

4 week Harvest series Theme: Thankful and Faithful

Week 1 Bible story – The Sower

Leaders' notes

Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Sower highlights four different responses to the gospel. The seed is "the word of God." The hard ground represents someone who is hardened by sin; he hears but does not understand the Word, and Satan plucks the message away, keeping the heart dull and preventing the Word from making an impression. The stony ground pictures a man who professes delight with the Word; however, his heart is not changed, and when trouble arises, his faith quickly disappears. The thorny ground depicts one who seems to receive the Word, but whose heart is full of riches, pleasures, and lusts; the things of this world take his time and attention away from the Word, and he ends up having no time for it. The good ground portrays the one who hears, understands, and receives the Word—and then allows the Word to accomplish its result in his life. The man represented by the "good ground" is the only one of the four who is truly saved, because salvation's proof is fruit (Matthew 3:7-8; 7:15-20).

Welcome and Introduction to the theme of the day

Game: Seed pass

You will need

A plastic table spoon for each child
A dried pea and a dried bean

What to do

Ask the children to stand in a circle with a spoon in one hand and the other hand behind their back. Pass a dried pea clockwise and a dried bean anti-clockwise. The difficulty comes when the two meet. Any individual or pair who drops the seed must sit down.

Bible Story

There are some great videos of this story. See "The Parable of the Sower" by GospelPictures at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjvzmBn5NcA>

Or

The Max 7 version at

<http://www.max7.org/en/resource/ParableSower>

For an interactive story idea try "The Sower" The Gospels Unplugged by Lucy Moore pages 45-48

Memory verse:

Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, His steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 107:1

Use some Sign language to help remember the memory verse

Thanks – put fingers on chin and then move them out and slightly down

Lord – point with 2 index fingers and look up

Good- 2 thumbs up

Steadfast – start with hand on head almost like a salute and bring hand down to other open palm as if chopping wood, then hook and lean one index finger onto the other and move hands forward in a straight line

Love – cross hands and arms over chest

Forever – point two index fingers towards each other horizontally and moves them in circles round each other.

100 – make a 1 with your index finger and then make a circle with fingers and thumb then repeat the circle again. Move your hand along from left to right as you do the 3 numbers

7 – hold up 7 fingers

1 – hold up 1 finger

Prayer activity:

You will need:

4 trays to compare soil types

Good top soil or potting compost

Rocky stony soil (lots of large and small rocks, and some dry soil)

Weedy soil (dig up clumps of weeds that are tightly packed into the soil)

Concrete block or brick

Heart shaped paper cut outs /pens

What to do

Encourage everyone to put their hands in the trays and feel the different soils, then asks questions like those below.



- What does it feel like?
- Can you tell if this is good soil?
- What would happen if you planted seed on this rocky soil?
- What would happen if you planted seed on these weeds?
- What would happen if you planted seed onto a brick /concrete path?
- Point to the good soil. What would happen if the seed fell here?
- How can our hearts be like soil? Can you have a hard heart? Can your heart and mind be crammed full of lots of things that mean you can't hear God?
- How do you have a heart like the good soil?

Encourage the children to write or draw a prayer on a heart shape. Have a few simple examples e.g.

Dear God, Help me to have a heart that has room for you. Amen

Dear Lord Jesus, Forgive me when my heart is hard. Amen

Week 2 Bible story – Ruth and Boaz

Leaders notes:

The book of Ruth is set in the period of the judges. The author of the book is unknown. The book records the circumstances that led to the marriage of Ruth, a Moabitess, to Boaz, an Israelite. A famine forced Naomi and her husband to move to Moab, where her sons married Moabite women, one of whom was Ruth. Naomi and her daughter-in-law became widows, and Ruth and Naomi returned to Bethlehem to settle. In the course of providing food for herself and her mother-in-law, Ruth met Boaz, a prosperous farmer and a relative of Naomi. With Naomi's encouragement, Ruth reminded Boaz of his obligation as a relative of her late husband's family. (Ruth.3.1-Ruth.3.9), This law found in a Deuteronomy 25 : 5-10 required a man to marry his brother's widow if she was childless, so that the dead man can have an heir and the family name be continued. However, Boaz was not the nearest of kin. When the closest relative learned that in redeeming Naomi's land, he also had to marry Ruth, he rejected it (Ruth.4.1-Ruth.4.6), and Boaz was then free to marry Ruth.

Welcome and Introduction to the theme of the day

Game: Seed Relay

You will need

A straw for each child
Two saucers for each team
Dried beans

What to do

Divide the children into teams and line them. In turn, team members must suck up a bean from one saucer with their straw and transfer it to the other saucer. If it drops they must retrieve it using their straw- no hands allowed! The team to successfully transfer all the beans from one saucer to the other is the winner. Test out beforehand what is a suitable distance between saucers. Make sure the bean is too big to be sucked up through the straw.

Bible Story

The story of Ruth can be found in Ruth chapters 1-4
See also "The Lion Storyteller bible" –Ruth finds a New Home pgs 48-49

Story Circle version

What to do

Ask the children to sit in a circle. Divide the circle into 3 parts. Make sure there is at least one leader with each group. For part one of the story, the first group (along with their leader) comes into the centre of the circle and acts out the story, trying to do as many actions as possible. At the end of part one, clear the circle and ask the next group to come into the centre

and act out part two. Repeat for part three. The children should enjoy acting out the narration and also watching others do the same. Leaders should join in enthusiastically to encourage the children. You can judge which group is the best if you like.

Part One

A man called Elimelech, lived in Bethlehem in Judah a long time ago with his wife Naomi and their two sons. It was tough living in Israel in those days because there was a famine and it was hard to find food. The family was very hungry. They decided to move to a nearby country called Moab. So they packed up all their belonging, filled up their bags, and loaded up the donkey. They waved goodbye to their neighbours who were very sad to see them go. They set off on the long journey carrying all their possessions. Elimelech led the donkey, Naomi his wife carried a huge bundle on her head, and their two sons carried heavy bags.

Not long after arriving in Moab, Elimelech died. Naomi was very sad but her two sons looked after her. They got married to local women and for a few years everyone was happy again. The sons worked hard sowing seeds, looking after the growing crops, cutting down the wheat and gathering the harvest. All the family ate well.

Then after living in Moab for about 10 years, Naomi's two sons also died. This left Naomi and her two daughters-in-law all alone. They were sad and lonely and they were worried too because how would they take care of themselves now?

Part Two

Naomi decided she was going back to Bethlehem and she kissed and hugged her two daughters-in-law and told them to go back to their own families. But her daughter-in-law Ruth would not go –she clung on to Naomi and pleaded to go to Bethlehem with her. She got down on her knees and begged Naomi to take her along! Naomi eventually agreed to take her with her. The two women began the long journey back to Bethlehem. It was a long way and the sun beat down on them. They were soon tired and weary. Sometimes they stopped and sat down to rest and eat and drink a little.

It was harvest time when they arrived in Bethlehem so Ruth went to some nearby fields to see if she could find food. She was allowed to pick up any stray barley that she could find after the workers had gathered in the harvest. She worked hard stooping to pick up the stray stalks and putting them into her bag. The owner of the field a man called Boaz noticed Ruth. He instructed his men to drop more barley for her to pick up so she would have plenty of food. He gave her food bread for lunch and told her to dip it into the vinegar and he gave her water to drink. He liked Ruth and was very kind to her. Ruth went home to Naomi feeling very happy!

Part Three

When Naomi heard about Boaz she was very happy because he was her relative. She thought very hard and came up with a very clever plan! She told Ruth to get washed, put on her best clothes and spray on some perfume. Then she sent Ruth to find Boaz who was working with his men threshing the barley. Threshing means taking bundles of barley and hitting it with rods to separate the grain from the stalks. It was very hard work. Ruth stayed hidden from view. When

the work was done Boaz and his men sat down to eat and drink. Afterwards Boaz lay down to sleep.

Ruth crept out of her hiding place and lay down at Boaz feet. In the middle of the night, Boaz woke up and found a woman sleeping at his feet and was very surprised. He shook Ruth to wake her. Ruth asked Boaz to cover her with the corner of his cloak. In those days, this meant that Boaz would take care of Ruth and marry her. Boaz was very happy because he loved Ruth and he knew she was a kind and good person. So he covered her with the edge of his cloak. Not long afterwards Ruth and Boaz were married and in time Ruth had a baby son. Naomi cuddled her new grandson and helped Ruth look after him. The family were happy once more!

Memory verse:

Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, His steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 107:1

You will need

Copies of Fruit and Vegetable Memory Verse" cut up

What to do

Print onto light card and cut up. Hide the pieces around the room. Send some volunteers around to look for the pieces. Stick all the pieces onto a wall, or notice board as they are found. Choose a couple of volunteers to rearrange the verse into the correct order by arranging the fruit and vegetables alphabetically. The rest of the children can help by naming each item and suggesting the order. Read though several times together.

Prayer activity:

You will need

2 or 3 Blankets or throws depending on the size of your group
2-3 copies of an appropriate prayer (see example)

What to do

Stand or sit children and leaders in a circle. Ask leaders to place a blanket around the shoulders of the child beside them and quietly read out the prayer you have supplied. The child then places the blanket around the shoulders of the next person and the leader reads the prayer to him/her. If some children are confident readers they can read out the prayer to their neighbour, otherwise leaders can do that part.

Example of a prayer you could use

*May you know the love of God surrounding you
And the grace of the Lord Jesus encompassing you
And the power of the Holy Spirit protecting you
May you know God's presence as close to you as this blanket so that you can turn to Him in bad times and give thanks to Him in good times.
Amen*

Week 3 Bible story: Jesus heals ten Lepers

Leaders notes:

Background information about leprosy

Leprosy was common in Bible times, and was greatly dreaded by everyone since it had no cure. The symptoms of leprosy include:

- Blindness or glaucoma
- Disfiguration of the face (including permanent swelling, bumps, and lumps)
- Kidney failure
- Muscle weakness that leads to claw-like hands or an inability to flex the feet
- Permanent damage to the inside of the nose, which can lead to nosebleeds and a chronic, stuffy nose
- Permanent damage to the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord, including those in the arms, legs, and feet
- Nerve damage can lead to a dangerous loss of feeling. A person with leprosy-related nerve damage may not feel pain when the hands, legs, or feet are cut, burned, or otherwise injured.

God had given the Israelites very specific instructions on how to deal with leprosy and other skin infections (Leviticus 13). Anyone suspected of having this disease had to go to a priest for examination (Leviticus 13:2-3). If found to be infected, “the leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Leviticus 13:45-46). The leper then was considered utterly unclean—physically and spiritually.

Many believed God inflicted the curse of leprosy upon people for the sins they committed. In fact, those with leprosy were so despised and loathed that they were not allowed to live in any community near their own people (Numbers 5:2). Among the sixty-one defilements of ancient Jewish laws, leprosy was second only to a dead body in seriousness. A leper wasn't allowed to come within six feet of any other human, including his own family. The disease was considered so revolting that the leper wasn't permitted to come within 150 feet of anyone when the wind was blowing. Lepers lived in a community with other lepers until they either got better or died. This was the only way the people knew to contain the spread of the contagious forms of leprosy.

Notes on Luke 17:11-19

When the ten men with leprosy came before Jesus with the hope of healing, all of them walked away cleansed but only one turned back to praise God and thank Jesus for his healing. Jesus makes it a point to ask about other nine to show the importance of our gratitude. Use this story

to share with the children that God is faithful to provide our needs as well as extra blessings. He deserves to hear our thanksgiving often through praise and prayer. Suggest they consider making it a daily activity at the dinner table or while travelling in the car to list 3 things for which they are thankful. Regularly expressing our thanks to the Father is one of our best weapons against all of life's battles.

Welcome and Introduction to the theme of the day

Game: Can race

What you need:

Masking tape
Long pieces of string – one between two (3-4 metres)
1 piece of string 1 ½ -2 metres long, 1 piece of string 5-6 metres long
A few dried peas
Empty drinks can with a tab still attached –one between two
Help cards
Tokens (optional)
Prize

What to do:

Tape some masking tape to the floor in a straight line and then tape a second line 3-4 metres away.
Ask the children to get into pairs. Give each pair one long piece of string (around 3-4 metres) and an empty drinks can. Tell the pairs to sit opposite each other one on each masking tape line. Both should be holding an end of the string and it should be stretched out between them. They have to attach the drinks can to one end of the string and pass it along the string to their partner but neither is allowed to stand up – they must stay seated on their bottoms. Give them a chance to practise and then tell them they have to do it for real with points given every time they get the can to the other side.
After the trial period, tell the pairs that there are “Help or Hinder” cards available. Some will help to do the task more quickly but some will make it more difficult. They have to decide whether they want to take the risk and take a card.

Suggestions for the cards

Help

Get a shorter piece of string
A leader assists your team for 30 seconds minute by moving the can for you
Add 2 points to your final score
Get a head start of 30 seconds
One person in your pair can stand up

Hinder

Get a longer piece of string

Some dried peas will be added to your can (or equivalent for extra weight)

Take away 2 points from your final score

Start 30 seconds later than the other teams.

One of your team can only use one hand.

Ask each pair if they want a card. Give out the cards to those that want one, stopping each time to share with the group what each card says and making the necessary adjustments.

Emphasize that the pairs who got Help cards must be feeling very thankful e.g. "I am sure you are so glad you got a good card. Do you feel thankful that that is a good one? Oh no! I am sure you are not very thankful for that one!"

Allow the teams to do the task for a limited time period e.g. 3 minutes –give warnings when time is nearly up etc.

To make it easier to judge you could ask pairs to raise a hand each time the can reaches the other side and give out a plastic token to the team member. Then teams can count out their scores at the end.

Giving a prize to the winning pair motivates everyone to really try hard and makes it more fun.

Bible Story

Introduction

Who got a good card in the game? How did you feel to get a good one? Thankful? Grateful that it wasn't a bad one? Who were the winners? How did you feel to get the prize?

Today's bible story is about a miracle that Jesus performed when he healed 10 men who had a dreaded skin disease. The disease was leprosy and it is still around today although now there is a cure for it. Leprosy causes sores and lumps on the skin, deformed hands and feet, disfiguration of the face, blindness, kidney failure. It is a terrible disease. Back in the time when Jesus was on earth there wasn't a cure for leprosy. There were rules for those who got leprosy and these rules were meant to stop the disease spreading and making more people sick. But for those who had leprosy, it was a very unhappy way to live your life. Listen to what the rules for people with leprosy were –they were written down in Leviticus chapter 13 verses 45-46

If you have a dreaded skin disease, you must wear torn clothes, leave your hair uncombed, cover the lower part of your face, and call out, "Unclean, unclean!"⁴⁶ You remain unclean as long as you have the disease, and you must live outside the camp, away from others.

People with leprosy had to stay away from everyone else and not enter the city, but live instead out in the wilderness. They weren't allowed to be near or visit their family and friends. It was a very lonely life. Lots of people believed that contracting leprosy was a punishment from God because of sin so lepers were despised by everyone because they thought they were sinful and

had brought this punishment on themselves.

Imagine how thankful you would be if you had this terrible disease and then you were miraculously healed. Do you think you would be grateful to the person who made you well again?

Read the story in a children's bible e.g. "The man who came back" from The Lion Storyteller Bible page 124

Or use a PowerPoint such as The Ten Lepers at

<http://www.communication4all.co.uk/http/New%20Testament.htm>

Or a video such as "Bibletoons Ten Lepers" at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyQvXEgUKUg>

Not only was the Samaritan leper healed in his body, but he was made right with God. He could see that it was Jesus who healed him and he wanted to give thanks to Jesus. He had healing in his body and his soul. Sometimes it is easy to forget how much God has blessed us with good things and also what Jesus has done for us through the cross. How about stopping each day and thanking God for 3 things. You could do it at the table when you are having dinner, or in the car on the way to or from school. It is a great habit to remember to thank God for his goodness and love to us.

Memory verse:

Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, His steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 107:1

You will need

Jigsaw template of memory verse cut up into pieces

Divide your group into groups of 4-5 children. If there are children who can't read, make sure they are mixed in with older children. Give out the memory verse pieces. The task is to put the memory verse together and then to recite it as a group without looking. First team to do so successfully share a small prize.

Prayer activity

Have the letters of the word GRATITUDE written up in big letters and ask the children to think of things they are thankful for that begin with these letters. When there are suggestions for each letter, lead a prayer thanking God for all of these things. Encourage the children to call out some of the words they have suggested.

Some suggestions are below:

G- grandparents, God's grace, gifts, God's goodness, games,

R - rain, Jesus is risen,

A - animals, aunties, all in church, advances in medicine, ambulances

T - treats, trips,

I - injections (make us better), inventions, ice-cream

T - talents, teachers,

U - uncles, understanding new things

D - dads, doctors, Jesus dying for me, desserts

E - everyone here,

Week 4 Bible story: Paul and Silas in prison

Leaders notes:

Prison in Paul's World

Prisons in Paul's time were often dug out of solid rock and were underground. Prisoners, their guards, and their provisions were lowered through an opening the size of a manhole. This manhole was the only means of entrance and exit. In the Roman colony of Alba, the prison was under the marketplace. Rain and debris from the market and from animals easily dropped into this "house of darkness." Neither animal waste nor that of the prisoners found its way out easily.

The prison itself probably had large rooms on different levels with iron shackles fixed to the walls. The lower chamber was the Tullianum, or the Tullian dungeon. The Roman historian Sallust, writing a century before Paul, said of this dungeon, "[It] is sunk about twelve feet underground. Walls secure it on every side, and over it is a vaulted roof connected with stone arches; but its appearance is disgusting and horrible, by reason of the filth, darkness and stench." Lighting was indeed poor, primarily coming from torches or oil lamps. The guards might have had fires to provide heat in the winter or to cook food.

These guards were usually soldiers. Being a prison guard was not an appealing job and was often given to the poorest soldiers. Some of the guards were cruel; and prisoners, particularly ones not Roman, were defenceless. Under Roman law, if a prisoner escaped, the guard was executed. This tended to make the guards cautious about their wards, to say the least.

Prisoners were manacled using different lengths of chain, probably reflecting the security risk, the nature of the accusation, and the attitude of the guards. A short chain could hold a prisoner continually upright, dependent upon others for everything. A longer chain might permit a prisoner to take a step or two from the wall and to sit or to lie down. Some prisoners were placed in stocks, their ankles held apart. These persons were forced to sit on the same filthy spot continually.

Welcome and Introduction to the theme of the day

Game: Prison Break

What you need:

- A chair for each child (minus 1)
- Number labels

What to do:

Arrange the chairs in a circle. Number each chair with a large number label. Ask one child to stand in the middle of the circle of chairs and ask the rest to sit on the chairs. The leader calls out two or three numbers such as 1, 3, 5, and the children on those chairs must swap places without losing their chair to the person in the middle. When the leader calls out prison break out, everyone has to move, but they cannot move to the chairs on either side of them. The aim is never to end up in the middle of the circle.

Bible Story

Acts 16 v 16-40

You can tell the story using this video from Vimeo

<https://vimeo.com/30378771>

One of the really interesting things about this story is that after all the bad things that happened to Paul and Silas they praised and worshipped God!

Let's remember some of the bad things that had happened to them.

- They were attacked in the street by a mob of people
- They were stripped of their clothes
- They were severely beaten with wooden rods
- They were sent to prison without a trial
- They were locked up in a dungeon
- They had their feet in stocks
- They sat on a cold stone floor
- They weren't allowed to get up and use the toilet
- There was no food or water

How would you have reacted if all those things had happened to you?

Paul wrote this verse:

⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:7 New Living Translation (NLT)

This was true of Paul and Silas; they were so overflowing with thankfulness to God for sending Jesus that no matter what happened to them they had to keep praising and thanking Him.

Illustration

You will need

Large see through container e.g. old fashioned sweetie jar or see through plastic tub

Plastic balls e.g. ball pool balls or ping pong balls or equivalent e.g. mandarin orange/small

potatoes
Small beads or equivalent e.g. dried peas
Large jug of water

What to do

Show the children the container and the balls but keep the small beads and water jug out of sight.

Add the balls to the container until you can't get any more in and ask the children – do you think this container is full? Hopefully they will say yes it's full. Can I squeeze in any more? No. I **CAN** fit more in but not these balls – what if I use these beads/peas... start pouring the smaller beads in so that they fill up all the spaces between the balls. Then ask – is the container full now?

Again hopefully they will say yes.

What about if I add this water? Pour it in until it fills the container to the brim. Can I fit any more in now? No.

That is how God wants us to be – all filled up with the knowledge of God and filled with the Holy Spirit so that He can guide us and help us in our lives. If we are filled up full and to overflowing, we will be able to serve God and keep telling God's story no matter what happens to us. How do we get filled up? We read God's word, we learn about Him from other Christians, we talk to God by praying, we ask God for His Holy Spirit to live in us and help us to live for God.

Memory verse: Sparkle!

Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, His steadfast love endures forever. Psalm 107:1

What to do

Recap the verse by getting everyone into a circle. The leader begins with the bible reference and the children say one word each moving round the circle. If someone forgets or says the wrong word, they must sit down. At the end of the verse the next person must say **Sparkle** and also sit down! Keep going until you have a winner!

Prayer activity

You will need:

Big sheet of paper
Marker pens

What to do

Ask the group to think back over the last week and think of things they want to say thank you to God for. Write up suggestions so everyone can see. You might want to put them in categories to help children think. E.g. school, home, clubs, food, fun times. Then weave the prayers

together into a response prayer such as:

For all the things we did in school last week and everything we learned we really want to shout...

Thank You Lord!

For mums and dads and brothers and sisters and for our nice warm homes we really want to shout...

Thank You Lord!

For BB and homework club and GFS and trampoline club we really want to shout...

Thank You Lord!

For all the dinners our mums cooked and for snacks and treats we really want to shout...

Thank You Lord!

For all our friends and for the trips out we had last week we really want to shout...

Thank You Lord!

AMEN!