

**LESSON 1: KINGDOM SOIL**

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

**1. LEADER PREPARATION****LESSON OVERVIEW**

How can we grow in our life of following Jesus? In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a parable of different types of soil, and buried in the parable is an answer to what spiritual growth looks like and how it happens. This lesson will help your teenagers uncover Jesus' message, discuss spiritual growth, and see how that growth happens.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- 1. WHAT:** We must navigate many snares and pitfalls on the path of following Jesus, but growth is possible, and Jesus is faithful in helping us put down deep roots that allow us to grow.
- 2. WHY:** Teenagers benefit from learning the important truth that anyone authentically following Jesus will seek lasting spiritual growth.
- 3. HOW:** Students can grow spiritually by assessing what might be preventing growth in their own life and in understanding that true growth comes from abiding in Jesus.

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 13:1-23

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURE**

John 15:1-8

**TEACHING PREP**

**LEADER  
TIP**

**Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.**

**Read Matthew 13:1-23.**

During his earthly ministry, Jesus was well-known within his part of the world—even famous. At the beginning of this passage, Matthew tells us that “a large crowd” had gathered to hear Jesus. Perhaps word had gotten around about his powerful teaching. Perhaps word had spread about his numerous healings. Most likely both factors contributed to this big crowd, which was so large that Jesus had to back up from the shore and sit in a boat before he started to speak.

This particular passage falls right near the middle of Matthew's Gospel, and it's part of a chapter filled with parables focused on God's kingdom. While the other parables center on what the kingdom is like, in this

parable Jesus talks about who inhabits God’s kingdom. Through the parable we learn that those that grow are receptive to the words of the kingdom. We also learn that those who don’t grow either have a hardened attitude toward God (v. 4), no roots (v. 5-6), or no space for growth (v. 7).

But it’s not all bad news: Jesus describes another type of “soil” that is receptive to the “words of the kingdom” and multiplies—many times over. Jesus’ heart, of course, is that everyone who wants to grow spiritually would experience that abundant growth. He wants to help us learn how to be receptive to his message, put down roots, and bear fruit as we follow him.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **TEXTS OR TWEETS**

**Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- Ever wonder how to become a better friend with Jesus? Come tonight and learn why it’s important and how it happens.
- What does it take to grow deep spiritual roots? Come join us this week for some great conversation.

### **PARENT EMAIL**

**Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

We’ve launched a new series titled, “The Kingdom of God Is Like...,” and each week, students are examining a passage of Scripture from Matthew 13 that will help them understand Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God.

In this first lesson, we studied Matthew 13:1-23, where Jesus describes several different kinds of soil: one that yields growth and three that don’t. We spent most of our time discussing what prevents spiritual growth and what creates an environment where it is nurtured. We then shifted the focus to our lives, asking tough questions about what type of soil we most resemble currently. Jesus’ desire is for all of us to find growth in him, so we finished our time discussing how we could resemble the soil that produces growth.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking with your teenager about our lesson. Consider building your conversation around these questions:

- How do people grow spiritually? What can prevent or hinder spiritual growth?
- What type of soil from Matthew 13 do you most closely resemble right now, and why?
- How are physical growth and spiritual growth similar? How are they different?
- Who in your life could you start loving with Jesus’ love, so that your faith multiplies?

Have a great week!



**LESSON 1: KINGDOM SOIL****2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]****LEADER  
TIP**

Each person will need a piece of paper and some colored pencils (or a pen or pencil) for the opening activity.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead the students in this opening activity.

Distribute supplies to each person. Ask students to create images that depict who they were at ages 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, and in the present. These pictures can be literal drawings, abstract images, something that falls somewhere in the middle, or representations of things they enjoyed doing or things that interested them at each age.

**ASK:**

- *What were some specific things you were interested in when you were 7?*
- *Are you still interested in those things? Why or why not?*
- *What are some other changes you have experienced from age 2 to the present?*
- *How are physical growth and spiritual growth similar? How are they different?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *It's crazy to think how much each of us has grown and changed since we were very young. No doubt we've stopped liking certain things we once thought were the best—and started liking other things we didn't even know about when we were younger. We have probably remained interested in other things. Just like physical growth or growth in our personalities and interests, spiritual growth involves changes. We may look back at earlier stages of our faith and chuckle about how we once acted. We also might look at our lives now and realize how little some things have changed. Jesus is passionately interested in our continued spiritual growth—even more interested than we are!*

**TEACHING POINTS****LEADER  
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 13:1-23 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Let's dig into this Scripture to see what Jesus has to say about what spiritual growth is, how it happens, and what prevents it.*

## 1. KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

**ASK:**

- *What does the phrase "spiritual growth" mean to you?*
- *What sticks out to you about this section of Scripture—does anything surprise you?*
- *What do you think Jesus meant when he talked about the plant that produces a large harvest?*
- *Think of a specific person who is growing spiritually. How can you tell that person is growing?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Spiritual growth means growing a deeper, stronger friendship with Jesus. It means seeing change and transformation in our lives. Whether or not you're currently growing in your relationship with Jesus, know that he wants all of his followers to experience growth and bear fruit.*

## 2. KNOW WHAT PREVENTS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**ASK:**

- *Look at verse 19—what can prevent people from understanding the "message about the Kingdom"?*
- *Considering what you see in verses 20-21, what are spiritual roots—and what does it mean to lack deep roots?*
- *Look at verse 22—how do "the worries of this life" and "the lure of wealth" prevent spiritual growth?*
- *What worries do you find yourself having? How can those worries keep you from Jesus?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *It's easy to begin resembling one of the soils that doesn't produce a harvest or experience growth. But Jesus' heart for his followers is that we would bear fruit, not whither.*

## 3. KNOW HOW SPIRITUAL GROWTH HAPPENS

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Jesus describes the type of soil that produces a crop 30, 60, or 100 times more than was planted. That's growth! While a lot of things can prevent growth, there is every reason in the world to grow in our friendship with Jesus.*

**ASK:**

- *The first soil didn't allow for growth because it was too hard. When thinking about our spiritual journey, what does that look like?*
- *What does fertile, receptive soil look like?*
- *The seed didn't grow in the third soil because it was choked out by concerns of the world. What might help you have space to grow, without being choked out by those concerns?*



- What's cluttering your life and preventing spiritual growth?
- The last soil in this parable—the fertile soil—produces a harvest. What would it look like for you to be producing a harvest right now?

### EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.



#### ASK:

- In our passage from Matthew 13, what is most fascinating about Jesus' explanation for why he told parables?
- Read John 15:1-8. What is most surprising about what Jesus says is necessary to produce spiritual growth?
- What does it look like to “remain” in Jesus? Try to be really practical.
- How does “remaining” in Jesus produce spiritual growth?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

### LIVING IT OUT

#### ASK:

- If you are willing to be vulnerable, tell us how your life of following Jesus is going—recent successes, ongoing challenges, and what that journey looks like for you.
- What do you need most from Jesus today?
- If you've made decisions that have hardened your heart to Jesus, how can you become receptive to his presence again?
- What would it take to de-clutter your life so you can have more space to grow spiritually?
- The main distinction about the final soil in today's parable is that it produces plants that multiply. Who in your life could you start loving with Jesus' love, so that your faith multiplies?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *If you want to grow spiritually, know that Jesus is interested in seeing and helping you grow. Growth is challenging, though—it requires receptiveness to Jesus, deep roots in your identity in Christ, and a life that isn't cluttered. But most of all it requires you looking toward Jesus, knowing that he is looking—with love—back at you!*

### SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

**FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]**

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

*"Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" (Matthew 13:8).*