

**SUPPLIES:** 1 Beanbag for every two students (the kind you throw, not sit in) [optional: instead of beanbags, you can use water-balloons - just be sure to inform parents ahead of time]; foam ball and a lawn or large indoor space

## **OPENING PRAYER**

### **TELL**

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Here's the opening question: what is your favorite type of plant?
- (go around the circle)
- During this summer, we're going to be talking about parables. Parables are stories that can help us better understand an idea. For instance, I could tell you that you have to just try harder. Or, I could tell you the story of the "little engine that could" that shows us what trying harder might look like.
- The story we're going to hear now is about a sower. The word sower describes someone who plants the seeds of plants by throwing those seeds all about him or her. Listen for what happens to the seeds.

### **READ Mark 4:1-9 (parable of the Sower)**

1 Again, Jesus began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 Jesus began to teach them many things in parables. This is one of the parables that he told them: 3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

### **TELL**

- In the story, the sower broadcasts the seed all around him.
- If you imagine taking a handful of sand and then throwing it out and away from you, with your hand in a position like you hold it when you throw a Frisbee, then you can imagine how the sower looks as s/he broadcasts the seed.

### **ASK**

- As the sower broadcasts the seed, can you remember the different places the seed fell? I'll give you a hint – there's four places. (Path, rocky ground, among thorns and good soil)

- Very good! Can you tell me what happened to the seeds that fell on the path? (the seeds were eaten by birds)
- Can you tell me what happened to the seeds that fell on the rocky ground? (the plant had no root and got scorched by the sun)
- Can you tell me what happened to the seeds that fell among thorns? (the thorns choked the plants)
- Can you tell me what happened to the seeds that fell on the good soil? (the plants brought forth grain 30, 60 and one hundredfold. NOTE: 4-fold would've been considered an extremely good year).

### **TELL**

- In this story, we are supposed to pretend that the seed is something other than seed. We are supposed to pretend that the seed is The Good News, the Word of God.
- And, we're supposed to pretend that sower is someone who broadcasts (remember what that looks like? What broadcasting look like?) the Word of God.
- And, we're supposed to pretend that the ground is anyone who is hearing the Word of God.

### **ASK**

- So let's review: What are we pretending the seed is? (The word of God)
- Who are we pretending that the sower is? (anyone who broadcast the word of God)
- Who are we pretending the ground is? (anyone who hears the word of God)
- So, if we pretend that the seed is the Word of God, how might we best be able to catch the word of God? (by listening)

### **TELL**

- Jesus begins and ends the parable with the word, "Listen."
- In order for the Word of God to be heard really well, the broadcaster and the receiver must both work really hard.
- One way to think about how this works is to think about a game of catch.
- In order for the word to be caught, it must first be thrown.
- And then, the person catching the word, has to want to catch it and put him or herself in the right place to catch it, right?
- So, we're going to start out with a game of catch.

**EXPLAIN** (if you want, and you let parents know ahead of time, you can exchange the beanbags with waterballoons)

- I have here a beanbag for every two of you.
- We're going to make two lines that face each other.
- I'll count down (3,2,1) and then everyone with a bean bag will throw your beanbag to your partner who is in the other line.
- If just one person in the catching line catches one bean bag, then the catching line will take

one step backwards and away from the throwing line.

- If no one catches a beanbag, then the catching line moves one step closer to the other line.
- Once that one step is taken, then the catching line will now throw the beanbag back and the same rules apply.
- Let's see how far away we can get from each other!

## **DO Game of Catch ACTIVITY**

### **ASK**

- So when did the most people seem to catch the beanbags (when we were all closer)
- When did the most people seem to not catch the beanbag (when we were further away)

### **TELL**

- The same is true for us about hearing the Word of God.
- The farther away we are from (meaning: The less time we spend with) people who share God's Word with us, then the less likely it is that we're going to understand and hear God's word, right?
- But we have to want to hear God's word as well.
- Our next game will hopefully help us to think about how wanting to hear God's word helps us to actually hear the Word of God.

## **EXPLAIN 5 Dollar Catch**

- This game consists of one person who will throw the foamball/beanbag up in the air.
- As the thrower is throwing the beanbag up in the air, s/he will call out how much the ball costs (One, two, three, four or five dollars).
- Everyone else, then, tries to catch the ball. Whoever catches it then gets to add that amount of money (whatever the ball cost) into their "bank."
- If you drop the ball, then you lose however much money from your "bank" that the ball cost.
- Your bank is simply your total score for the game that you keep track of yourself.
- If your bank adds up to 5 dollars before anyone else, then you become the next thrower.
- If you hit the ball, but someone else catches it, then you do not lose any money.

## **DO 5 Dollar Catch**

### **ASK**

- So when you were trying to catch the ball, what would you do? (watch where the thrower was throwing the ball. get in the right place. Keep eyes on the ball. Jump for the ball. Reach hands out to the ball).
- That's a lot of effort that goes into catch the ball, isn't it? (yes)

## TELL

- Going back to the story that we heard today, if we try to catch the Word of God (which is the seed) like we tried to catch a five dollar ball, then we're going to hear the Word of God very well, which means that we will be like the good soil.

## CLOSING PRAYER

[END OF LESSON]

### **Understandings that the lesson is built around:**

Jesus begins and ends the story with "Listen!" The word here that Jesus is most likely using here is the word, "Shema." Which means to take in and then follow through with. If everyone shemas then all of us will be good soil.

Random/blanket distribution – the word of God goes everywhere. Scarcity is not an issue!

Receptivity – there are a number of reasons why the word of God does not take hold, even though it goes everywhere. Most of the reasons are external: birds, weeds, rocks, the sun, etc. The condition of the ground, though, helps to determine the effect the external reasons have on the seed. What are some ways to change the ground in order to optimize reception of the seed/word and reduce the effect of the external influences? (better soil receives the seed better. If the seed is word, then what ways can we better listen to the Word?)