

Youth Teaching Resources

July 12, 2020



What the World Needs Now...

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30—"The World Needs Rest"

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23—"The World Needs the Word"

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43—"The World Needs Patience"

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52—"The World Needs Wisdom"

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The World Needs the Word

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

Take pictures of the beauty in nature and post them to your social media account. Use the hashtag #sowersoil with each of your posts.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Let it Grow” from *The Lorax*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What do you think about the lyric “You can’t reap what you don’t sow?”
- 2) Why is O’Hare outright rejected?
- 3) What does their song represent?
- 4) Have you ever planted anything? What did you have to do to make sure it grows?
- 5) How is our spiritual life like planting a seed?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Matthew 13.1-9;18-23. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Where did Jesus tell this story? Why is the setting ironic? Why is the setting important?
- 2) What do you think Jesus wanted the hearers of this story to get out of the parable?
- 3) What in this story would have seemed remarkable to the first hearers of the story?
- 4) Why does Jesus say he teaches in parables? Why then does Jesus give an explanation for the parable?
- 5) What is this parable calling you to do today?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why do you sow and then plow?
- 2) Why would Jesus teach in parables when everyone could not understand them?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Could the seeds reflect the Shema?

Transformation

Introduce the Social Media Challenge for the week:

Take pictures of the beauty in nature and post them to your social media account. Use the hashtag #sowersoil with each of your posts.

After introducing the challenge, facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Where do you see beauty in nature?
- 2) How often do you think about soil?
- 3) We talk a lot about the fruits of our actions, but what are you doing to make sure the "soil" of your life is healthy? How do you tend to your spiritual journey?

Close with a prayer thanking God for the rich soil that has been given to us and the opportunities that we have to tend to this soil.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text—The Revised Common Lectionary skips over vv. 10-17, in which Jesus was asked to explain why he taught in parables, focusing on the parable and its interpretation alone. Nevertheless, we will give some attention to those verses, as they help us to understand Jesus’ purpose and strategy in utilizing parables for teaching.

Structure—Matthew 13:1-52 comprises the third of five major teaching discourses apparent in the structure of Matthew. Though Jesus had used analogies before, this is the first time the author uses the word “parable” to describe Jesus’ teaching, and the chapter is a collection of parables having to do with the kingdom, or dominion, of God.

Scholars are divided over whether the chapter contains seven or eight parables, depending on whether v. 52 is regarded as a parable: “And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’” The verse clearly contains an analogy, but some see it as a comment on scribes trained for the kingdom of heaven as opposed to being about the kingdom itself.

Here is a representative outline of the structure, drawn from Donald A. Hagner in the Word Biblical Commentary:

- I. The Parable of the Soils (13:1–9)
 - The Purpose of Parables (13:10–17)
 - The Explanation of the Parable of the Soils (13:18–23)
- II. The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:24–30)
- III. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31–32)
- IV. The Parable of the Leavened Loaves (13:33)
 - Further Comment on the Reason for the Parables (13:34–35)
 - The Explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:36–43)
- V. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44)
- VI. The Parable of the Pearl (13:45–46)
- VII. The Parable of the Dragnet (and explanation) (13:47–50)
 - Concluding Comment on the Scribe Trained for the Kingdom (13:51–52)

Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A of Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 362.

Sow first, plow later—How do we know that ancient farmers may have sown seed before plowing? We find suggestions in several ancient writings.

The apocryphal Jewish book of Jubilees speaks of Mastemah, a mean-spirited angel who tests and tempts humans, as robbing people of their labors in this way: “And the prince

Digging Deeper *continued*

Mastêmâ sent ravens and birds to devour the seed which was sown in the land, in order to destroy the land, and rob the children of men of their labours. Before they could plough in the seed, the ravens picked (it) from the surface of the ground” (From R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913]).

In the Mishnah, tractate Shabbat 7:2 lists 39 categories of labor, beginning with “sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, winnowing, selecting, grinding, sifting, kneading....” Note that the elements of producing grain and bread making are listed in order, with sowing listed first, before plowing.

Some farmers were apparently more thorough. In the Talmud, b. Shabbat 73b, a commentary on t. Shabbat 7:2, speaks of a practice in which farmers plowed twice, once before sowing and once after.

The secret life of parables—Douglas R. A. Hare explains the role of parables in this way: “The secrets of the kingdom . . . are not *taught* but *revealed*. They are presented in the veiled speech of parables to the crowds who are unable to appropriate them and are explained to the disciples who, because of their commitment to following Jesus, are capable of comprehension” (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Accordance electronic ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993], 149).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Could the seeds reflect the *Shema*?

Swedish New Testament scholar Birger Gerhardsson has argued that the parable of the sower and the soils intentionally reflects the *Shema*, the Old Testament commandment found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (“The Parable of the Sower and Its Interpretation,” *New Testament Studies* 14:2 [1967-68], 165-193).

The *shema* begins: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart” (Deut. 6:4-5).

Faithful Jews of Jesus’ day repeated the *shema* twice each day in keeping with the command to recite them “when you lie down and when you rise” (Deut. 6:6-7), and many Jewish people maintain the practice.

Gerhardsson suggested that the *shema* was so well known that Jesus may have intentionally alluded to it in the parable. First, the rejection of the seed by the hard ground contradicted the command to love God with all of one’s heart. Similarly, the shallow ground that did not sustain growth in times of persecution or trouble could indicate an unwillingness to love God with all the soul. Finally, the weed-filled soil that choked out the good seed with worldly cares and selfish attitudes pointed to a failure to love God with all of one’s might.

The *shema* was popularly recited as the greatest of all commandments in the first century, as reflected in Jesus’ conversation with the curious lawyer. That, along with the gospels’ interest in portraying Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, strengthens the proposed connection. By Jesus’ day, however, Jews had become so Hellenized that it was popular to add the word “mind” to the sequence of heart, soul, and might (Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27), or to substitute it for “might” (Matt. 22:37). This makes the possible comparison less neat, but there still may be value in seeing the parable of the sower and the soils as a call for people to pledge love and loyalty to God through Christ as they had once done through the Deuteronomic covenant.