed by the enormity of the parable and its interpretation. Yes, there is much need all around us. But what is one thing you can do; one person who you can help on a regular basis; one place where your kindness, generosity, love, and mercy are needed on a regular basis?

*Loving God, help us to see the places in our world where we are called to live out our love for you. Amen.*



## Leading

### Gathering Supplies

Depending on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs
- ✓ Bible
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Drawing supplies, such as pencils, pens, crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ✓ Parable sketchbooks (see “The Sower” session)
- ✓ *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Flyaway Books, 2019)
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ Card-stock copies of Resource Page 1
- ✓ Watercolor paints, paintbrushes, and water
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 2

### Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, Luke 10:25–37. As you read, make notes of questions it raises for you. Then read “The Good Neighbor” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 212).

As you engage with the passage, consider these questions:

- ✓ Why do you think Jesus used a person from Samaria as a counterpoint to the two religious leaders in this parable?
- ✓ Growing up, were there groups of people you distrusted or discounted? Who or what shaped those perspectives?
- ✓ Can you identify groups of people whom the children in your group may distrust or discount? Is your faith community helping dismantle or reinforce these perspectives?
- ✓ Like the innkeeper, have you ever witnessed someone go to great lengths to help someone else?
- ✓ What barriers keep you from receiving help from others? From extending help to others?
- ✓ How does this parable challenge you to be a good neighbor?

Pray for the children you will be leading and the neighborhoods they represent. Pray that your understanding of loving neighbors will expand as you encounter Jesus' parable. Pray for the positive impact the children can have on both a local and global scale as they grow in their faith and understanding of Jesus' teachings.

As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs in a circle.



### Enter into sacred space together.

Encourage the children to gather in the seating area. Turn on the candle and place the Bible and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* next to it.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, author of life, /  
thank you for your words of life. /  
May your stories live in us /  
and through us. /  
Amen. /

Distribute the children's parable sketchbooks from the “The Sower” session. Have extra sketchbooks available for any children who do not yet have one. Each session the children will have an opportunity to write, sketch, and draw in them as a way of engaging with the parables. At the end of the unit, they will be able to take home their sketchbooks. Invite everyone to use the drawing supplies for their sketchbooks throughout the session. Encourage the children to begin a new entry for today's parable.

Explain that parables are stories Jesus told to teach people. Introduce the title of today's parable as “The Good Neighbor.” Invite everyone to open their sketchbooks and draw a picture of someone who is a neighbor of theirs.



### Read a story of God's people.

Hold up the Bible, open it to Luke 10, and show everyone where today's biblical text is located. Place the open Bible next to the candle. Invite the children to listen to today's parable. Read “The Good Neighbor” (p. 212).



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children to think about their neighbors as they quietly draw or write in their sketchbooks.



## Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Have a conversation using the following prompts:

- ✦ Who are your neighbors that live near you?
- ✦ How do you and your neighbors help each other?
- ✦ This parable helps us understand that neighbors are not just those people who live nearby. Who else are your neighbors?
- ✦ How do you and these neighbors help one another?

Choose one or both options:

- Sketchbooks
  - ✦ Invite the children to add to their picture of a neighbor by drawing pictures of neighbors they do not know. Have children write three or more words about reasons people do not help one another. Then have them cross those words out and write three or more words Jesus might say. Assist with writing or encourage the children to help one another as needed.
- Telling the Story
  - ✦ Watch the YouTube video “Parable of the Good Samaritan” ([bit.ly/GoodSamaritanVideo](https://bit.ly/GoodSamaritanVideo), 2:16). Then invite the children to narrate the video as you play it again. Have the children determine the order in which they will offer a sentence or two of narration. Assure them that they don’t have to tell the story the way the story Bible told it. They can tell it in their own words. Pause the video as needed for the children to add their narration.
  - ✦ Invite the children to have a conversation about the story using the following questions:
    - Who saw the injured man, and how did they react? Why do you think they reacted the way they did?
    - Did the injured man ask for help? Do you think the man from Samaria knew why the injured man was lying on the ground?
    - Why do you think the man from Samaria, whom they did not like or trust, stopped to help?
    - Why do you think Jesus made the man from Samaria the hero, instead of the religious leaders?



## Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Choose one or both options:

- Acting It Out: In Living Color or in Your World
  - ✦ Choose one of the ways below to act out the parable, or form two groups and allow children to select which way they would like to participate, or have younger children act out the story with the colors and have older children act out a current-day scenario.
    - In Living Color
      - Read aloud *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso or watch the YouTube video “Who Is My Neighbor?” ([bit.ly/WhoIsMyNeighborBook](https://bit.ly/WhoIsMyNeighborBook), 8:10). Invite children to act out the story using the blue and yellow colors or their own color choices. Encourage them to be creative in costumes and props, such as by using art supplies and other items in the room.
    - In Your World
      - Invite the children to act out the parable as they understand it in the world today. They may choose to use their school, community, nation, or the world as the setting for their parable.
- Sketchbooks
  - ✦ Wonder together about the following questions. Then encourage the children to write or draw their response to one of the questions in their sketchbook.
    - How would you feel if someone you thought was supposed to help you didn’t?
    - How would you feel if someone you didn’t think would help you did help?
    - Have you ever avoided helping someone you saw who needed help? Why? What are some other reasons someone might avoid helping someone in need?
    - How can you be a hero to someone who doesn’t know you or maybe even doesn’t like you?
    - Who might need help at your school? In your neighborhood? In your city? At church? What can you do to help them?
    - What is one thing you can do this week to “go and be that kind of neighbor”?

## Leading

Older children may enjoy writing an entry from the point of view of someone in the parable, such as the injured man, one of the religious leaders who didn't help, the man from Samaria, or the innkeeper. Suggest that they use these two questions as they think about the character they choose: **In what ways do you see yourself in the character? How did taking their perspective help you understand the parable more fully?**

Invite the children to share their work with the rest of the group.



### Bless one another with God's grace.

Teach and sing together “Love Your Neighbor,” sung to the tune of “Frère Jacques.”

Love your neighbor, love your neighbor,  
as yourself, as yourself.

Let's love people God's way.

Jesus, guide us today.

Leader: Will you help?

**Children (shout):** Yes, we will!

Leader: Will you help?

**Children (shout):** Yes, we will!

While holding the candle in your hands, share a blessing with the children, encouraging them to keep their eyes open as they receive the blessing.

May the light of Christ's words inspire you.

May the light of Christ's love shine in you.

May you bring the light of Christ with you,  
wherever you go.

Amen.

Turn off the candle. Ask children to leave their sketchbooks to use next session. Assure the children that you will keep their sketchbooks safe.



### Grow with more.

#### Kindness Spreads

- Watch the YouTube video “Color Your World with Kindness” ([bit.ly/ColorKindness](https://bit.ly/ColorKindness), 2:13).

Wonder together:

- What are some of the ways you see people being neighbors to one another in this video?
- How can you color your world with kindness?
- Give children card-stock copies of Resource Page 1 and watercolor paints. Show them how to wet the world with a paintbrush and water. Starting with one part of the world, tell the children to add one color of paint, just dabbing it onto the wet paper. Watch how the paint spreads. Have the children add another color of paint next to the first one. Wait to see how the colors blend. Have them keep adding colors as they wish to color their world.
- Being a Good Neighbor
  - Watch the YouTube video “Wonder (2017 Movie) Official Trailer” ([bit.ly/WonderMovieClip](https://bit.ly/WonderMovieClip), 2:10). Wonder together:
    - Who is being a good neighbor? How?
    - To whom can you be a good neighbor in your school?
    - What things can you do to be a good neighbor to them?
- Intentional Acts of Kindness
  - Tell the children that sometimes people talk about “random acts of kindness,” little things people do for other people as a nice surprise, such as paying for their drink in the drive-thru line or taking the trash can up to the garage after garbage collection. Wonder together if the man who was from Samaria performed a *random* act or an *intentional* act of kindness. Suggest that the act he performed was probably not random but that he probably did good deeds of kindness for his fellow humans more than this one time. Kindness was probably a part of who he was as a person. It was intentional because he chose to be kind.
  - Hand out Resource Page 2 and ask the children to consider which acts they do as intentional acts of kindness already. Invite the children to decorate their page, adding two more acts at the bottom that they would like to do. Encourage them to take this paper home, place it where they will see it regularly, and work on performing intentional acts of kindness.



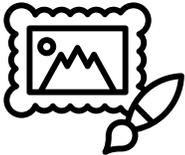
## Intentional Acts of Kindness



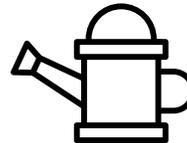
Recycle  
trash.



Sweep the  
kitchen floor.



Draw a  
picture.



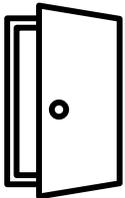
Water the  
plants.



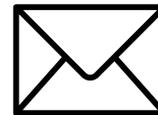
Give water  
to someone  
who is thirsty.



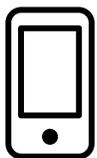
Donate  
toys.



Open the door  
for a stranger.



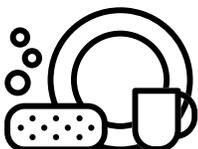
Send a  
handwritten  
letter.



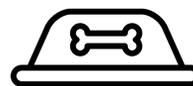
Call a  
grandparent.



Smile at a  
stranger.



Offer to  
wash dishes.



Offer to  
feed a pet.

--	--

🌱 **Goal:** To explore how God creates abundance from something small.

### Connecting with the Biblical Text

This story focuses on two parables, as recorded by Matthew, in which Jesus used examples from the everyday lives of people to connect with the kingdom of heaven. In three verses, Jesus uses images of a small mustard seed and yeast hidden in sixty pounds of flour to teach that something big can come from something small. Why do you think Jesus told these parables? What do they have to do with what the realm of God looks like? In both parables there is action—planting the seed and adding water to the yeast and the flour. Then there is waiting and watching for growth.

The mustard seed in this parable grows so large after being planted that birds can nest in its branches. It's tempting to resist the analogy, since we know mustard seeds don't grow into huge trees. But stay with it and, again, imagine why Jesus would use this image from nature. Is Jesus inviting us to think about the potential of something that is as small as a mustard seed? Or perhaps using our imagination in general to see what more could be?

Yeast is often mixed with water and then added to flour to make it grow. Imagine what sixty pounds of flour with yeast added would look like! "Ginormous," as they say, the biggest loaf of bread or the largest number of rolls, enough to feed a very large group of people. What if this parable challenges us to think about abundant sharing and generosity of spirit? What if one person's kind and generous act grows as others get involved?

For additional background reading visit [bit.ly/MustardAndYeastCommentary](https://bit.ly/MustardAndYeastCommentary) or read the chapter on this parable in *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* by Amy-Jill Levine (Harper One, 2014).

### Connecting with the World

- 🌱 At communion, we see bread broken and eat it, and in the breaking and sharing of bread, we remember Jesus. So what if every communion Sunday, you baked a loaf of bread and took it to someone who needed bread and a conversation?
- 🌱 Does your church shelter homeless guests at any point in the year? If you host a meal, is it served to them or enjoyed with them by members of the congregation? Can children and youth be involved in making care bags of items homeless guests might need, such as toiletries; gum; mints; art supplies; or new hats, scarves, and socks?

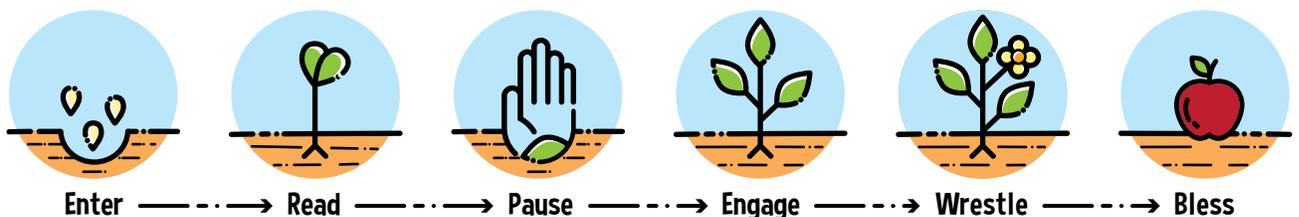
### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Children are very aware of their small size. They love to have their height marked on the door frame each year and to look at how much they have grown. When we help our children grow in their spiritual lives, we are actively helping them to be engaged with age-appropriate activities of sharing and helping others. Baking cookies with a child to take to someone is messier and takes a bit longer than doing it yourself. But children learn about God's world and their role in it by participating in caring acts.

### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

We can look at the world through lenses of either scarcity or abundance. People of deep faith believe that, as at the Lord's Table, there is always enough: enough bread to share, enough of the cup to drink. Scarcity invites hoarding, fear, and borders. Looking at the world and the realm of God that Jesus envisions with yeast and mustard seeds reminds us that there is always enough, and more if we share, if we imagine, if . . .

*God, in your world there is always enough to share. Thank you. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Depending on your choices, you will need:

- ✦ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✦ Floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs
- ✦ Bible
- ✦ Battery-operated candle
- ✦ Parable sketchbooks (see “The Sower” session)
- ✦ Drawing supplies, such as pencils, pens, crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ✦ Experiment supplies: 16 oz. plastic bottle, large tub or tray, funnel (optional), ½ cup hydrogen peroxide (household strength—3 percent, or pharmacy strength—6 percent, for a bigger reaction), dish soap, food coloring (optional), small cup, 3 tablespoons warm water, 1 tablespoon dry yeast
- ✦ Materials to make a large mural of a tree with leaves
- ✦ Mustard seeds (usually available in the spice aisle of your local grocery store)
- ✦ *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Amy-Jill Levine & Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Flyaway Books, 2018)
- ✦ Internet-connected device

## Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, Matthew 13:31–33. As you read, make notes of questions it raises for you. Then read “Something Big from Something Small” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 224).

Engage with the passage:

- ✦ When and where have you witnessed transformation occurring in your life or around you?
- ✦ Who might benefit from the mustard seed growing so large? Who might benefit from the yeast transforming the sixty pounds of flour into so much bread?
- ✦ What is your experience with scarcity? What is your experience with abundance?
- ✦ How do those experiences shape your reaction to this parable?

As you prepare to lead this session, pray for the seeds being planted in the children you lead. May God's spirit enliven your imagination—that from their small lives can come great growth and big blessings.

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Any time you include an experiment in your session, be sure to test it out ahead of time to prevent mishaps or disappointing results, or to make adaptations as needed.

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As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs in a circle.



### Enter into sacred space together.

Encourage the children to gather in the seating area. Turn on the candle.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, author of life, /  
thank you for your words of life. /  
May your stories live in us /  
and through us. /  
Amen. /

Distribute the children's parable sketchbooks. Have extra sketchbooks available for any children who do not yet have one. Each session the children will have an opportunity to write, sketch, and draw in them as a way of engaging with the parables. At the end of the unit, they will be able to take home their sketchbooks. Invite everyone to use the drawing supplies for their sketchbooks throughout the session. Encourage the children to begin a new entry for today's parable.

Explain that parables are stories Jesus told to teach people. Introduce the title of today's parable as “Something Big from Something Small,” and encourage everyone to consider what Jesus is teaching us today through this story.



### Read a story of God's people.

Open the Bible to Matthew 13 and place it next to the candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* where everyone can see. Explain that today's parable comes from the New Testament book of Matthew.

## Leading

Invite the children to listen to today's parable read from "Something Big from Something Small" (p. 224).



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to enjoy a few moments of silence as they draw quietly in their sketchbooks. Encourage them to draw something small that could grow into something big, either from the parable or their own idea.



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Wonder together:

- ✎ What do we know about the mustard seed? About the yeast?
- ✎ What is being transformed in these parables?
- ✎ Who or what can benefit from this transformation?

#### ○ Yeast Experiment

- ✎ Help the children further understand Jesus' metaphors by performing a science experiment with yeast. Show the children the supplies for the experiment. Invite the children to help set up the experiment using the following instructions:
  - Place the plastic bottle inside the large tub or tray (to catch the spillover).
  - Carefully pour a half cup of hydrogen peroxide into the bottle (using a funnel, if you have one). Add a large squeeze of dish soap and, if desired, a few drops of food coloring. Swirl to mix.
  - In a small cup, add the warm water to the dry yeast. Stir to mix.
  - Carefully pour the yeast mixture into the plastic bottle and take a few steps back. The reaction should begin immediately.

**Set materials aside, out of reach of the children, to be cleaned up at the end of the session.**

- ✎ Engage the children in conversation about the experiment and the parable using the following questions:
  - How did the yeast mixture affect the peroxide?

- Do you think we could have created so much foam without the yeast?
- How is this experiment like or unlike the parable of the yeast?
- Why do you think Jesus compares the realm of heaven to yeast?



### Wrestle with our place in God's story.

When teaching people, Jesus used familiar items and experiences in his parables. The first audience that heard Jesus' parables were familiar with planting mustard seeds and baking with yeast. Wonder together what Jesus would say if he were to tell a story today.

- ✎ What objects could Jesus use to talk to your friends about something big coming from something small?
- ✎ What did you learn about the realm of heaven from today's Bible story?
- ✎ How can you be a part of making something big out of something small?
- ✎ How can you help God's love grow huge?

Choose one or both options:

#### ○ Sketchbooks

- ✎ Invite the children to draw the "something big" that the something small they drew in their sketchbooks became. Have the children share their drawings as they wish. Wonder together how a parable might be told using the objects from their drawings, if they chose something other than the mustard seed or yeast.

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Older children may enjoy writing an entry from the point of view of someone in the parable, such as the baker, the mustard seed, or a bird that nests in the mustard tree. Ask them to consider ways in which they see themselves in the character they choose.

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#### ○ Community Tree

- ✎ Make a large mural of a tree with leaves. Consider making the tree in such a way that it can be displayed in a community space so that others may add leaves as well. Invite the children to cut out leaf shapes from construction paper and fill in their leaves with words or pictures that represent them. Have them glue or tape their leaves on the branches.

## Leading

- ✦ Encourage the children to make extra leaves for others to add to the tree if you are placing it in a community space. Provide crayons, markers, and tape or glue sticks. Suggest that some children make a sign inviting people to add a leaf with words or pictures that describe them. Then they can post these on the tree to show how they are part of God's big kingdom. Brainstorm ideas for a title, such as "God's Kingdom Grows with You!" or "Like the Mustard Seed, Something Big Grows from Something Small."
- ✦ Engage in conversation using the following questions:
  - What commonalities do you see among our leaves? Differences?
  - What can we do together that we wouldn't be able to do on our own?
  - What is "something small" you can contribute to the group to help make us grow?



### Bless one another with God's grace.

Close with the following blessing from Ephesians 3:17–18 (CEB), inviting the children to repeat your words and motions as you say each line:

I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through  
faith. (*place hands over heart*) /  
As a result of having strong roots (*point to the  
ground*) /  
in love, (*create heart shape using two hands*) /  
I ask that you'll have the power to grasp (*grasp  
hands together*) /  
love's width and length, (*stretch out arms to the  
sides*) /  
height and depth, (*reach up and then reach low*) /  
together with all believers. (*everyone hold hands  
in a circle*) /  
Amen. (*drop hands*) /

Turn off the candle. Ask children to leave their sketchbooks to use in the next session. Assure the children that you will keep their sketchbooks safe.



### Grow with more.

- Mustard Seeds
    - ✦ Hand out mustard seeds to the children. Ask them to hold one. Explore the seeds together:
    - ✦ Engage the senses.
      - What does it look like?
      - What does it feel like?
      - What does it smell like?
      - What does it sound like when you pour a bunch of seeds onto a flat surface?
      - What does it taste like?
    - ✦ Why do you think Jesus would talk about birds finding shelter from something that began so small?
    - ✦ How are you like a mustard seed?
  - Mustard Seed Storybook
    - ✦ Before reading the children's book *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, read "A Note to Parents and Teachers" at the back of the book.
    - ✦ Read the book with the children. After you are finished, consider asking some of the questions provided in the note section.
    - ✦ Invite the children to wonder about examples of different things that might be "but isn't yet."
- 
- Invite volunteers to take turns reading pages of the book aloud to the group.
- 
- Singing and Moving
    - ✦ Watch the YouTube video "The Smallest Seed—The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Acoustic Bible Song, Two by 2" ([bit.ly/TheSmallestSeed](https://bit.ly/TheSmallestSeed), 3:09). Invite the children to sing along as the words become familiar. Play it again and have the children create motions to go along with the song.

You may want to change the words *man's hand* to *person's hand* in the first line of the song to be more inclusive.

✦ **Goal:** To examine what is most important in life.

## Connecting with the Biblical Text

Jesus uses these parables to help hearers understand what he wants the world to look like. Traditional interpretations of this parable have focused on allegorical meanings, typically understanding Jesus or the church to be the pearl. But there is another way to wrestle with the parable and to explore why you think Jesus told it. On the surface, it's a simple parable: a merchant looks for fine pearls, and when he finds the best one, he sells everything so that he can own it. Does the realm of God look like what we each seek? For the merchant, it was the most beautiful pearl. It changed his life. He sold everything to get it. What do you think happened to him after he got the pearl? What do you seek, and what do you want most?

## Connecting with the World

- ✦ Sometimes you just need to pause, catch a breath, and take a break from the messages society throws at you. If you do, consider reading or listening to a podcast from the On Being Project. Visit [www.onbeing.org](http://www.onbeing.org).
- ✦ Consider visiting a worshipping community outside of your tradition. Experience the world as these worshipers see it, as they engage biblical text or sacred Scripture.

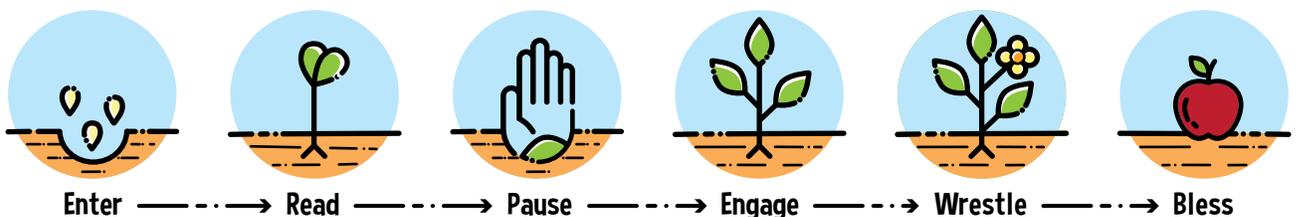
## Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Children learn early about being consumers. They watch, they listen, they know what is marketed to them—the toys or games they must have, the newest athletic shoes. And they watch us, observing what our “pearls” are, those things we most want. One of the best spiritual gifts we can give our children is the ability to pause to think about the things we most want and to consider them in light of how God wants us to live in the world as neighbors with others.

## Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

For some people, what is of ultimate value is the biggest house or the newest car. For others, it's shelter from the weather and food to eat. What we most want is relative to the spaces we inhabit (literally and metaphorically). What is the pearl you most want? What does it reveal about you? What is enough? What is too little? In terms of your spiritual life, what is the pearl you seek? What would you really like to be able to do to feed your life of faith? Is it a life of prayer? Is it time for listening for God? Is it time to wrestle with biblical texts? Is it time to listen to a neighbor? What is it that you seek? How are you changed in the seeking?

*God, as I pause to breathe, to notice your world, and to consider my life, point me to the things this day that you value, those things that you hold dear. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Depending on your choices, you will need:

- ✦ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✦ Bible
- ✦ Floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs
- ✦ Battery-operated candle
- ✦ Parable sketchbooks (see “The Sower” session)
- ✦ Drawing supplies, such as pencils, pens, crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ✦ Gold box or treasure chest
- ✦ Objects for a treasure hunt, such as stickers, individually wrapped candies, new pennies, new pencils, and such
- ✦ Parachute or old sheet
- ✦ Small balls, at least six
- ✦ Gold star stickers
- ✦ Paper plates
- ✦ Clear glass jar, at least pint size, for each child
- ✦ Pea gravel—enough to fill about half of each jar
- ✦ Pebbles in various sizes, not bigger than a quarter—enough to fill about a third of each jar
- ✦ Ping-pong balls, one for each child
- ✦ Permanent markers
- ✦ Smartphone or tablet for filming

## Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, Matthew 13:45–46. As you read, make notes of questions it raises for you. Then read “The Pearl” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 228).

Engaging with the passage:

- ✦ Many English translations begin verse 45 with the word *again*. Read the previous verse in your Bible. How is verse 44 similar to and different from this parable?
- ✦ What are the merchant's actions in this parable?
- ✦ What items do you imagine the merchant sold to afford the precious pearl?
- ✦ Were you surprised by the actions of the merchant? Why or why not?
- ✦ Just as the merchant was a pearl aficionado, is there something you've found yourself continuously seeking throughout your life? In what ways can this intentional seeking be a spiritual practice in your life?

Watch the YouTube video “What Does Your Bucket List Say about You?” ([bit.ly/BucketListQuestion](https://bit.ly/BucketListQuestion), 4:34). After the video, review and answer the questions raised in the “Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults” section of this session (p. 23).

Gather objects for the treasure hunt, having several items for each child to find. Place a gold star sticker on the items so that the children know these are the treasures. Hide the objects around the room before the children enter.

Cut a hole in the center of the old sheet just slightly bigger than ping-pong balls or tennis balls, depending on which you have. Mark one ball with marker or colored tape to be the “pearl.”

As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs in a circle.



**Enter into sacred space together.**

Encourage the children to gather in the seating area. Turn on the candle.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, author of life, /  
 thank you for your words of life. /  
 May your stories live in us /  
 and through us. /  
 Amen. /

Distribute the children's parable sketchbooks. Have extra sketchbooks available for any children who do not yet have one. Each session the children will have an opportunity to write, sketch, and draw in them as a way of engaging with the parables. At the end of the unit, they will be able to take home their sketchbooks. Invite everyone to use the drawing supplies for their sketchbooks throughout the session. Encourage the children to begin a new entry for today's parable.

Explain that parables are stories Jesus told to teach people. Introduce the title of today's parable as “The Pearl” and encourage everyone to consider what Jesus is teaching us today through this story.

## Leading



### Read a story of God's people.

Open the Bible to Matthew 13 and place it next to the candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* where everyone can see. Explain that today's parable comes from the New Testament book of Matthew. Invite the children to listen to today's parable. Read the first two paragraphs in "The Pearl" (p. 228). Have a conversation using the following prompts:

- Who has seen a pearl?
- What do you know about where pearls come from or how they are made?

Read the rest of the story.



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to have a few moments of silence as they draw quietly in their sketchbooks. Encourage them to imagine and draw something the merchant would have given up for that one special pearl.



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Wonder together:

- How do you think the merchant felt when he saw the pearl?
- How do you think the merchant felt after he sold everything and bought the pearl?
- Why do you think Jesus told this parable?
- What questions does this parable raise for you?

#### ○ Treasure Hunt

- Tell the children they are going on a treasure hunt in your room. Show the children the treasure box. Invite everyone to explore the room and place any treasure they find in the treasure chest. Don't mention the gold star stickers yet. If children find objects that you did not intend to be "treasures," engage them in a discussion about why they think it could be a treasure. You may welcome children to place those objects in the treasure chest as well. If some treasures are still missing, give clues about where they might be found. Telling the children about the gold star stickers may help them find the rest of the items.
- When all the treasures have been found, have a discussion using the following prompts:

- How does it feel to search for something?
  - How does it feel to find something?
  - What is your treasure?
- Divide up the treasure so that everyone has some to enjoy.



### Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Read Matthew 6:19–21:

"Stop collecting treasures for your own benefit on earth, where moth and rust eat them and where thieves break in and steal them. Instead, collect treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust don't eat them and where thieves don't break in and steal them. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (CEB)

Tell the children that Jesus said these words about treasure at another time. Wonder together what it means to collect treasures for heaven.

Choose one or both options:

#### ○ Sketchbooks

- Wonder together about the following questions. Then encourage the children to write or draw their response to one of the questions in their sketchbook.
  - What do you want most in the world? What is your most beautiful pearl?
  - How would it feel to give up everything else to have the thing you want most?
  - Do you think the merchant made a good decision? Why or why not?

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Older children may enjoy writing an entry from the point of view of someone in the parable, such as the merchant, the person who sold the pearl to the merchant, or the pearl itself. Ask the children to consider what ways they see themselves in the character.

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- Invite the children to share their work with the rest of the group.

#### ○ The Most Important Thing

- Give each child a clear jar and some pea gravel on a paper plate. Suggest that the jar is a person's life and that the pea gravel are all the little things that a person does, has, or thinks about. Ask the

children what might be some things that the pea gravel could be. These may vary from person to person. Some things could be very minor for one and more significant for another. Let children wrestle with that thought as they talk about the pea gravel and then the pebbles. Have them put the pea gravel in their jars.

- ✦ Then give each child some pebbles to put in their jars, but not enough to fill them. Explain that the pebbles represent the more important things in life. Invite the children to name what some of these might be. If the pebbles are big enough, have the children write on the pebble with a permanent marker. Assist with writing as needed.
- ✦ Give each child a ping-pong ball and suggest that it is their pearl—the most important thing in their life that they would give up everything else for. Wonder what this might be. Again, it may vary between children. Allow children to express their greatest desires without judgment. Suggest that Jesus' parable may be telling us that God's kingdom is the pearl, or at least was for the merchant. Wonder together what God's kingdom is like. Invite the children to write some of these ideas on their ping pong ball.
- ✦ Then wonder how this precious pearl can fit into a jar that is so full of other things, especially a lot of little, less important things! See what the children suggest. Offer that they could take everything out of their jars and start with the most important thing—the pearl, then add the things that are next in importance, and finally add in whatever else fits.



### Bless one another with God's grace.

While holding the candle in your hands, share a blessing with each child, encouraging them to keep their eyes open as they receive the blessing. Look the children in their eyes as you bless them:

May the light of Christ's words inspire you.  
 May the light of Christ's love shine in you.  
 May you bring the light of Christ with you,  
 wherever you go.  
 Amen.

Turn off the candle. Remind the children to leave their sketchbooks.



### Grow with more.

- Acting It Out
  - ✦ Have the group work together or in small groups to create a short skit. Depending on the time and number of children in your session, consider one or more of these options:
    - Contemporary style: If Jesus were to tell this parable today, what comparison might he use? Act out this modern-day parable.
    - Poetry slam/hip-hop style: If Jesus were a spoken-word artist, what might this parable sound like?
    - Mime style: Without using words, perform the parable using body motions and music.
    - Or consider another option of your own idea.
  - ✦ Lead a discussion based on the skit(s) to engage the children further with the parable.
    - How did you come up with your idea for your skit?
    - What did this skit tell you about this parable that you might not have thought of before?

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Consider filming the skit(s) so that the children may watch them. Invite older children to direct and/or film.

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- Finding the Pearl
  - ✦ Gather the children, evenly spaced, around a parachute or old bed sheet with a hole cut out of the center. Play a game to find the precious pearl. Show the children the balls you have, which are many pearls, and the one you have marked as the pearl of great price. Have the children stand or sit, holding on to the edges of the parachute or sheet. Drop the balls on it and work together to get the most special pearl out through the center hole without letting any of the other pearls out. Rejoice when you find the pearl of great price and play again.

### Connecting with the Biblical Text

When you read this parable, perhaps more than the others, it's important to remember that Jesus intended parables to be disturbing. Jesus told them to make us wrestle with and look at our lives, not to come up with quick and easy responses. This parable follows Jesus' teaching about the challenge of following him; the previous chapter ends with a comment about first and last. Jesus describes God's world, a place in which a landowner goes out to hire day laborers to work in his vineyard. He didn't just go once in the morning; he returned several times, hiring more workers and sending them to the vineyard. When it came time to pay them, they were asked to line up last hired to first hired. But then they were all paid equally for their work! Like the first workers hired, you may be saying, "It's not fair." Read on to hear the response of the landowner who believes it's his right to be generous. In God's economy, generosity, sharing, providing, and including are the rules for living. In God's economy, we don't earn God's love; it's a gift. And we are left to struggle with the bookends to this parable: "So those who are last will be first. And those who are first will be last" (Matt. 20:16 CEB).

For additional background on this text, go to [bit.ly/GenerousLandownerCommentary](https://bit.ly/GenerousLandownerCommentary).

### Connecting with the World

- Learn more about the Fair Food Program and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. They monitor humane working conditions and fair pay for farm workers. Visit [www.fairfoodprogram.org](http://www.fairfoodprogram.org).

✦ **Goal:** To choose God's generosity over grumbling.

- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ([www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org)) partners with Interfaith Worker Justice to ensure fair wages, health, and safety at work sites. Visit their website at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) to learn more about how your congregation can become a Worker Justice Congregation. Consider how this information can be shared with children.

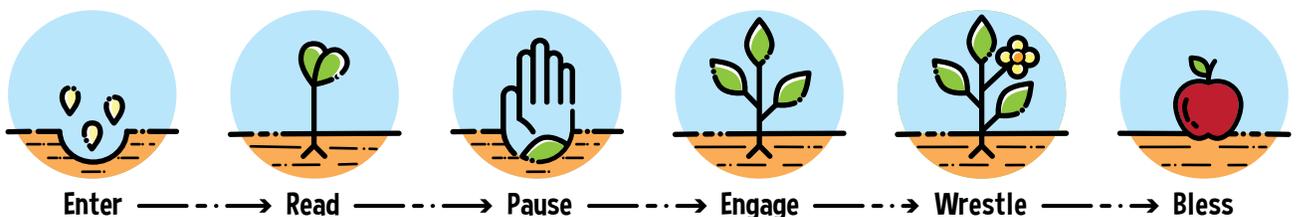
### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

As you teach or live with children this week, be attentive to the environment that surrounds you and the things children hear and see that might relate to this story about fairness and being generous. Invite children to tell you what they notice or have experienced as well. When did you experience people being treated equally? When did you see someone not being included? The spiritual lives of children are nurtured and supported when we help them make connections between their life experiences and the ways God wants us to live in the world with generous hearts.

### Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

We grow up learning about what's fair and are quickly immersed in a culture that teaches us about who deserves what. As Christians, we also sit with texts like this one where Jesus envisions a different economic order in God's world. In God's world, there is justice for all. In the moments you take for meditation and prayer, think about your own privilege, the things you maybe take for granted. How does the concept of God's generosity speak to the places in your life where you see a need for justice, mercy, and kindness?

*Generous God, you see everything we do. Help us to remember that life is not about earning your love but about receiving your love and sharing it with others. Amen.*



## Gathering Supplies

Depending on your choices, you will need:

- ✦ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✦ Bible
- ✦ Floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs
- ✦ Battery-operated candle
- ✦ Parable sketchbooks (see “The Sower” session)
- ✦ Drawing supplies, such as pencils, pens, crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ✦ Prizes that are easily divisible, such as stickers, candy, coins, and such
- ✦ Copies of Resource Page 1
- ✦ Small snacks, such as fish-shaped crackers or small round candy-coated chocolates or fruit chews
- ✦ Resource Page 2
- ✦ *Fair Is Fair* by Sonny Verla (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014)
- ✦ Internet-connected device

## Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, Matthew 20:1–16. As you read, make notes of questions it raises for you. Then read “The Generous Landowner” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 226).

Engaging with the passage:

- ✦ Who are the characters and what do they do in this parable? How do different characters relate to one another?
- ✦ Why might the landowner keep returning to the marketplace throughout the day?
- ✦ Why might the landowner refer to the first-hired workers as “friend” when responding to the workers’ grumbling? Note: the Greek word used here is *ἑταῖρος* (*hetairos*), which means “a companion, associate, fellow comrade, friend.” *Hetairos* also appears in Matthew two other times, at 22:12 and 26:50.
- ✦ In what ways do you connect personally with the first workers? The last workers?

Did you grow up with a “first shall be first” or “the early bird gets the worm” mentality? What is one of your earliest memories of being taught these lessons?

As you consider how this parable is used to describe the kingdom of heaven, how does it align (or not) with your current beliefs of power, fairness, and

justice? Who and what has shaped your beliefs in these areas? Reflecting on God’s love for all people, how have your recent thoughts and actions aligned (or not) with God’s generosity?

Are there any areas of your life that you need God’s help to shift your perspective from an economy of scarcity to an economy of generosity?

Pray that God’s generous love may fill you as you prepare to lead this session.

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Keep in mind that some children may not be familiar with the vocabulary and concepts used in this session: *parable*, *landowner*, *generosity*, and so forth. As you prepare to lead, anticipate making space and time for unfamiliar terms to be fleshed out during the session.

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As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, cushions, carpet squares, or beanbag chairs in a circle. Leave part of the room clear to allow room for the game below.



## Enter into sacred space together.

Lead the children in a game of Red Light, Green Light or any game that quickly identifies someone in “first place” and someone in “last place.”

- ✦ Before beginning the game, state the game’s rules clearly. Announce that there will be a special prize at the end of the game. Display the prize (such as a bag of candy or stickers).
- ✦ After the game, congratulate the winner and affirm how great they did.
- ✦ Then tell the children that it’s time to award the special prize. Hold the prize out and ask the children to line up in the order of who completed the game from first to last.
- ✦ Walk to the back of the line and announce what prize you are giving the last-place person (for example, two pieces of candy, two stickers, etc.). Give the next person standing in line the same prize. Repeat until all the children have their prizes.
- ✦ Discuss:
  - How does it feel to be first at something?
  - How does it feel to be last at something?
  - Do you think the prizes were distributed fairly? Why or why not?

## Leading

Invite the children to gather in the seating area. Turn on the candle.

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, author of life, /  
thank you for your words of life. /  
May your stories live in us /  
and through us. /  
Amen. /

Distribute the children's parable sketchbooks. Have extra sketchbooks available for any children who do not yet have one. Each session the children have had an opportunity to write, sketch, and draw in them as a way of engaging with the parables. At the end of today's session, they will be able to take home their sketchbooks. Invite everyone to use the drawing supplies for their sketchbooks throughout the session. Encourage the children to begin a new entry for today's parable.

Explain that parables are stories Jesus told to teach people. Introduce the title of today's parable as "The Generous Landowner," and encourage everyone to consider what Jesus is teaching us today through this story.



### Read a story of God's people.

Open the Bible to Matthew 20 and place it next to the candle and *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* where everyone can see. Explain that today's parable comes from the New Testament book of Matthew. Invite the children to listen to today's parable. Read "The Generous Landowner" (p. 226).



### Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to draw quietly in their sketchbooks as they ponder the story. Suggest that they could draw ten people or the numbers 1–10 and think about who was first and who was last.



### Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Wonder together:

- How does the landowner act toward and how might he feel about the first-hired workers? Why do you think that?

- How does the landowner act toward and how might he feel about the last-hired workers? Why do you think that?
- The landowner asks the first-hired workers, "Are you jealous because I am generous?" Why do you think these workers are focused on what others earned instead of their own earnings?
- What surprised you in this story?
- If Jesus were here, what questions would you like to ask him about this parable?

### Consider each character's perspective.

- Hand out copies of Resource Page 1. Give each child a small handful of fish-shaped crackers or candy-coated chocolates or fruit chews to use as markers.
- Invite the children to choose one of the characters in the parable: landowner, a first-hired worker, a last-hired worker, or a manager. Encourage the children to think about how their particular character might feel throughout the story.
- Have the children help you retell the story. Help them by asking questions such as, "What happened first?" and "Then what happened?"
- Pause at each step of the story and invite the children to place their marker on the emoji(s) they think matches how their character is feeling at this point in the parable.

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Remind the children that it is possible for their characters—and for them!—to feel more than one feeling at the same time.

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Wonder together:

- Why might the person be feeling this way?
- Did your character's feelings change throughout the story? Why or why not?
- When have you felt like your character?



### Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Choose one or both options:

#### What Is Fair?

- Read *Fair Is Fair* by Sonny Verla or watch the YouTube video "Fair Is Fair Read Aloud" ([bit.ly/FairIsFair](https://bit.ly/FairIsFair), 4:43).
  - Reflect on this quote together: "And then she gave each one just enough food. And they

## Leading

didn't care how much it was or how much the others received because each one knew how much they were loved." Ask the children how it makes them feel. Wonder if there are situations they can think of in which everyone has enough or is cared for in the same way, not necessarily about food.

- ✦ God loves everyone and wants to make sure each person has enough. Wonder together:
  - What are some things that people need enough of? (*Help the children think beyond tangible items and things of value like justice or freedom.*)
  - What can we do to help God make sure everyone has enough?
  - How could this affect our attitudes and the choices we make?

### ○ Sketchbooks

- ✦ Wonder together about the following questions. Then encourage the children to write or draw their response to one of the questions in their sketchbook.
  - What can you be generous with?
  - Who are people in your life who demonstrate generosity?

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Older children may enjoy writing an entry from the point of view of someone in the parable, such as one of the workers, the landowner, or the manager who distributed the wages. Ask them to consider what ways they see themselves in the character?

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- ✦ Invite the children to share their work with the group. To recap the *Parables Jesus Told* unit, encourage each child to share their favorite journal entry from any of the sessions as well as their entry for today.

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When seeking responses from everyone in the group, avoid forcing children to share by giving each person the option to “pass” or to “come back later” when it's their turn to share.

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### Bless one another with God's grace.

Close with the following blessing from Ephesians 3:17–18 (CEB), inviting the children repeat your words and motions as you say each line:

I ask that Christ will live in your hearts through faith. (*place hands over heart*) /  
As a result of having strong roots (*point to the ground*) /  
in love, (*create heart shape using two hands*) /  
I ask that you'll have the power to grasp (*grasp hands together*) /  
love's width and length (*stretch out arms to the sides*) /  
height and depth, (*reach up and then reach low*) /  
together with all believers. (*everyone hold hands in a circle*) /  
Amen. (*drop hands*) /

Turn off the candle. Encourage the children to take their sketchbooks as they leave.



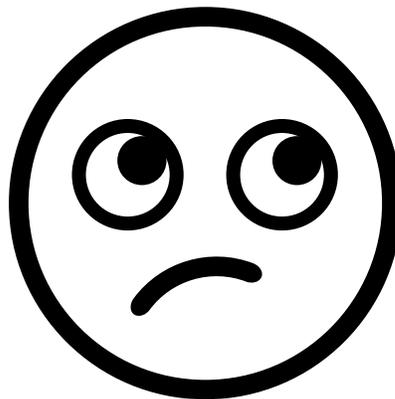
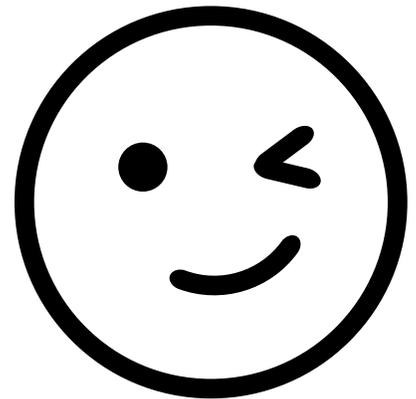
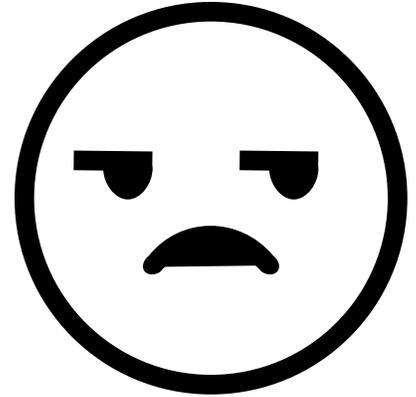
### Grow with more.

#### ○ Generosity List

- ✦ Invite the children to list or draw the things they can generously share (*money, toys, love, time, and so forth*). Encourage them to be specific.
- ✦ Talk together about how the children can make a plan with their families to share something on the list. Discuss options for different suggestions the children have made.

#### ○ At the Playground

- ✦ Form two groups of three or more children, or work together as one group. Hand out the scenes from Resource Page 2 and invite each group to create a short skit depicting their scene. After the skits have been performed, talk together about generosity. Suggest that sometimes generosity comes in the form of money, like in the case of the landowner paying everyone the same. Comment that there is also a generosity of spirit, such as how we treat one another. Ask the children who had generous spirits in the skits. Wonder together:
  - When have you been like Me First, Gimme Gimme, or That's Mine?
  - When you are like that, how does that make you feel in the moment? Later?
  - How do you think others feel?
  - When have you been like After You, You Have It, and It's Your Turn?
  - How do you think being like this shows you have a generous spirit?





Scene for three or more people:

One family had three children named **Me First**, **Gimme Gimme**, and **That's Mine**. At the playground, **Me First** shoved to the front of the line all the time. When they ate snacks, **Gimme Gimme** took two bags of chips, leaving less than enough for the others. **That's Mine** would hog the ball when playing basketball and would grab it and leave if they didn't like the way the play was going.

Scene for three or more people:

One family had kids named **After You**, **You Have It**, and **It's Your Turn**. **After You** let others go first. **You Have It** passed around their snack of cookies to the others, making sure everyone had some. **It's Your Turn** never hogged the ball when they played soccer and always looked for others who were open.

# A Story Bible Curriculum features

- sessions based on 148 stories from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- 35 units in 3, 4, or 5 sessions that cover large biblical stories, key people in the Bible, or biblical themes
- intergenerational activities for use at church or home
- unit overview that explains how these stories connect with one another and our faith
- helps for leaders to connect the biblical story with our world and the spiritual lives of children and adults
- a free downloadable at-home kit guide with instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation

**multiage**  
stillness seeking  
wonder filled  
curiosity driven

**relational**  
exploratory  
imaginative

**fun**  
intergenerational  
growth encouraging

**collaborative**  
compassionate  
community oriented

## *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum*