



Let It Grow!

THEME: Gardening

BIBLE STORY: The Parable of the Soils (*Luke 8:4–15*)

MATERIALS NEEDED

OPENING GAME

- [Resin or pom-pom bees](#), one per person
- [3/16-inch glue dots](#), one per person
- A poster board with a large flower drawn on it
- A blind fold
- A fine-point permanent marker

GAMES

- 5-gallon bucket
- Small disposable cups (3-oz.), one per person
- Small watering cans, two (more for larger groups)
- A variety of seed packets (or pictures of seed packets), one packet per person
- Masking tape, one or more rolls

LESSON

- (Optional) A piece of fruit (apple, orange, etc.), one for about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the group

CRAFT

- Fake flowers, one or more per person
- Capped ballpoint pens (like a Bic Round Stick), one or more per person
- Floral tape, one roll for each family
- 4-inch terra-cotta pot, one per family
- 16-ounce bag of dried black beans, one per family
- Paint markers, an assortment for the group to use
- Wire cutters, one or two pairs to be shared
- Tables for the families to sit at (covered with newspaper or plastic)

90-MINUTE SESSION OUTLINE

- [Introduction and Opening Game](#) (10 minutes)
- [Craft Activity](#) (30 minutes)
- [Games](#) (20 minutes)
- [Devotional Thought](#) (10 minutes)
- [Family Discussion](#) (15 minutes)
- [Closing Prayer and Dismissal](#) (5 minutes)

Introduction and Opening Game

(10 MINUTES)

Welcome to family fun night! We are so glad you're here. Our goals are to help your family have fun together and to learn about God's love and his word.

A summer activity that many people enjoy is gardening. Some people grow vegetables. Some grow flowers or herbs, and some people grow a mix of different kinds of plants. Tonight, our theme is "Let It Grow" because we are looking at a Bible story about a farmer who plants some seeds. Let's read it now.

Read Luke 8:4-15.

That's an amazing story, and we'll have a chance to come back to it later, but right now let's get things rolling with a little friendly competition!

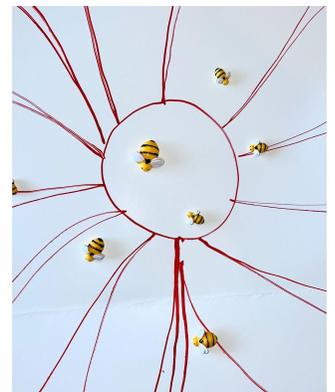
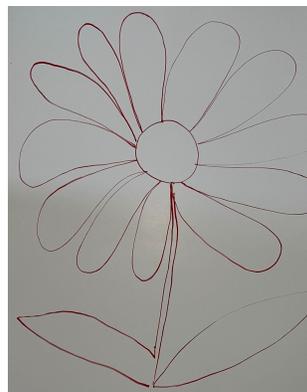
Family Game: Stick the Bee on the Flower

Object: To stick your bee right in the middle of the flower

Setup: In advance, draw a daisy or similar flower on a large sheet of poster paper. Mount this on a wall.

Instructions: Players will line up behind a designated line. Place a bee with a glue dot affixed to it in the hand of each player. Blindfold the first player and spin

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them around. Then they will attempt to stick their bee to the middle of the flower drawn on the poster paper. Regardless of where they stick the bee, write their name or initials next to the stuck bee. After everyone sticks a bee, the family with the most bees inside the circle (center of the flower) wins.

Craft Activity

(30 MINUTES)



Preparation:

Distribute the materials to each family. Each family will make one flower pot, and each person will make one or more "pen flowers" to put into the pot.

Instructions:

1. Use the paint markers on the pot to write, "God's Word bears fruit in me." Then use the markers to decorate the pot with whatever patterns, pictures, or designs you like.
2. Once the pots are dry, fill them with dried black beans to serve as the soil.
3. With the wire cutters, cut each stem so that it has one flower at the top and is approximately six inches in length.
4. Remove the cap from the pen, and using the floral tape attach the flower securely to the pen.
5. Replace the pen cap, and place the "pen flower" into the pot.

Games

(20 MINUTES)

Water the Plants

Object: To fill and empty more watering cans than the opposing team

Setup:

- Place a 5-gallon bucket filled with water in the center of your playing area.
- Divide the participants into two or more teams, and give each player a 3-ounce disposable cup.
- Place one watering can per team at an equal distance from the bucket of water.

Instructions: On your GO signal, the player will fill their cup with water, take it to their team's watering can, and pour the water into the can. All players can be doing this simultaneously. (For larger groups, you may need more than one bucket of water.) Once the watering can is filled, one of the participants will yell, "Full!" and bring the watering can to the 5-gallon bucket. They will empty the water back into the bucket and move the can back to its original position. The team that has filled and emptied the most watering cans in three minutes is the winning team. Play multiple rounds as time permits.

Seed Packet Mania

Object: To be the first family to identify all the types of seeds taped to their backs

Setup:

- Designate an area outside the playing area where people will gather when they correctly identify their type of seed.
- Tape a seed packet to each player's back using masking tape.
- Instruct the group not to tell anyone else what kind of seeds are taped on their backs.
- Make sure that each family has roughly the same number of players. If not, group families together into teams.

Instructions: On your GO signal, each participant will begin to ask other non-family-member participants yes-or-no questions to attempt to identify the kind of seeds taped to their back.

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(For example, “Am I a flower?” or “Am I a vine?”) Once a player has identified the type of seed taped to their back, they will go to the designated area and wait for the rest of their family members. The first complete family (or team) to complete the challenge wins! Play multiple rounds as time and interest permit.

Devotional Thought

(10 MINUTES)

Lots of people like to plant gardens in the summer months. People grow herbs, vegetables, and fruits. Great gardeners know what their plants need, and they give it to them. What are some of the things that different types of plants need in order to grow strong and healthy?

Allow each family to talk amongst themselves.

Today’s Bible story has seeds that are planted on four different kinds of soils. Some of the seeds grow strong and healthy, and other seeds . . . well, they have some issues. We’re going to divide up into four sections, and each of us are going to pretend to be seeds as I read the story.

Divide the group into four groups: *path*, *rocky*, *weedy*, and *fertile*. As you read, direct each group to start balled up like a seed. For the *path* group, you can pretend to step on them or be a bird that eats them. You can make this funny and encourage other leaders to be bird as well. These seeds stay balled up and never grow.

The *rocky* group is next. They will start balled up like seeds, but will start to grow and stretch out. Then encourage them to start panting like a dog and acting thirsty before wilting away.

For the *weedy* group, they will start to sprout and grow. You can go around and (without touching anyone) pretend to choke them or bump into them. These plants will begin to wilt and die.

The fertile group will grow and be strong and healthy plants. Optionally, you can go around and hand each person an apple, orange or other piece of fruit.

Read Luke 8:4-15.

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This story is called a parable. A parable is a short story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth. In this case, Jesus told the parable, and then he explained what it means. According to Jesus, who do you think the farmer is? Take responses. Answer: God or Jesus **Who or what is the soil?** Take responses. Answer: people or us. **What is the seed?** Take responses. Answer: God's word.

Let's take some time to talk about what this story means for us. What do you think Jesus wants us to know or to do after hearing this story? Allow 2-3 minutes for families to discuss this question together.

Here are a few things that stand out to me from this story.

- 1. God is so generous. He gives his word to all kinds of people and gives each one of us the opportunity to respond. Those people who receive God's word with joy and hang onto it grow into maturity, are filled with joy and have a relationship with God. God gives all of us that opportunity because his word is available to each of us.**
- 2. The soil conditions affect the growth. Even though God gives us all an opportunity to receive his word, we are responsible for the effect it has. We can reject it like the hard soil. We can focus on other things so that it's crowded out, or we can cling to it and pay attention to it.**
- 3. All the soils are essentially the same, which means one type can change to the other. Back in Jesus' day, a path would have been soil that was packed down hard. Weeds could be pulled from weedy soil, and more topsoil could be put over the rocks. In other words, the conditions of the field can be changed. If you have previous rejected God and his word, he invites you to change.**

Here's what I'd like us to remember from this story. God loves us so much that he gave us his Son and his word. We have the choice to receive God's gifts with joy or to reject them. Receiving God's gifts leads to an abundant and fruitful life and brings honor to God.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we recognize that you generously gave us your word. You gave up your life for us so that we could have new life and grow into the people you made us to be. Help us to be good soil—to receive your word with joy, to pay attention to it, and to obey it. Amen.



Family Discussion

(15 MINUTES)

Distribute the family discussion guide and give the families time to discuss the questions there together.

Closing Prayer and Dismissal

(5 MINUTES)

Thank everyone for coming. Make any announcements about future family fun nights or other events at your church. Let the families know you love them and want to serve them. If anyone needs prayer, offer to pray for them.

Close the evening in prayer.

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

What's your favorite thing that people grow in their gardens in our area?

Read the story together again, and then answer the questions together. Be sure everyone has a chance to speak.

One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him: "A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!" When he had said this, he called out, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God's word. The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved. The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation. The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest. (Luke 8:4-8, 11-14, NLT)

To Discuss

- How would you summarize the main point of this story in one or two sentences?
- What title would you give this story? Why?
- What do you find surprising, confusing, or interesting about this story?
- The seed is always the same. What determines whether or not it grows?
- What does Jesus say the people who are good soil are like?
- What do you think it means to "cling to God's word" like the good-soil people?
- What do you think God might want you to do after hearing this story?