

Prepare for the story:

Ask for a volunteer to be the farmer. Give him/her a basket and get him to practise 'sowing seeds'.

Ask for volunteers (choose about a third of the children) to be birds, and get them to practice waving/bouncing birds on sticks when you say "birds".

Ask for volunteers (choose about a third of the children) to be the sun, and get them to practise holding up the sun picture when you say "sun".

Ask for volunteers (choose about a third of the children) to be the seed that fell among thorny plants, and get them to practise withering when the green sheet (symbolising the thorny plants) is thrown over them.

Tell the story:

One day, a farmer went out to scatter some seed.

Some of the seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it.

Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. But when the sun came up, the plants withered, and they dried up because their roots had no water.

Other seed fell among thorny plants.

[Adult to throw sheet over children.]

The thorny plants grew and choked them.

Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Thank the children and ask them to sit down. Explain the story:

Jesus came to show us what God is like and what he wants us to be like. God longs for us all to know how much he loves us, and how important it is for us to love each other.

We can find the good news about Jesus in the Bible. But it's up to us what we do when we hear it. God lets us choose. And we don't all choose the same thing.

In today's story, the seed is like God's word.

Can you remember where the first lot of seed fell?

On the path, where the birds gobbled it up.

I bet you've sometimes walked along a footpath through a field, where the ground was trodden down so very hard that no seed could grow there. Well, some people's minds are hard and closed like that. They just won't listen to the good news about Jesus.

We need to choose. We need to decide whether we want to listen to the good news about Jesus.

Where did the next seeds fall?

On stony ground, where there was only a thin layer of soil over solid rock, where the soil wasn't deep enough for the roots to find wet soil and grow properly and flourish. So when the sun shone and it became very hot the plants wilted because they didn't have enough water, and they died.

Some people listen eagerly at first, but then they soon lose interest when things get difficult. They don't try to stay close to God. They don't spend time talking and listening to God. And soon they forget all about him.

We need to choose. We need to decide whether we want to stay close to Jesus. We can do that by talking to him, by being quiet and listening to him, and by reading the Bible.

Where did the next seeds fall?

Among the thorns - and you can't grow a good crop in a patch of ground that is full of weeds and thistles.

Some people listen at first, but then they get distracted by other things. Soon their minds are so busy worrying about things that surround them, or thinking about all the things they want, that there's no room left for God.

We need to choose. We need to decide whether or not we will trust God to look after us and give us everything we need.

But where did the other seeds fall?

On good soil, where it grew and produced lots of fruit.

Some people really listen to the good news about Jesus. They try to stay close to him, spend time with him, trust him, and tell other people about him. And when we do that, God's word keeps on spreading and growing.

We need to choose: do we really believe the good news about Jesus? Are we letting him change our lives? Is he so amazing that that we want to tell other people about him, too?

If we do, then God will send his Holy Spirit to help us. And so God's word will keep on spreading and growing.

We need to choose.

Let's ask Father God to send his Holy Spirit to help us, now.

Let us pray.

Father God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how much you love us
and how we should love each other.

We ask you now to send your Holy Spirit
to help us to be the people you made us to be,
and to bring your good news to other people.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.