

The Scottish Sleuths

and

The Case of

The Puzzling Parables

Pre-School

**Vacation Bible School
Curriculum**

*Teacher's Manual
4 and 5 year olds*

Introduction

Welcome to *Scottish Sleuths* Vacation Bible School curriculum series. Each year, our Scottish Super Sleuths, Angus McTavish and Professor Dabney Thornwell, are called in to solve a Biblical “case” with the help of the VBS children. The detective characters symbolically portray the message that we want the students to learn to become thoughtful investigators of Biblical truth.

This year, our case presents a study of twelve of Jesus’ “Kingdom” parables. Each daily grouping of parables is arranged in such a way to teach the children a particular aspect of the Kingdom of God. The children will learn how God’s Kingdom rules and operates in this world, and what the response of Kingdom-dwellers should be.

Curriculum Distinctives

1. Focuses on the verbal transmission of Bible stories (The art of storytelling).
2. Emphasizes class discussion in an open question and answer format.
3. Age-appropriate.
4. Maximizes the small amount of time with profound truths and clear Biblical principles.
5. Reduces the amount of “busy work.”
6. Does not overload with too much content or too many activities.

Vacation Bible School is a ministry that is intended to be primarily evangelistic in nature. Yet since many of your children may in fact be regularly “churched,” it is essential that VBS also be used as an opportunity to teach God’s Word more intensively. Thus, *The Scottish Sleuth* series works hard to be both evangelistic in method as well as discipleship-focused.

This curriculum presents the clear gospel message from God’s Word in the context of loving relationships between teachers and their students. Accordingly, it is vital for each teacher to recognize that VBS is all about:

- a) Showing the love of Christ to each one of your students;
- b) Faithfully and clearly presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ from God’s Word; and,
- c) Praying for God’s Spirit to do His work in the lives of the VBS children.

Please feel free to use your creative energy to mold this curriculum to your own personality and the make-up of your particular class. Remember that the end goal of all your teaching is to bring students face-to-face with the Gospel of Jesus Christ with full dependence on His Spirit to change hearts and minds.

On Classroom Setup

The most important thing to remember about your classroom setup is that it should be conducive to learning. Arrange the room in such a way that the students can effectively hear and see the teacher(s) and have classroom discussion. Also, post the Scripture Memory, Application Points and other visual aids that will focus the minds of the children on God’s truths.

Don’t worry about decorating according to the theme—but you are welcome to be as creative as possible. Simply make the room a place which helps the children learn.

Overview of Daily Lessons

The Sower

Day One

Theme: God's Kingdom comes by the **Gospel Ministry**
Bible Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Scripture Memory: Mark 1:15

The Lost Coin The Lost Sheep The Lost Son

Day Two

Theme: God's Kingdom **Goes After the Missing**
Bible Text: Luke 15:1-24

Scripture Memory: Luke 19:10

The Unforgiving Servant Workers in the Vineyard

Day Three

Theme: God's Kingdom shows forth His **Grace and Mercy**
Bible Text: Matthew 18:21-35; 20:1-16

Scripture Memory: Ephesians 2:5

The Hidden Treasure The Pearl The Great Supper

Day Four

Theme: God's Kingdom demands **Giving All of Myself**
Bible Text: Matthew 13:44-46; Luke 14:16-24

Scripture Memory: Matthew 22:37

The Seed The Mustard Seed The Yeast

Day Five

Theme: God's Kingdom is **Growing and Multiplying**
Bible Text: Mark 4:26-32; Matthew 13:33

Scripture Memory: Review all memory verses

Scripture Memory

Note: All Scripture Memory passages are taken from the New International Version (NIV)

Day One: Mark 1:15

Jesus said... “Repent and believe the good news!”

Day Two: Luke 19:10

The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

Day Three: Ephesians 2:5

It is by grace you have been saved.

Day Four: Matthew 22:37

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Day Five: Review all Memory Work

Daily Schedule

9:00 - 9:15	Opening Program
9:15 - 9:45	Welcome/Icebreaker Bible Lesson
9:45 - 10:05	Recreation
10:05 - 10:25	Snacks
10:25 - 10:45	Music
10:45 - 11:05	Bible Application
11:05 - 11:25	Crafts
11:25 - 11:45 **	Bible Memory
11:45 - Noon	Closing Program

****Day Five Only: 11:30 - Noon
Closing Celebration**

God's Kingdom comes by the Gospel Ministry

DAY ONE

Bible Text

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Memory Verse

Mark 1:15

Scripture Truth

The faithful proclamation of the gospel never fails to bring forth fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Lesson Aim

For the students to understand that (1) the gospel builds the Kingdom of God, and, (2) the gospel of Jesus Christ penetrates hearts that have been made receptive by God's Spirit.

Opening Program

The opening program includes a skit to introduce the day's theme, a time of singing, and announcements. After the opening program, go with your students back to your classroom.

Welcome

Introduce yourself, your co-teacher(s), and your classroom helpers. Greet the boys and girls warmly, working diligently to memorize their names. Make sure each student has a name tag.

Icebreaker

[Note: For our younger students, the icebreaker time is intended to: 1) Help the children feel comfortable in their new class; 2) Help build relationships between teachers, helpers and the students; and 3) Get the children excited about the Bible lesson.]

Materials: Large gift-wrapped box and lid with a Bible inside.

Seat the students and get their attention.

Hold the gift-wrapped box on your lap as you speak to the children.

Say: *Who likes getting presents? Someone tell us one of the most favorite gifts that you have ever received.* **Have children raise**

their hands. Give several children a chance to share.

Transition: *Those are all great gifts. I have one of the greatest gifts ever given to us in this box. Do you know what it is? **Open the box and show your Bible.** God has given His Word to teach us about Him and how we can love and obey Him. The Bible will bring much more joy to your lives than any earthly gift that you can ever receive. Now, let's look to God's Word for our Bible Lesson today.*

Bible Lesson

[Note: The "Bible Lesson" time is intended to: 1) Allow the students to hear God's Word, getting acquainted with its stories and truths; and to 2) Enable them to begin learning about God and their responsibilities toward Him.]

Materials: Younger children need this storytelling time to be dramatic as well as visual. Feel free to bring in pictures, drawings, flannelboards, puppets, etc., for visual aids. **Today's parable should be told using pictures of the various soils (road, rocks, thorns, good soil) as well as the resultant growth of each type of seed in the different soils.**

Gather all the children together for the Bible Lesson. [All in-text Bible references are from the New International Version.]

Introduction: *This week we will be studying some of the parables our Lord Jesus taught while He was on earth. Who knows what a parable is? **Allow responses.** A parable is a verbal picture or story that teaches an important lesson. Jesus told these stories,*

taken from real life situations, to teach His followers truths about the Kingdom of God. So let's be good Bible detectives today and listen closely to one of Jesus' parables.

Read Matthew 13:1-3.

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed.

Ask these discussion questions for the class to answer (help them with the answers): *Who was Jesus speaking to?* [Large crowds.] *How was He able to teach such a large crowd?* [He got into a boat, while the people sat on the shore.] *What is Jesus telling a story about?* [A farmer who is planting his crops.]

Good listening. Let's continue.

Read verses 4-9.

⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up (**Show picture**). ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow (**Show picture**). ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants (**Show picture**). ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown (**Show picture**). ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

Discussion: *What four places did seeds fall on? Hold pictures up as children name them.* [The path; rocky places; among thorns; good soil.] *What happened to the seeds that fell on each spot? Point to*

pictures. [The Path: Birds ate them; Rocks: Scorched and withered plants; Thorns: Plants were choked; Good Soil: Healthy, abundant crops.] *Where was the only place that seeds produced a healthy crop?* [The good soil.]

Say: *After Jesus told this parable, His disciples asked Him why he taught in parables. Jesus then took the opportunity to not only teach them about parables, but also explain this one to them (and us). Let's listen to what this parable means...*

Read verses 18-21.

¹⁸ "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path (**Show picture**). ²⁰ The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away (**Show picture**).

Discussion: *So, boys and girls, the seed that falls on the path is like a person who does not understand God's word. The seed that falls in the rocks is like a person who hears God's Word but does not obey it.*

Let's read on. Read verses 22-23.

²² The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful (**Show picture**). ²³ But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown (**Show picture**)."

Discussion: *The seed that falls in the thorny place is like a person who hears God's Word but never grows because he is worried about other things. Which soil is the only one that produces a plant? [The good soil.] Yes, only the last soil represents the person who has truly received the gospel and become a Christian.*

We will apply this parable to our own lives during our Bible Application time.

Close this time with prayer, thanking God for His Word.

Recreation

Have your helpers escort your children to the Recreation Area. The Recreation Team will be responsible for your students during this time. **This is a time for you to take a break.**

Snack

Snacks will be delivered to your classroom. Lead the class in a prayer of thanks for the food and drink. Make sure the students respect each other while eating and clean up after themselves. **This is also a good time for all of the children to take a bathroom break.**



Music

Escort your children to the Music Area. The Music Team will lead the class in a time of singing and learning the various VBS songs. **Use this time to prepare for Bible Application Time.**

Bible Application

[Note: For pre-schoolers, the Bible Application time is intended to reinforce what was presented during Bible Lesson time. The "Application Points" are included here just for the teacher's understanding, since they are too difficult for this age group to comprehend. One or two word simple concepts will be the focus of the activities during this segment.]

Arrange the children on the floor so they can see and hear the teacher.

Application Point 1:

Your response to the gospel depends on the state of your heart

Materials: Bible, pictures from the lesson, picture of a heart.

*In our parable today, a farmer planted some seeds, didn't he? The "seeds" represent this... **Hold up your Bible.** The seed is the Word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*Who knows what a seed does? **Allow answers.** [It goes into the ground and produces a plant, tree, flower, etc.]*

The Word of God is a “seed” that goes into different “soils.” The “soil” is the human heart. **Show a picture of a heart.** Where is your heart? **Have students place a hand on their heart.** We all have a heart and God sends His Word to us. But, you and I must have the right kind of heart, right?

Can it be a “hard heart” like the hard path in the story? **Show a picture of a seed lying on hard ground.** Can it be a “thorny heart?” Do seeds grow in thorns? **Show a picture.** Can it be a “shallow heart?” Can seeds grow in rocky, shallow soil? **Show a picture. Allow discussion.**

None of these soils will grow a seed, will they? None of these kinds of **hearts** will receive the gospel of Jesus Christ either. You must have the right sort of heart to be one of God's children!

Application Point 2:

A receptive heart will hear and understand the Gospel

Materials: Pictures from the lesson.

So, what kind of soil will grow a seed? **Show a picture of good soil.** That's right, it must be good, rich soil. This good soil is the same as someone who has a good heart.

Alright, let's play a game. You're going to hear a sound and if you know what makes that sound, raise your hand and I'll ask you to tell me what it is. But you have to be very quiet to hear it. Ready? **Have different ones of your co-teachers and helpers make various animal sounds, or a car sound, or people sounds, one by one. Allow the children to say what makes each sound. Stop after about ten sounds.**

Did you understand what the sounds were?

You understand them because you listened well and you have good minds!

Well, boys and girls, having a “good soil heart” means that the Holy Spirit has given you ears that listen to God's Word and a mind that understands it. But, it also means one more thing—that you believe what you hear is TRUE.

So, every time you hear (have the children point to their ears) God's gospel, and understand it (have the children point to their heads) and believe it (have the children point to their hearts) you show that you have a “good soil” heart. **Repeat until they understand.**

Application Point 3:

The faithful sharing of the gospel always produces changed lives

Who teaches you God's Word? **Allow students to answer. Assist them in talking about their parents, Sunday School teachers, pastors, etc.** Do you listen when God's Word is taught? **Allow discussion.**

Who remembers what the “good soil” in our story produced when the seed was planted? [A huge harvest]. That's right, good soil produces lots and lots of fruitful plants.

So, boys and girls, it is so very important for people to plant seeds of God's Word isn't it? That's why we should be thankful for parents who teach us God's Word, and for pastors and teachers who teach us God's Word on Sundays.

Raise your hand if you have told a friend about Jesus and how special He is? Did you know that when we tell others about Jesus, we are planting seeds of the gospel too? It is good to tell others the Good News!

Our story teaches us that God's Word WILL produce good fruit in the lives of people who have "good soil hearts" Let's pray today that God will give us good soil hearts!

Close in prayer, thanking God for the Gospel and asking God to give us good soil hearts.

Note: If you need to fill some time before Crafts, have coloring sheets available.

Crafts

Have your helpers escort your students to the Craft Area. The VBS crafts team will lead your students in a crafts project. Use this time for a break or to prepare for Bible Memory time.

Bible Memory

Begin by teaching the students the importance of memorizing God's Word:

- (1) We "hide it in our hearts" so we will turn away from sin and obey God.
- (2) It changes the way we think, focusing on pleasing God instead of pleasing self.
- (3) It helps us to know God more and love God more.

**Today's Scripture Memory is found in
Mark 1:15**
Jesus said... "Repent, and believe the good news!"

Write the Scripture memory on the board or on poster board.

Say: *Today's Bible memory verse shows us that Jesus taught the gospel—the good news—in order that people might turn from their sins and believe in Him. Only those who have "good soil hearts" will believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord.*

Activity: Memory Rhythm. Help the children make a "rhythm" or chant to make memorizing easier.

Example:

Je-e-sus said
(echo) Je-e-sus said
Repent! (echo)
And Believe! (echo)
The Good News! (echo)

Review the Scripture a number of times to allow memorization. Allow students to perform their rhythms in front of the class.

Hand out Scripture memory reminder cards for the parents to help their children memorize.

[Note: If extra time here, have coloring sheets available, or play a quiet game.]

Closing Program

Go with your students to the area designated for the Closing Program. Remind them to be respectful of others on their way to and during the Closing Program. Afterwards, escort the students to their pick-up location.

END DAY ONE