

REFLECTING ON THE PAST

Matthew 13:1-16 // The Parable of the Sower

This worship service centers on the Parable of the Sower. Here are some materials to help you create your own worship service.

MAIN THEME: *How are you sowing seeds in the kingdom of God?*

CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

- 🎵 **The Earth is Yours** [Suggested Key: A]
Text and Music: Michael Gungor
© 2010 worshiptogether.com songs
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)
- 🎵 **Holy, Holy, Holy** [Suggested Key: D]
Text and Music: Reginald Heber and John B. Dykes
© Public Domain
- 🎵 **Beautiful Things** [Suggested Key: D]
Text and Music: Lisa Gungor and Michael Gungor
© 2009 worshiptogether.com songs
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)
- 🎵 **Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)** [Suggested Keys: D or E]
Text and Music: John Newton, Chris Tomlin, Louie Giglio
© 2006 sixsteps Music, Vamos Publishing, worshiptogether.com songs
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)
- 🎵 **Tell Me the Story of Jesus** [Suggested Keys: D]
Text and Music: Fanny Crosby and John Sweney
© Public Domain
- 🎵 **The Benediction: My Friends, May You Grow in Grace** [Suggested Key: G]
Text and Music: Timothy James Meaney, Sean Diamond, Gregg DeMey & Gregory Kett
© 1991, 2001, Wiseman Music
Teach and use this song as the closing song each week in this series.

CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

Purchase and use the loop The Sower from The Work of the People [www.workofthepeople.com] to show as Matthew 13:1-16 is read.

FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

Have worshipers draw a picture/snapshot of an event from the previous year that reminds them of the seeds God is sowing in the world.

Compile a short video or picture slideshow that recaps the life of your church or youth group in the previous year. Include summer camps, mission projects, choir tours, or other activities.

Ask a worshiper to create a painting or take a photo that reflects the scripture passage.

Display your favorite artwork depicting a season of sowing and invite the congregation to reflect on it. Examples could be “The Sower” by Van Gogh or “The Sower Sowing the Seed” by English School. Don’t forget to project proper credentials.

LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

After the scripture reading or the message, have a small group discussion time, facilitated by older worshipers. For this, prepare clay pots filled with soil, markers, and Popsicle sticks around the room. Through small group discussion, ask worshipers to reflect on the seeds they planted – or saw planted – in the previous year, write it on a Popsicle stick, share with the group, and place in the potted plant. Use a song to close the discussion time and invite members from each group to bring their clay pots to the front of the room and place them on a table. You might include these questions as discussion prompts:

- What seeds have you sown that sprang quickly?
- What seeds have you sown that were eaten up?
- What seeds have you sown that you are most excited about?
- What seeds have you sown that were choked by thorns?

MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPING

Fill the worship space with items that possess imagery of planting and cultivating. This might include burlap fabric, potting soil, clay pots, gardening tools, work gloves, or other similar materials.

WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

Use the free guided, interactive prayer “Planting Trees” found below. We suggest you incorporate Andrew Peterson’s song “Planting Trees” as you do so.

PLANTING TREES

Materials Needed

- Blank piece of paper
- Writing utensil

Instructions to be given by leader

We are going to spend time together in prayer now. You should have a blank piece of paper. Take that out, and take out something to write with. Let yourself get into a comfortable position. You can stay in your chair, you can kneel beside your chair, or you can walk to another place in the room.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Get comfortable in your space, and take a few deep breaths. As you take these breaths, think about a tree that you helped plant in the past year. Maybe it wasn't really a tree - it may have been a person or a project - but let the image of a tree represent the person or project. Imagine what God might do with the tree you planted many years from now. What might the roots look like? The trunk? The branches? The leaves? The ground around it?

As you imagine, draw the tree's root system on the bottom of your paper. As you draw the roots, ask God to plant the tree in good soil where its roots can grow big, strong, and deep. You might even want to write a few words that describe the roots of this tree.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Now, imagine the trunk and branches of the tree. What does the trunk look like? Is it tall or short? Thick or thin? What about the branches? Are they simple or complex? Do they extend far and wide or do they hug the trunk tightly? Draw a picture of the tree trunk and its branches coming from the roots. As you draw them, ask God to make the trunk and branches strong and sturdy yet flexible enough to bend with winds that may arise.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Think about the vegetation this tree might produce. What do the leaves look like? Are there many of them? Few? What color are they? Do they change colors with the seasons, or are they the same all year long? Does the tree have flowers or pinecones in it? Draw leaves and flowers on this tree, and as you do, ask God to help the tree produce good fruit.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Last, think about how God might use this tree in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. In the space around the tree you have, write a prayer to God for this tree as it encounters the coming year - winter, spring, summer, and autumn. Ask God to give the tree protection. Ask God to give the tree nourishment. Ask God to give the tree flexibility. Ask God to use the tree to display the wonder of God to all that might see it.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you have called us to plant, and we have done so to the best of our abilities in this past year. Knowing we will never know the fruits of our labor, we trust you to take and use all of the seeds and trees that we have planted and helped plant. Help them flourish in all seasons, O God, and use them to provide stability where it is needed. Use them to shield others from harms way. Use them to display your wonder, and use them to help your kingdom flourish in all of the world. In the name of Christ we pray, amen.

SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

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WELCOME

Say hello to other worshipers and welcome them in the name of Christ

SONGS AND STORIES

Begin by singing the chorus of the hymn, *Tell Me the Stories of Jesus*. A few days before worship, invite 2-3 worshipers to prepare brief testimonies completing this statement: “The story of Jesus is a story of ...” Sing the refrain of the hymn between each person’s story.

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

[Light a candle to represent the light of Christ]

Leader: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: **Who made heaven and earth.**

Leader: God of light and truth, you are beyond our grasp or conceiving. Before the brightness of your presence the angels veil their faces. With humble reverence and adoring love we acclaim your glory and sing your praise, for you have shown us your truth and love in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

All: Amen.

SONGS OF PRAISE

All Creatures of Our God and King
The Earth is Yours
Holy, Holy, Holy

PRAYER OF PRAISE

SCRIPTURE READING

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SONG OF RESPONSE

Beautiful Things

SHARING WITH ONE OF ANOTHER

Have a small group discussion time, facilitated by older worshipers. For this, prepare clay pots filled with soil, markers, and Popsicle sticks around the room. Through small group discussion, ask worshipers to reflect on the seeds they planted – or saw planted – in the previous year, write it on a Popsicle stick, share with the group, and place in the potted plant. Use a song to close the discussion time and invite members from each group to bring their clay pots to the front of the room and place them on a table. You might include these questions as discussion prompters:

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[Sing the chorus of “Beautiful Things” to end this time]

MESSAGE

PRAYING TOGETHER

“Planting Trees: A Guided Prayer Experience”

[Each worshiper will need a blank piece of paper and something to write with. Download complete instructions on the Resource page of our website.]

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[Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions]

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wasn't really a tree - it may have been a person or a project - but let the image of a tree represent the person or project. Imagine what God might do with the tree you planted many years from now. What might the roots look like? The trunk? The branches? The leaves? The ground around it?

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[Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions]

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[Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions]

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[Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions]

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLOSING SONG

My Friends, May You Grow in Grace

SENDING

Leader: May the peace of god, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

All: Amen.

Leader: Friends, go in peace to love and serve.
All: With God's help, we wil.