

YEAR LEVEL	3 & 4
TITLE	Jesus' Parables
STRAND	Scripture
SUGGESTED DURATION	4 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	What is Scripture? How does God's word affect my life?

Sandhurst Source of Life UNIT OUTLINES

Unit Focus

In this unit, students will be given opportunities to become familiar with the structure, form and content of selected parables. They will be provided with the opportunity to explore a parable in detail, taking into account the context and content of the text.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 4 students should be able to:

Identify parables as a particular genre in Scripture.

Explore examples of parables including the content and meaning for the listener.

Apply the message of the parable to their own lives.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of the unit students should be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of the Parable of the Sower.

2. Identify how this parable can relate to their own lives.

Key Understandings for Students

- The Bible contains many books divided into the Old Testament and New Testament.
- The Scriptures have messages which challenge us to live as Jesus lived.
- The Gospels teach us about the life of Jesus.
- Jesus taught using Parables and stories.
- Scripture is an integral part of sacred celebrations.

Student Context

Students at this level are becoming more systematic in their thinking. Whilst still being very literal, they are developing their ability to understand different levels of meaning. They have a growing understanding of time and the sequencing of events. The Scriptures take on a new significance for them.

Because of the growing awareness of year 3 and 4 students, they are able to research and explore significant people and key events in the Scripture and identify that Scripture stories have a message that can relate to their own lives. Such development correlates with the unit outcomes as they are linked with the lived experience of the child.

Theological Background for Teachers

- The Bible is a collection of 73 books, written by numerous authors who were inspired by God.
- The first and longest part of the Bible is the Hebrew Scriptures, commonly called the Old Testament by Christians. The Hebrew Scriptures reveal how humanity came to know the one true God. It was composed over many hundreds of years while the Hebrews, the chosen people of Yahweh, awaited the coming of a Messiah and Saviour promised by God.
- There are 46 books in the Old Testament.
- The second major part of the Bible is called the Christian Scriptures, or the New Testament. They centre on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and on the early community of his followers whose mission was to preach and spread Jesus' good news of salvation to all humanity.
- The New Testament is composed of 27 books.
- Catholics believe the Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is God who communicates in the Bible but always through the limitations of a culturally situated human being. The writers communicated the truth using their own powers and abilities, their cultural limitations and at times their narrow images of God. God entrusted the communication of truth to human beings who expressed that truth in their own way, using the tools and concepts available to them at the time.
- We cannot look to the Bible for scientific explanations or historical accounts that are accurate and factual in all respects; instead the Bible gives us religious truth, the inner truth of God.
- The Catholic insight into interpreting the Bible is that we can find religious truth by first of all understanding what the writer of any given passage intended to communicate:
Who was the audience?
What problems or concerns of the community influenced what was written or edited into the passage?
What literary form was the passage written in?
For a rich, full understanding of the Bible, guidance is necessary.
- Approaches such as Source Criticism, Historical Criticism, Form Criticism and Redaction Criticism are used as contemporary methods of biblical interpretation. A text can be analysed for any materials within it that are not original but that the author incorporated from other sources (Source Criticism). The literary forms employed in a text can be analysed (Form Criticism). The manner in which authors edit or 'redact' the

materials at their disposal can be examined to indicate what their interests and convictions were (Redaction Criticism). A text can also be viewed in the light of texts and other information available from the same time and place, in order to see it in its historical context (Historical Criticism).

- The parables are short stories that are used by Jesus to communicate his teachings. They are features of the synoptic Gospels. Ryan & Peterson (2021) *Teaching the Parables* Queensland: Lumino Press

Ekstrom, R. (1995). *The new concise Catholic dictionary*. Dublin: Columbia Press. Queensland: Lumino Press

Fischer, K., & Hart, T. (1995). *Christian foundations: An introduction to faith in our time*. New York: Paulist Press.

Zanzig, T., & Allaire, B. (1997). *Understanding Catholic Christianity*. Minnesota: St Mary's Press.

Scripture

Matthew 13:1-9 – The Parable of the Sower

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!"

Major Assessment Task

Students will create a folder of work using the 4 parts of the Parable of the sower. They will break open the parable through art and reflective questions.

The Four Parts of the Parable

This Parable is about the Kingdom of God. Jesus told stories using images and objects that were familiar to his listeners. In this Parable it is the seeds and the soil in which they were planted. The seeds represent Jesus' message about God's Kingdom and the soil represents how different people listen and respond to Jesus' message. (Students can draw or write their responses).

Part 1

Some seed fell on the road and was eaten by the birds. The hard soil of the path was like the hard hearts of people who heard Jesus' teaching but did not even understand or care what it meant. When people have hard hearts then they do not want to follow God.

- What do you think this section is about?
- Who are people in the community who help others?
- Who can help when you can't understand something?

Part 2

Some seed fell on rocky ground and the soil wasn't deep enough so the plant couldn't put down strong roots. When the sun came out, the plant was scorched and died. The seed that fell on the rocky soil was like someone who hears Jesus' message about how God wants us to live. They are so happy to hear what God wants but then they change their minds and turn away from God.

- When do we listen to a message or instruction but sometimes it is too hard to do what we should do? When do we listen to Jesus' message and understand what we should do, although we don't do it? (Personal Response Question)

Part 3

Some seeds fell among bushes and were choked by weeds and thorns. The plant sprouted and began to grow but it never got very big. The weeds choked the plant and kept taking all of the sun and the best soil. The plant never produced any grain. Some people get so busy that they don't have time to think about God.

- Sometimes it is tricky to make good choices, who can help us when we are making choices?

Part 4

Then there was the seed that fell on good soil and grew and grew and grew. The good soil was the kind of heart that we should all have. The good soil is a heart that listens to God's word and tries to be as Jesus teaches. Just like the seed grows in good soil, the words of Jesus grow in good hearts. The person whose heart is like the good soil always wants to listen to God and do what is right.

- When are the times you have been kind and asked others to play with you when they are by themselves?
- Who in our community helps others?
- When have I shown the love of God / Jesus in my actions? (eg. By helping others when they aren't sure what to do) (Personal Response Question).

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity

Read or watch the story of the Hare and the Tortoise <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO1DJ6H8cVU>

- The hare is very confident of winning, so it stops during the race and falls asleep. The tortoise continues to move very slowly but without stopping and finally it wins the race. The moral lesson of the story is that you can be more successful by doing things slowly and steadily rather than by acting quickly and carelessly.

Or the story of the Lion and the Mouse <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq6sf-8tVf4>

- In the oldest versions, a lion threatens a mouse that wakes him from sleep. Hearing it roaring, the mouse remembers its clemency and frees itself by gnawing through the ropes. The moral of the story is that mercy brings its reward and that there is no being so small, that it cannot help a greater being.
- Discuss the story chosen with the students:
 - What do you think is the lesson of the story?
 - What do you think it means for you?
- Without explaining fables, talk to the students about how, through stories, we often learn something about the way we should be towards others or how we should act.
- Students create their own fable with a message about an important way to act in their classroom. Illustrate these and share these in small groups.

- Talk about how Jesus often taught people through stories called Parables. Briefly explain the meaning of the word parables to the students.

Information about parables for students

When Jesus told parables he talked about the things that the people knew and saw in their lives – trees, sheep, families and even farmers. We are going to listen to a parable Jesus told about a farmer who went out to sow seeds in his field. (see **appendix 1** for additional information)

- A parable is a story that uses symbolism and allegory as a teaching tool. An honoured tradition among the Judean people, telling parables was used to pass on the wisdom of the ancestors to the next generation. A parable is a tale about a simple, common subject to illustrate a deeper, valuable moral lesson
- **Farming in Jesus' Time.**
Farmers in those times did not plant seeds using tractors. The farmer would take a handful of seeds and carefully toss them onto the soil. After he was finished he would cover the seeds over with the soil and then wait for the plants to grow. Planting seeds is called 'sowing'. The main crops were: grain, grapes and olives.
- What do you know about farming today? How is the crop sown? Do farmers today have problems with birds today? Create an image that is split in 2 showing the difference in farming today compared with farming at the time of Jesus.
- Watch the YouTube clip of the Parable of the Sower <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tb7bvF5Ucr>
- Students complete a '3, 2, 1 Bridge' on the parable. They respond with 3 ideas about this parable, 2 questions and 1 Metaphor. At the completion of this unit of learning, students may return to this task and respond with their new knowledge.
- Students complete a 'Liquid Picture' of Sowing Seeds. ([Rina Wintour Sacred Celebrations of Ordinary Time Year A](#) p61).
- Read Scripture **Matthew 13:1-9**. Students create a Graphic Storyboard or Comic strip of the main elements within the Scripture.
- Students share what they think the message or the meaning of this parable may be for the listeners of Jesus time. What is the message for us? Students take photos or collect images that they believe represent this theme or message. This could be in the form of a collage or just a single image.
- Students write their own contemporary version of the Parable of the Sower. This may be presented digitally. What title would they provide for their version of the parable?

Prayer Ritual

Students are asked to write on cards the messages that they have taken from the parables explored throughout the unit. Together as a class, say a short prayer about being able to follow Jesus.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Parable of the Sower (For Teachers)