

A Good Shepherd Parable

The Sower

Adapted by:
Brenda J. Stobbe

**Illustrations by:
Jennifer Schoeneberg**

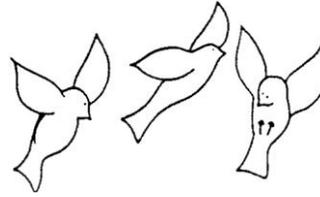
2nd Edition
"Good Shepherd, Inc. 1991, 1992
Good Shepherd, a registered trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

THE SOWER MATERIALS

- parable box containing:
 - brown felt rectangular underlay
 - 3 tan felt grain bags
 - laminated figure of a sower
 - laminated path
 - laminated rocky ground
 - laminated thorny ground
 - laminated good ground
 - 3 laminated birds



Sower



Birds



Path



Rocky Ground



Thorny Ground



Good Ground

rae SOWER ... MATmEw 13:1-9

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and go to the shelf and remove the parable box. Carry it back to the circle and sit down.

After speaking, allow at least 15 seconds of silence as you gently trace the outline of the parable box.

Rest your hands lightly on the box, touching it reverently.

Slowly shake your head and smile.

Nod your head confidently.

Raise your eyebrows, shake your head.

Remove the lid so you can reach inside.

Unfold the brown underlay. Smooth it slowly as you speak.

Lean forward as you begin your story.

WORDS

Watch very carefully where I go to get this story. Then if you choose to make this your work, today or another day, you will know where to find it.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to the story?

This is a parable box. I wonder if there is really a parable inside this box?

Parables are very precious.

This box looks a bit like a gift.

Parables are like gifts. We can't go buy one, or even rent one, like we do a movie. Parables already belong to us.

And like gifts, we don't always know what is inside by looking at the box.

We have to take the lid off. If we take the lid off our box, maybe we will discover a parable.

I wonder what this is to be? It's not green, like grass. It's not blue, like water. It's brown. I wonder?

Once there was a man who said amazing things and did wonderful things. And people began to follow him.

The man who said amazing things and did wonderful things told the people who followed him this story:

Center the sower at the left end of the underlay.

Lay the path to the right of the sower. Walk the sower to the right of the path. One at a time, take the birds from the box, have them touch the path, then place them on the upper part of the underlay.

Lay the rocky ground to the right of the sower. Move the sower to the right of the rocky ground. Make a circle above your head with an open palm. Then let your hand drop, as if something is wilting.

Lay the thorny ground to the right of the sower. Move the sower to the right of the thorny ground. Then reach in front of you with both hands as if grabbing something and make a twisting motion.

Lay the good ground to the right of the sower. Move the sower to the right of the good ground. Then place the three grain bags, from smallest to largest, toward the bottom of the underlay, under the good soil.

Gently touch the underlay and look around the circle as you speak.

Once a sower went out to sow.

And as he planted, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and ate them.

Other seeds fell on rocky ground and they grew quickly, but when the sun came up they died because they had no roots.

Some of the seeds fell on thorny ground. There the thorns grew up and choked them.

But some of the seed fell on good ground. A lot of grain was harvested there, thirty, sixty or a hundred fold.

"All of you," said the man who said amazing things and did wonderful things, "should listen to these words."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder if the birds liked the seed they ate?

I wonder how heavy the bags of grain from the good soil were?

I wonder if the sower had a party when the good soil gave so much grain?

Carefully return the grain bags and the laminated pieces to the parable box, beginning with the last piece you put out and working backwards to the first.

Smooth the underlay with one or both hands. Beginning at either side, fold the underlay to the other side.

Repeat that side to side fold.

Carefully place the top edge against the bottom edge and place it in the box.

After speaking, stand up and carefully carry the parable box back to the shelf. Then return to the circle.

Go around the circle allowing each child their choice. Remind them of smocks for painting.

Watch carefully how I put this away so you will know how to do it if you make this your work today or another day.

This underlay must be folded to fit in our parable box. If we take this edge and put it by this edge, we have made another straight edge.

Let's do that one more time.

Now, if we put this top part by the bottom part, it should be ready. There it fits.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

What will you choose for your work today? We have and Maybe there is something special from this story that you would like to paint or draw. Let's go around now and choose our work.

THE SOWER TEACHER HELPS

With the Western mind we all bring to the scriptures we have a difficult time understanding this Palestinian farmer from the parable of the Sower. Why on earth would anyone throw seed on the hard path, the rocky ground, or among the thorns? The American understanding of farming in us reacts unbelievably. But in Jesus' day the seed was thrown randomly and then the entire field was plowed under. The hard path, the thorns, the rocks that lay hidden under the soil and the good ground would all receive the same treatment from the sharp plowshare.

In this parable we have a good example of how the early church changed the emphasis of certain words of Jesus to be more appropriate to their needs. The original point of this parable is that in spite of all the problems with the planting, the harvest is still plentiful. One should not despair because of the normal hindrances to a 100% return, rather rejoice in that which is plentiful in spite of all circumstances. However, the people of the early church tended to interpret this soil as different kinds of "hearers" of the word of God. C. H. Dodd suggests that we leave out the interpretation of this parable found in Matthew 13: 18-23. Those who

taught the words of Jesus after his death most likely added this interpretation to the original story of Jesus. (The Parables of the Kingdom, C. H. Dodd, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1961, p.145)

It will be a challenge to teach this parable faithfully to the children because most of us grew up knowing the interpretation of the parable as well as the parable itself. Many of us can remember being asked which kind of soil we wanted to be. But for our Good Shepherd room the emphasis will be on the joyful harvest that comes at the end. The work of the sower will not be in vain. We will even smile at the thought of the birds liking the seed they ate from the path.

The wondering questions are designed to rejoice in the harvest and even the gift of food for the hungry birds of God's creation. These questions will help establish the emphasis of the parable on the possibilities for harvest in spite of problems with planting.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

In this story the sower did what he was supposed to do, he planted the seeds. Whose responsibility was it to make the seed grow? Could the sower have done any more than he did? If so, what?

All Christians have difficult times in their lives. At that time, what kind of soil do you most easily slip into?

When do you get the best harvest? What have you put into the soil of your life to make the harvest greater? Have you increased your Bible study or have you thought about Jesus as you cared for others?