

God's Word in Our Hearts

OBJECTIVE: *To encourage each other to "plant" God's Word in our hearts and in the hearts of others.*



WORSHIP

Sing praise and worship songs as well as songs about God's Word and our hearts that are familiar and meaningful to your group. Here are some suggestions.

"All Consuming Fire"

"Arise and Sing"

"Give Thanks"

"God the Lord Is the Strength of My Heart"

"Into My Heart"

"Jesus Loves Me"

"Standing on the Promises"

"The B-I-B-L-E"

"Thy Word"

"Wonderful Words of Life"

STORY

The Farmer and the Seeds, Matthew 13:1-23

- Jesus tells about a farmer who plants seeds, and he compares this to God's Word in people's hearts.
- The seeds fall on a variety of types of soil: the path, rocky soil, weed-filled soil, and good soil.
- The soils affect the seeds in different ways: birds eat the seeds, seeds don't develop roots, weeds choke out the seedlings, and the seeds grow and yield crops.

Tell this story outside by a garden if possible. Ask everyone to plant seeds as you tell the story. If you tell the story indoors, let everyone plant seeds in cups of potting soil. See the Planting activity on page 60.

MEMORY VERSE

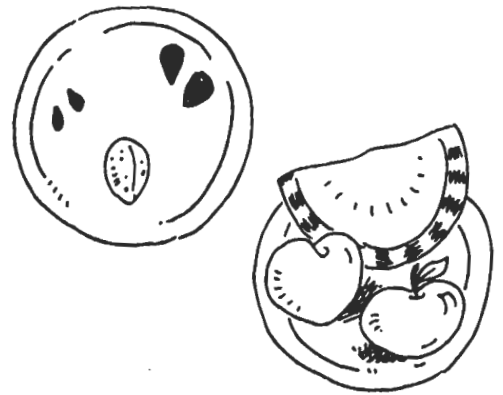
"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

To help the children learn the verse, play "Hide the Heart." Cut a heart shape out of paper. Tell the verse to everyone and let them repeat it several times after you. Then ask them to close their eyes. Hide the heart in a place where it will not be too hard to find. Ask everyone to open their eyes. Choose a child to hunt for the heart. If anyone else sees it, they may tell the child whether he's close or far away (hot or cold). When he finds the heart, he must say the verse. Then he can hide the heart and choose another person to hunt for it and say the verse.

ACTIVITIES

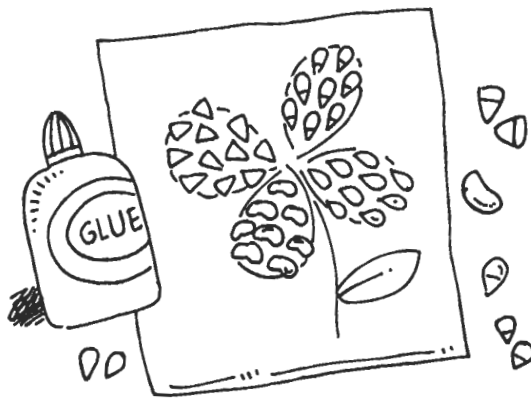
Choose one or more of the following activities to support the story and to provide a springboard for discussion.

SEEDS. Take a few seeds out of different fruits and vegetables. Lay seeds on a paper towel or plate. Place fruits and vegetables on another towel or plate in such a way that no one can see seeds inside them. Let everyone try to match seeds to the fruits they came from. Discuss the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:1-23).



SOILS. Let everyone gather different types of soils into jars or transparent plastic cups. Try to fill one jar with hard packed dirt, one with rocky soil, one with weed-filled soil, and one with good soil. Discuss the parable.

PLANTING. Give each person a paper or plastic cup. Let each one fill his cup with potting soil and plant a seed in it to take home and water. Discuss the parable and its meaning.



SEED COLLAGE. Each one makes a collage by gluing a variety of seeds (or dried beans) in a design on cardboard, heavy paper, or Styrofoam plates. This can be like a mosaic or collage. Discuss the parable and its meaning.

IN THE CIRCLE. Give each person 2 yards of string or yarn. Show how to make the string into a circle shape on the floor (or ground, if you're outside). Each person stands inside his circle. The leader calls out "birds," "rocks," "weeds," or "good soil." If he says "birds," each person has to jump out of his circle and run around it. If he says "rocks," each person runs in place inside the circle as if running barefoot on rocks. If he says "weeds," each one sits in the circle and makes himself as small as possible as if being squeezed. If he says "good soil," each one stands and stretches toward the sun. The leader calls out these words at random. Discuss the parable and its meaning.

QUESTIONS

1. What is a hard heart?
2. What happened to the seed on the hard path? What does that mean if the path is a person's heart?
3. What does it mean to be rooted in God's love? (Read Ephesians 3:17.) Why did the plant in the rocky soil wither?
4. Plants in good soil bear fruit. What is the fruit that comes from God's Word in our hearts?

KIDS' COUNCIL

BRING IT HOME

- What were the weeds that squeezed out the plant? What are we tempted to worry about? Why shouldn't we worry?
- How can riches fool us and squeeze out God's Word? How can we keep that from happening?
- How will you protect your heart from worry and riches?
- Can you plant good seeds in someone else's heart? How?

SHARE AND PRAY

- Ask the children to share their concerns and pray for each other.
- Pray that God will keep our hearts soft like good soil and bring good things from his Word in our hearts.
- Pray that God will help us hide his Word in our hearts.
- Thank God for giving us his Word.

ADULT STUDY QUESTIONS

- Have you ever known someone whose heart was like the hard path? What happened?
- Have you ever known someone whose heart was like the rock-filled soil, and God's Word didn't develop roots? What happened?
- Have you ever known someone whose heart was like the weed-filled soil? What happened?
- Can we change the soil of someone's heart? If so, how?
- Are you still hiding God's Word in your heart? How do you choose what parts of his Word to hide in your heart? How do you hide it there?

SNACK AND FELLOWSHIP

Pear Hearts. When a pear is upside down, it has a shape similar to a heart. Slice pears vertically and lay them out on a serving plate so they look like heart shapes. Serve slices of cheddar or muenster cheese and crackers with them. Talk about hiding God's Word in our hearts.