



9 Jesus Teaches in Parables

Key Theme

- Jesus teaches His disciples.

Key Passages

- Matthew 13:3–11, 13:18–23; Luke 15:4–7

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why Jesus taught in parables.
- Describe who the “lost sheep” was in Jesus’s parable.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet using the letter clues. If time allows, have them recite the verse to a partner or to the class using the letter clues.



Activity 1: Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes

Students will fill out the Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

Jesus taught through parables in order to separate the people who loved Him and wanted the truth from the people who really didn't care about Him or what He had to say. Today you will talk about two of Jesus's parables—the parable of the sower and the parable of the good shepherd.



Activity 2: Four in a Row

Students will review the lesson by playing a game of “Four in a Row.”

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- ☐ Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



JESUS TEACHES IN PARABLES CLASS NOTES

- ☐ Print one Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- ☐ Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets
- ☐ Year 3, Quarter 1, Lesson 5 Lesson Theme Poster



FOUR IN A ROW

- ☐ Print one Four in a Row Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- ☐ Prepare a 16-section square grid on the floor with masking tape.
- ☐ Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from red and black construction paper. Or use different colored paper plates.
- ☐ Bring in one beanbag, rolled sock, or other appropriate item to toss for each team.

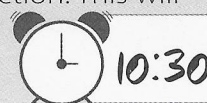
- ☐ Four in a Row Teacher Guide
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ 8 red and 8 black construction paper circles to mark four in a row
- ☐ Beanbag, rolled sock, or other appropriate item



Memory Verse

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages along with this background.

One of the hallmarks of the teaching of Jesus was His use of parables. A parable is a fable or allegory to illustrate a truth or lesson. It is a story or narrative drawn from nature or human circumstances from which spiritual lessons can be made by comparison. Or to put it simply, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Parables help the listener to discover the deeper meaning and underlying truth of the reality being portrayed.

Depending on which ones you include, between 35 and 45 different parables of Jesus are recorded in the Gospels. Some of these were longer stories, including such popular ones as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30). Other parables of Jesus were short, pithy statements, such as, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” (Matthew 13:33).

But why did Jesus teach in parables? There are two reasons given in the Bible: to conceal and to reveal.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus provided an answer when asked about His use of parables:

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Matthew 13:10–16)

Jesus said that He taught in parables to conceal the truth from certain people, and to reveal it to others. By resorting to parables, Jesus effectively separated the truth-seekers from the mere curious. Those seeking the truth would say, “Explain to us the parable . . .” (Matthew 13:36), while the merely curious could easily be dismissed. They would not ask and were unwilling to receive Jesus’s message. The truths were heard by unbelievers, but the meaning was hidden because they did not want to hear.

In this way, Jesus’s use of parables was a form of divine judgment. As Jesus explained in the passage above, “For whoever has [a good heart, listening ears], to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have [a good heart, listening ears], even what he has will be taken away from him” (Matthew 13:12). Then Jesus quoted from Isaiah 6:9–10 and explained that because the people’s hearts had become dull and because they had closed their ears and eyes, God was going to speak to them in a way that they would not understand. So Jesus taught them in parables. In a way only God could contrive, the very things which were useful to reveal and make clear the truths about the kingdom to those willing to hear were also used to conceal truths about the kingdom from those who would not believe.

About the middle of His ministry, after He had begun to receive much opposition from the religious leaders and had been accused of blasphemy, Jesus started teaching the crowds almost exclusively in parables. Mark tells us that He did not speak to them without a parable, and that when He was alone with His disciples, He would explain the meaning of His teachings (Mark 4:33–34). However, those who had persisted in rejecting His message were left in their spiritual blindness. Although they heard the truths of the kingdom of God, they could not understand them; they were unwilling to hear. The Apostle Paul later described those blinded to the truth as “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). They would never hear or understand the words of Jesus (Matthew 13:13). But His disciples (except for Judas Iscariot) accepted His truth and

so were given more to know, understand, and believe (Matthew 13:12).

The parables of Jesus contain great volumes of truth in very few words. The images Christ presents through them are not easily forgotten. And He has promised that for those with eyes to see and ears to hear His truths will be revealed (Matthew 13:16).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND¹

When we read parables, we must be careful how we interpret their meaning. Sometimes, as in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus Himself provides the explanation (Matthew 13:18–22). However, most of the time, the hearers (and us) are left to discern the meaning.

A parable is really an extended metaphor, or an allegory. In fact, the Bible often uses allegory as a literary device. In the Old Testament God speaks of His people Israel using images of a vineyard (Isaiah 5:6–7) and a flock of sheep (Ezekiel 34). Jesus refers to Himself as a shepherd (John 10:11) and a vine (John 15:1–6). And Paul takes a historical event from the Old Testament (Hagar and Sarah) and uses it as an allegory for law and grace (Galatians 4:21–31). So while the Bible uses allegories to teach truth, we must not confuse the literary device of allegory with the hermeneutic of allegorizing Scripture; the two are not the same.

Soon after the completion of the New Testament, early Christians began interpreting the text allegorically. They proposed many symbolic meanings that neither Jesus nor the biblical authors ever intended.

It wasn't until the time of the Reformation in the 1500s that a return to a more literal, historical-grammatical method of interpretation began to take hold. Luther, Calvin, and some others criticized the excesses of allegorical interpretation, but it still remained popular among many Christian scholars and writers into the 19th century.

More recently, in the 20th and 21st centuries, there has been an increased interest in understanding the parables as the original hearers would have understood them. Interpreters started focusing on the main point of the parables—God's kingdom coming through the reign of the Messiah.

Care must be taken when interpreting these parables. Here are a few basic principles to adapt while trying to understand the parables of Jesus and interpret them properly:

1. **Determine the main point of the parable.** Most parables have one main point, though they may have a couple sub points. To get to the main point, ask yourself a few questions:

Who are the main characters? What occurs at the end? What or who gets the most consideration in the parable? To whom is the parable directed? What is the context in which Jesus gave it?

2. **Recognize standard imagery used in the parables.** For example, God is often symbolized as a master, a father, a judge, or a king. A vineyard or a fig tree usually refers to Israel. The harvest refers to the judgment. An enemy is typically the devil.
3. **Note striking or unexpected details of the parable.** Jesus's parables are filled with striking details, unexpected twists, shocking statements, and surprise outcomes. When such attention-getting components occur, pay attention because an important point is being made.
4. **Do not press every detail for meaning.** The many details in a parable are usually given to make the story memorable and interesting. Typically there is one central figure (or two) and one main point. Attempting to interpret every individual detail will lead one to an allegorical reading.
5. **Pay attention to the literary and historical context of the parable.** The authors of the Gospels often clue us to the meaning of a parable by including information about why Jesus uttered that parable or by grouping together parables on similar topics.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, used many parables in His teaching. By some accounts, about one-third of all of Jesus's words in the Gospels are parables. We are called to be diligent to handle His Word carefully as we read it, interpret it, and teach it to others.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.

1. This material was adapted from Robert L. Plummer, "Parables in the Gospels: History of Interpretation and Hermeneutical Guidelines," *SBJT* 13.3 (2009): 4–11.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Good Shepherd, you have scattered your seeds of truth upon my heart; I praise you. Thank you for the truth of your Word. Keep my heart soft, so I will produce good fruit. And Lord, please prepare the hearts of my students so they will hear your truth, repent of their sins, trust you, and bear good fruit for your kingdom.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes

MATERIALS

- ☐ Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Jesus Teaches in Parables Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print one class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We'll do these together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will talk about two of Jesus's parables and find out why Jesus taught using parables.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. Jesus defended God's honor while He was on earth. In Lesson 8 we talked about a couple of ways He did that.

- ? What was happening in the Temple during the Jewish holiday of Passover?
Animals were being sold. Money was being exchanged.

Yes. There was business going on in the Temple. And it was likely dishonest business where the money changers and sellers were overcharging and making a profit in God's house.

➤ Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson. Emphasize that Jesus ministered only 3 years, and He lived only about 35 years. Yet His life changed the world forever and brought eternal life to all who believe.

Parable: A fable or short story that uses everyday things to teach a lesson.

Matthew 13:3–10

And we read that God called the religious leaders, or the Pharisees, hypocrites! They were pretending to love God and be holy, but they were not sincere about it. They were being good when people watched, and they wanted everyone to see them. But their hearts were not right with God.

Refer to Quarter 1 Lesson 5 Lesson Theme Poster. Several weeks ago we looked at the life of Christ. One of the things we talked about was that He taught the disciples. Jesus had a very special way of teaching which He used quite a bit. That is, He taught in parables.

? Have you ever heard of a parable? *Yes/no.*

? What is a parable? *Allow discussion.*

A parable is a fable or short story that uses things in the world like nature, farming, food, animals, and other things to teach a lesson. A parable teaches a lesson that has a deeper, spiritual meaning.

You see, in spite of Jesus's miracles, His life, and what He taught, there were still many people who did not believe what He said. In fact, many people hated Him and were planning how to kill Him. This is what led Jesus to begin teaching in parables.

Let's read one of Jesus's parables now. This is about a "sower" who sowed seed. Another word for "sower" is farmer. Jesus often used farmers and nature in His parables. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 13:3–10. Let's read it.

Choose students to read the verses.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Let's answer some questions about this passage.

Observe the Text

? How did Jesus speak to the people? Look in Matthew 13:3. *In parables.*

? What was this parable about? *Matthew 13:3. A sower.*

? Do you remember what a sower is? *Allow discussion.*

A sower is a farmer who "sows" or plants seed. This is what this parable was about.

? The seed fell on four different types of ground. Who can tell me the first one Jesus mentioned? *Matthew 13:4. The wayside.*

? And what happened to that seed? *Matthew 13:4. The birds came and ate it.*

? Where was the second place the seed fell? *Matthew 13:5. Stony places.*

Yes. This seed fell on ground that had stones in it.

? What happened to that seed? *Matthew 13:5–6. It grew up quickly, but when the sun came up the plants died because there were no roots.*

That's right. The stony ground did not make for good soil to grow the plants—they had no roots. So when the hot sun came out, the plants died and withered away.

? What was the third place where the seed landed? In Matthew 13:7. *Matthew 13:7. Among thorns.*

? What happened to that seed? *Matthew 13:7. The thorns choked out the seed and plants.*

? And one more place Jesus mentioned—in Matthew 13:8? *The good ground.*

? And what happened to the seed that fell on the good ground? *It yielded a crop.*

So the seed that fell on good ground grew up and produced a crop.

? Jesus ends this parable in an odd way. Someone read Matthew 13:9 for us again. What did Jesus say? *Assign a reader. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

Hmmm. That is a funny way to end this parable or story. How many people listening to Jesus did NOT have ears? What did He mean? We'll find out in a minute.

? What did the disciples ask when Jesus finished telling this parable? *Matthew 13:10. Why do you speak in parables?*

That is a good question. What did Jesus say? Someone read Matthew 13:11 for the answer. *Assign a reader. Read Matthew 13:11.*

Matthew 13:11

? How did Jesus answer? Why did He speak in parables? It has to do with two different types of people. *Allow discussion.*

Jesus said He spoke in parables because He knew His disciples—His followers—would understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. These people were the people with “ears to hear.” They wanted to know more about Jesus and wanted to learn from Him. But those who were not His disciples, or His followers, would never understand these mysteries—these people “had ears, yet did not hear.”

Discover the Truth

The parables Jesus taught were stories about everyday things that would teach a lesson to those “who had ears to hear”—His followers. These parables taught deeper meanings—spiritual truths.

This parable was about the sower, or the farmer, and the seed. The disciples wanted to know why Jesus spoke in parables. And Jesus answered. Many had rejected Him and would never accept Him. But those who truly sought after God would get the meaning of the parable—the meaning Jesus was trying to give. Those who did not want to follow Jesus, would not ever understand the meaning of these stories. Through parables, Jesus separated the people who loved Him and wanted the truth from the people who really didn't care about Him, who He was, or why He had come. The people who loved Him wanted to know the meaning of the parables! The people

who really didn't care about Him didn't understand the parables and usually walked away from Him.

- ? Let's do a little review and start filling out the class notes. Will someone read #1 for us? What are the answers to that? *Assign a reader. Wayside, stony, thorns, good. Have students complete #1.*
- ? And how about #2? Why did Jesus teach in parables? What is one reason? *Assign a reader. Believed. Have students complete #2.*
- ? Number 3? What did the parables teach? *Assign a reader. Truth. Have students complete #3.*
- ? And number 4? Who would hear and understand Jesus's parables? *Assign a reader. Ears. Have students complete #4.*



READ THE WORD

Matthew 13:18–23

So, what was the spiritual truth Jesus was teaching in this parable? His followers asked Him to explain the parable of the sower to them. Let's read Jesus's explanation. Turn to Matthew 13:18–23. *Choose students to read the verses.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What was the seed in Jesus's parable? It stood for something. The answer is in Matthew 13:19. *Allow discussion.*

The seed was the Word of God—the truth Jesus was speaking! Now remember, the seed fell on several grounds. It fell on the wayside, on rocky soil, on thorny soil, and on good soil.
- ? What do you suppose the different soils stood for in Jesus's parable? *Allow discussion.*

The soils stood for people's hearts. Jesus knew that not all hearts were the same. And He first described the "seed" or "His Word" that fell on the "wayside." Remember, in the parable, the birds came and ate it right away.
- ? What did the birds stand for? *Matthew 13:19. The wicked one.*
- ? And who is the wicked one? *The devil. Satan.*
- ? What does the wicked one do to the Word of God in the hearts of some people? *Matthew 13:19. He snatches it away from their heart.*
- ? What is the next "heart" Jesus's parable spoke of? Remember, the different types of ground stood for the heart. *Matthew 13:20. The stony heart.*
- ? How did the stony heart react to Jesus's truth? *Matthew 13:20–21. Allow discussion.*

The stony heart hears the Word and receives it with joy. But it lasts only a short time. When hard things happen like suffering or trials, the Word is forgotten.

- ? What about the “thorny heart?” How was the Word (seed) received there?
Matthew 13:22. Allow discussion.

This person hears the Word, but the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches choke the Word. The “thorny heart” is a heart that loves the world and money more than Jesus and His Word.

- ? Someone read Matthew 13:23 again. *Choose a student to re-read the verse. Which ground is this? Good ground.*

- ? And what does the good ground stand for? *Matthew 13:23. He who hears the Word and understands it.*

That’s right. The good ground stands for the person with a heart that is ready to receive and understand the Word. He is one who “has ears to hear.” He hears the Word, understands it, and lives for God’s glory! Jesus said this person would bear much “fruit.” That fruit stands for the things done in his life that are done for God.

Discover the Truth

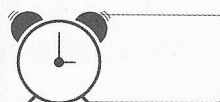
Do you see how the parables worked? Jesus told about common things that everyone understood. But a parable always had a deeper, spiritual meaning that not everyone could understand. Like Jesus had said, whoever had “ears to hear” would be interested in the meaning and would understand. In this parable, the seed was the Word of God. The ground stood for different types of hearts. The birds stood for the wicked one, or the devil. The fruit stood for the things done in the lives of believers that are done for God’s glory!

- ? Go back to your class notes. We will review a bit. How did Jesus explain the parable? Someone read #5 for us. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Word. Have students complete #5.*

- ? And what did the soil stand for? What is the answer to #6? *Assign a reader. Hearts. Have students complete #6.*

- ? We read about the birds that came and ate the seed off the wayside. What did the birds stand for? It is #7 on your class notes. *Assign a reader. Wicked. Have students complete #7.*

- ? Jesus said he who hears the Word and understands it would bear fruit. What is that fruit? Someone read #8 on the class notes. *Assign a reader. Glory. Have students complete #8.*



READ THE WORD

Jesus liked teaching in parables and told a lot of them. Let’s take a look at one more. In this parable Jesus spoke about sheep. Listen carefully to see if you can figure out what the sheep stood for.

Open your Bibles to Luke 15:4–7. Let’s read that. *Assign readers.*

Luke 15:4–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What do the sheep stand for in this parable? Any ideas? *Allow discussion.*
- ? Let's find out. This is about a shepherd. How many sheep did the shepherd have? *Luke 15:4. 100.*
- ? How many sheep did he lose? *Luke 15:4. One.*
- ? What did the man do when he realized he lost the one sheep? *Luke 15:4. He left the 99 sheep and went into the wilderness to find the one he had lost.*
- ? Did he find the lost sheep? *Matthew 15:5. Yes.*
- ? What did he do after he found it? *Luke 15:5. He laid it on his shoulders and rejoiced!*
He was very happy! He had 99 other sheep in his pasture. But he rejoiced that he found this one lost sheep!
- ? What did the man do when he got home with his one lost sheep? *Luke 15:6. He called his friends and neighbors together and said rejoice with me. I found my sheep which was lost!*
The shepherd was so excited that he had found his sheep. But remember, this has a deeper meaning. The sheep stands for something. And the Bible tells us. But you have to listen very carefully. Listen as I read Luke 15:7 for us again. *Read Luke 15:7 emphasizing "sinner who repents."*
- ? Who did that one sheep represent? *A sinner who repents.*
- ? Who do you think the shepherd was? *Allow discussion.*

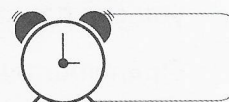
Discover the Truth

The shepherd represents Jesus Himself. Remember the man rejoiced because he found his one lost sheep. What Jesus was teaching was that Jesus, the good shepherd, will rejoice, too, when one sinner repents. In fact, the Bible says that there will be joy in heaven when that happens!

This parable has a spiritual meaning. The lost sheep stands for a sinner who is not following Jesus. The shepherd stands for Jesus, who came looking for that sinner. And Jesus explained what joy there is over every sinner who repents and trusts in Jesus.

- ? Let's review by completing our class notes. Will someone read #9 for us? What is the answer. *Assign a reader. Sheep. Have students complete #9.*
- ? And what about #10? Will someone read and answer that? *Assign a reader. Rejoiced. Have students complete #10.*
- ? And #11? Who will read it? *Assign a reader. Sinner. Have students complete #11.*
- ? Who was the shepherd in the parable? Someone read #12. *Assign a reader. Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Have students complete #12.*
- ? And what happens in heaven over one sinner who repents? *Assign a reader. Joy. Have students complete #13.*

➤ If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.





Four in a Row

MATERIALS

- ☐ Four in a Row Teacher Guide
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ Beanbag, rolled up sock, or other appropriate item
- ☐ Eight red and eight black construction paper circles (or different colored plates)

INSTRUCTIONS

Use masking tape to make a 16-section square on the floor. The square should be four sections wide by four sections high. Each section should be equal in size. Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from the red and black construction paper. Or use some other appropriate markers for the two teams.

Divide the students into two teams—red team and black team. Give each team eight paper circles—either red or black. Students will toss the beanbag to a square. They will answer a question. If correct, they can put a marker in that square. To win the game, teams must get four circles in a row on the grid—by answering the questions correctly and throwing the beanbags accurately.

We are going to review now by playing “Four in a Row.” I’ll put you into two teams: Red Team and Black Team. I want each

team to throw the beanbag onto an empty square on the grid. I will then ask a question about what we have been learning. If your team answers correctly, mark the grid where the beanbag landed. If you don’t get it correct, the other team will have an opportunity to answer and earn a space on the grid. We will alternate teams until one team gets four circles in a row. *Play the game using the Four in a Row Teacher Guide from the Resource DVD-ROM.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

People listened to Jesus as He taught the parables. I wonder if some of those people went home or to the market or to their friend’s home and talked about what Jesus said and what He meant.

There is so much to learn from God’s Word. He wants us to study it. But more than that, He wants us to use it to live our life to His glory and honor.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 9 Lesson Theme Poster. These parables, or short stories, taught spiritual lessons to those with “ears to hear.” Jesus taught in parables in order to separate the people who believed in Him and wanted to know more from the people who didn’t really care what He was teaching and didn’t want to learn.

One of the parables that Jesus told was about a sower who scattered seeds. Jesus wasn’t giving a lesson on farming. His parable had a deeper meaning.

The soils represent different kinds of hearts, and the seed stands for God's Word. The seed that lands on good soil—a good heart—will grow and bear fruit. That fruit stands for things done for God's glory!

The second parable was about the shepherd who went to find his lost sheep. The lost sheep stands for a sinner who is not following Jesus. The shepherd stands for Jesus, who came looking for that sinner. And Jesus explained what joy there is in heaven over every sinner who repents and trusts in Jesus for eternal life!

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Jesus described four kinds of soil. Only one kind was good enough to grow a healthy plant from the seed—a plant that bore fruit and had strong roots.

There were three other kinds of soil. The hard soil of the wayside was like a hard heart that hears the Word of God. This describes a kind of person who may hear the Word in class, or church, but afterward they walk out and forget about it completely.

Then there's the stony soil where the seed grows for a short time, but it doesn't have a root, and it soon dies. This person might hear the Word and receive it with joy, but he will soon move on to the next thing that excites him and forget all about God.

And there is the thorny soil. This was a heart that would receive the Word, but the deceitfulness of riches would choke the Word right out. This person loves the world and its riches more than God.

Then there is the good soil. These are people who receive the Word, love it, obey it, and want to learn more. They do NOT fall away, but live their lives to the glory of God!

Jesus's parable should challenge us. If your heart isn't soft, good soil where the Word of God is able to grow, pray! God's grace will soften your heart and prepare it to receive the seed. He alone can make our hearts good soil!



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God because He is the Good Shepherd who seeks lost sinners.
- Ask God to soften our hearts so we will receive the Word of God when we hear it.
- Thank God for His Word that grows and bears fruit in our lives when we receive it by faith.