

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

At-Home Kit Letter to Families

Dear Family,

Here is your at-home kit! This kit is designed to engage your family in exploring this unit on **Parables Jesus Told**, with five stories that have questions and activities for you to do together. We will be using these materials and stories during our Wednesday Night Alive Zoom meetings, but you can also use them on your own time if Wednesday nights don't work for you!

There are three activities to do, called The Story, Around the Table, and Family Activity. You can do these activities at your pace, and you don't have to do everything all in the same day or in one sitting. Read the at-home kit instructions sheet to see what to do for the **Parables Jesus Told** unit.

- 🌿 **The Story** – This is the easy part! Read or listen to one of the stories from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* together as a family. You can find a video of Susannah reading these stories on the church's website. Just go to www.fpcgastonia.org/children and you'll find the videos in the "Growing in God's Love" Wednesday Night Alive section.
- 🌿 **Around the Table** – This section contains wondering questions that everyone can discuss about the story. Wondering questions have no right or wrong answers. They are meant to evoke imagination and further discussion as everyone thinks about the story and wrestles with their place in it. A great time to ask these questions is during a family meal or at another time when your family can gather together.
- 🌿 **Family Activity** – There are several suggestions for activities you can do together as a family. Choose one that works best for your family. Some activities require supplies found in this kit or things you may have at home. If you are missing something, feel free to substitute or adapt the activity. There are book and/or video suggestions that may be included in a session. You can borrow a book if it is in your local library, purchase a book, or watch a read-aloud version online. Internet links are provided in the at-home kit instructions.

We hope this helps your family learn about the stories of the Bible and guides you through talking about faith in your home. If you have any questions, please contact me at sbryant@fpcgastonia.org or by calling the church office (704.864.2651 ext. 106).

Blessings,

Susannah Bryant
Director of Faith Formation
First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

At-Home Kit Instructions

○ In this kit, you will find:

- ✦ At-home kit letter to families
- ✦ Instructions on how the family can listen to the stories from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*: Go to www.fpcgastonia.org/children and you'll find the videos in the "Growing in God's Love" Wednesday Night Alive section of the page.
- ✦ Supplies provided in the at-home kit:
 - Wildflower seeds (The Sower)
 - Colored paper (The Sower)
 - Shelled sunflower seeds (The Sower)
 - Resource Page 2 (The Good Neighbor)
- ✦ Supplies not included in the at-home kit:
 - Newspaper (The Sower)
 - Empty egg carton (The Sower)
 - Blender (The Sower)
 - Water (The Sower)
 - Mixing bowls (The Sower)
 - Strainer (The Sower)
 - 1/2 cup of liquid glue with PVA (Something Big from Something Small)
 - Baking soda (Something Big from Something Small)
 - Food coloring (Something Big from Something Small)
 - Contact solution (Something Big from Something Small)
 - Baby oil (optional) (Something Big from Something Small)
 - *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Something Big from Something Small)
 - Catalogs or a printer (The Pearl)
 - Crayons, markers, or colored pencils (The Pearl, The Generous Landowner)
 - Paper (The Pearl, The Generous Landowner)

○ The Story

Choose one or more stories to read from the ***Parables Jesus Told*** unit:

- ✦ The Sower (Luke 8:4–15)
- ✦ The Good Neighbor (Luke 10:25–37)
- ✦ Something Big from Something Small (Matthew 13:31–33)
- ✦ The Pearl (Matthew 13:45–46)
- ✦ The Generous Landowner (Matthew 20:1–16)

○ Around the Table

Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- ✦ The Sower
 - What are the different soils in this story?
 - What happens to the seeds in each soil?
 - Why do you think Jesus compares God to a farmer?
 - How is God's message of love growing in you?
 - What do you need to keep it growing?
- ✦ The Good Neighbor
 - Who are your neighbors that live near you?
 - How do you and your neighbors help each other?

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- This parable helps us understand that neighbors are not just those people who live nearby. Who else are your neighbors?
- Why do you think Jesus made the man from Samaria the hero, instead of the religious leaders?

🌱 Something Big from Something Small

- What do we know about the mustard seed? About the yeast?
- What is being transformed in these parables?
- Who or what can benefit from this transformation?
- What objects could Jesus use to talk to your friends about something big coming from something small?
- What did you learn about the realm of heaven from today's Bible story?

🌱 The Pearl

- What do you know about where pearls come from or how they are made?
- How do you think the merchant felt when he saw the pearl?
- How do you think the merchant felt after he sold everything and bought the pearl?
- Why do you think Jesus told this parable?
- What questions does this parable raise for you?

🌱 The Generous Landowner

- How does the landowner act toward and how might he feel about the first-hired workers? Why do you think that?
- How does the landowner act toward and how might he feel about the last-hired workers? Why do you think that?
- The landowner asks the first-hired workers, "Are you jealous because I am generous?" Why do you think these workers are focused on what others earned instead of their own earnings?
- What surprised you in this story?
- If Jesus were here, what questions would you like to ask him about this parable?

🕒 Family Activity

Choose one or more activities to do together as a family.

🌱 The Sower

- Becoming Sowers
 - Make seed balls, or bombs, together. Seed balls are small balls made of seeds and compostable materials, in this case paper pulp. They can be scattered (but only if there is a good rain in the forecast for the seeds to get the moisture they need) or planted and watered. Go to bit.ly/MakingSeedBombs for simple directions. Note that if you don't have a silicon mold, you can make the balls with your hands and place them to dry in an egg carton. As you create together, discuss:
 - What do you think the optimal growing conditions will be for these seeds?
 - What steps can you take to help nurture these seeds?
 - What are the optimal conditions for God's love to grow in your life?
 - What steps can you take to help nurture God's love growing in you?
- To sow the seeds, scatter the balls in grassy or wooded areas or plant them in a garden and let nature take care of the rest!

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- Seed Snacks
 - Share a snack of shelled sunflower seeds or other edible seeds, such as pumpkin or pomegranate seeds. If edible seeds aren't available, serve freshly popped popcorn, setting aside a few unpopped kernels for the children to see. Wonder together:
 - What plant could this seed grow into?
 - Which part of the plant produces seeds?
- 🌱 The Good Neighbor
 - Exploring Picture Books
 - Read children's books that explore (some explicitly and others implicitly) this parable's themes.
 - Who Is My Neighbor? by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Amy-Jill Levine. (Flyaway Books, 2019) or watch the YouTube video "Who Is My Neighbor?" ([bit.ly /WholsMyNeighborBook](https://bit.ly/WholsMyNeighborBook), 8:10).
 - Love Your Neighbor (Just Like Jesus Said) by Melody Carlson (B & H Kids, 2002) or watch the YouTube video "Love Your Neighbor by Melody Carlson" ([bit.ly /LoveYourNeighborBook](https://bit.ly/LoveYourNeighborBook), 8:06).
 - Leo: A Ghost Story by Mac Barnett (Chronicle Books, 2015) or watch the YouTube video "Leo: A Ghost Story by Mac Barnett, Read by Inky Blinks" (bit.ly/LeoAGhostStory, 8:46).
 - Wonder together:
 - What do the illustrations tell you about the parable of the Good Neighbor?
 - After reading, what thoughts or questions do you have about the parable of the Good Neighbor?
 - Intentional Acts of Kindness
 - Tell the children that sometimes people talk about "random acts of kindness," little things people do for other people as a nice surprise, such as paying for their drink in the drive-thru line or taking the trash can up to the garage after garbage collection. Wonder together if the man who was from Samaria performed a random act or an intentional act of kindness. Suggest that the act he performed was probably not random but that he probably did good deeds of kindness for his fellow humans more than this one time. Kindness was probably a part of who he was as a person. It was intentional because he chose to be kind.
 - Hand out Resource Page 2 and ask the children to consider which acts they do as intentional acts of kindness already. Invite the children to decorate their page, adding two more acts at the bottom that they would like to do. Encourage them to place it where they will see it regularly and work on performing intentional acts of kindness.
- 🌱 Something Big from Something Small
 - Making Slime
 - Watch the YouTube video "Best Kid-Friendly Slime (No Borax)" (bit.ly/SlimeRecipeForKids, 3:10) for an easy slime recipe. As the saline or contact solution is added, explain that this is the special "activator" ingredient. Just as yeast activates the flour to make bread, the contact

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solution activates the other ingredients to make slime. Wonder together:

- As your faith and God’s love grow inside you, what changes might you see in your life?
- What can God’s love activated inside of you motivate you to do?
- How can our small actions activate big change in our communities?
- Singing and Moving
 - Watch the YouTube video “The Smallest Seed— The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Acoustic Bible Song, Two by 2” (bit.ly/TheSmallestSeed, 3:09). Invite the children to sing along as the words become familiar. Play it again and have the children create motions to go along with the song.

The Pearl

- Considering Value
 - If you have older children, watch the YouTube video “The Value of Things—How Do We Determine It?” (bit.ly/TheValueOfThings, 4:36). Ask if there are words that are difficult to understand. Wonder together:
 - How does this concept of value apply—and not apply—to aspects of your life?
 - What does our society consider valuable even though it doesn’t actually add value to your life or the life of others?
 - How is understanding value in terms of money like or unlike the values Jesus teaches?
- Making Merchandise Collages
 - Discuss what it means to be a merchant. Invite participants to imagine that they are merchants. Encourage each person to create a collage of things they are selling by drawing pictures or cutting out images found in magazines or catalogs. Allow time for everyone to share what is on their collage. Ponder together:
 - Why was the merchant willing to sell everything to purchase the pearl?
 - What will he do now that he has the pearl but no merchandise left to sell?(Note: if catalogs are not available, consider printing pictures from the internet, printing photos from your phone, or creating a Pinterest board with images of items you might sell.)

The Generous Landowner

- Planning Generosity Surprises, “Service” section, page 8
 - The landowner surprised the workers with his generosity. When he could have paid less, he paid more! God loves us with the same extravagant generosity as that the landowner showed to his workers! Think of the people you come in contact with daily. How could you surprise them with your generosity? Maybe you could:
 - Tip your server twice as much as usual?
 - Go above and beyond when you do your chores?

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- Give a larger than normal gift to someone you love?

Make a plan to surprise someone generously as a group. Afterward, explore:

- Was the recipient of your generosity surprised?
 - How did you feel being able to give or help so much?
 - How was this experience like or unlike the way God loves us?
- Generosity List
 - Invite the children to list or draw the things they can generously share (money, toys, love, time, and so forth). Encourage them to be specific. Talk together about how the children can make a plan to share something on the list. Discuss options for different suggestions the children have made.