

LESSON



The Big, Big Tree

GRACE God brings His love to us.

References

Matthew 13:31, 32; *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 76-79.

Memory Verse

"Grow in the grace . . . of . . . Jesus" (2 Peter 3:18, NIV).

Objectives

The children will:

Know that our lives are like plants—we grow in God's love all the time.

Feel a desire to grow tall in God's love.

Respond by thanking God for His gifts of love that help us grow each day.

The Message

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Getting Ready to Teach

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

A man plants a tiny mustard seed in the ground at his farm. When it grows, it becomes a huge tree and gives shade for birds and animals. When we listen to stories from the Bible, we feel good like the birds and animals feel good in the shade of the mustard tree. Our lives are like the mustard plant. We grow in God's love every day as we get to know Him better.

This is a lesson about grace.

God's love helps us grow in many ways. We grow physically, spiritually, and mentally. And we grow in love for Him as we get to know Him better.

Teacher Enrichment

"When Christ spoke this parable, there were only a few Galilean peasants to represent the new kingdom. . . .

NINE

Program Outline			
LESSON SECTION	MINUTES	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS NEEDED
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Seed Sprouting</i> B. <i>Nature Table: Seeds</i> C. <i>Growing Leaves</i>	same as last week seeds, plants or pictures of plants card stock, scissors, green paper, copies of leaves (see p. 142), pencils
* Prayer and Praise *	up to 10	See page 96. *Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.	
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story	optional: little seeds, leaves made in Readiness Activity C
		Bible Study	Bible, <i>Little Voices Praise Him</i>
		Memory Verse	Bible
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Sharing Tag Game</i>	none
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Mustard Seed</i>	copies of mustard seed card on heavy paper (see p.142), mustard (or other small) seeds, tape or liquid glue

But the mustard seed was to grow and spread forth its branches throughout the world. When the earthly kingdoms whose glory then filled the hearts of men should perish, the kingdom of Christ would remain, a mighty and far-reaching power.

"So the work of grace in the heart is small in its beginning. A word is spoken,

a ray of light is shed into the soul, an influence is exerted that is the beginning of the new life; and who can measure its results?" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 77, 78).

Room Decorations

Add a picture or model of a large tree to your bulletin board or scenery.

Teaching the Lesson

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Encourage them to share any experiences from last week's lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

A. Seed Sprouting

Say: **Each week since we planted our seeds, we have given them sunshine and water. Let's look at them this week and see how much they have grown.**

Help the children find their jars and look at their plants. If desired, measure the sprouts this week and compare with measurements from last week. This activity can be continued at home after today.

You Need:

- items used last week

Debriefing

Say: **Just as these seeds grow with sunlight and water, you are growing too with the good food and care you get from your parents. Let's water our plants and put them back in the sun. You may take your plant home with you today and continue to watch it grow. It will help you know that you can grow to be more like Jesus. Remember that . . .**

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Say that with me.

B. Nature Table: Seeds

Gather as many different kinds of seeds as you can. Try to get tiny mustard seeds also. An adult can talk with the children about the names of the seeds, their colors, where they grow, if they are good to eat, etc. If possible, have plants or pictures of the plants the seeds could become, so the children can compare the size of the seed to the size of the plant. The children can sort the seeds according to color, shape, size, etc. If the weather permits, take the children outside and show them some plants that have grown from some similar seeds.

You Need:

- different kinds of seeds
- plants or pictures

Debriefing

Say: **Just as the seeds grow into big plants, you grow every day as well. Because Jesus loves us, He wants us to grow up to be strong boys and girls. Who can tell me what plants must have in order to grow?** (water, air, sunlight, food from good soil) Say: **Yes, all living things need water, air, sunlight, and food. What is another thing that people need in order to grow?** (Elicit the response: Love.) Say: **You are right. People need love. Who gives us love?** (Jesus, Mommy, Daddy, grandparents, friends, etc.)

Say: **Yes, Jesus gives us a lot of love, just as our mommies and daddies do. God's love helps us grow to be more like Him. Say that with me.**

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

C. Growing Leaves

In advance, copy the leaves (see page 142) onto green paper.

Say: **We are going to make some leaves to use when we learn about our lesson story today. One leaf will be big, and the other will be a little smaller. An adult helper will help you cut out your leaves.** Have the children cut out two sizes of leaves. Adults assist as necessary.

Debriefing

Say: **You have all made lovely green leaves to use in our lesson story. These leaves remind me of the way people grow. Just as leaves get bigger, people get bigger also. We grow taller, and our minds grow as we learn new things. Did you know that we grow in another way too? Yes,**

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- heavy card stock
- scissors
- green paper
- copies of leaves (see p. 142)
- pencils



NOTE: Prayer and Praise appears on page 96.

2

Bible Lesson

Experiencing the Story

Give each child a little seed and the different-sized heart-shaped leaves they made (optional).

You Need:

- seeds (optional)
- leaves made in Readiness Activity C (optional)

When you say: Children will:

- seed** crouch down and hold up their seed
- plant** bend knees and hold up small leaves
- tree** stand on tiptoe and hold up big leaves

Have an adult lead the children in doing the actions.

God’s kingdom, said Jesus, is like a mustard **seed** [crouch, hold up seed]. The people who were listening to Jesus knew a mustard **seed** [crouch, hold up seed] is tiny—one of the smallest **seeds** [crouch, hold up seed] that grew. But when a farmer plants that tiny **seed** [crouch, hold up seed] in his field, it grows and grows until it becomes a big **tree** [stand on tiptoe/big leaves]. Then birds come and build nests in its branches.

What did Jesus mean by saying that a tiny **seed** [crouch, hold up seed] is like God’s love?

Maybe Jesus meant that the first time you ask Him to come and live in your heart He plants a **seed** [crouch, hold up seed] of love inside you. Every time you hear Bible stories, and every time you choose to follow God’s way, every time you talk with God, the **plant** [bend knees, hold small leaves] grows bigger and stronger. Soon everyone can see it. They know that you have God’s love in

your heart. Other people will want to be around you, just as the birds came to build their nests in the branches of the mustard **tree** [stand on tiptoe, hold big leaves].

Maybe that’s what Jesus meant when He said that God’s kingdom is like a mustard **seed** [crouch, hold up seed].

But maybe He also meant that the story of His love would begin with just a few people. The people who knew Him when He was alive are like the tiny **seed** [crouch, hold up seed]. But as they told other people about Jesus, the **plant** [bend knees, hold small leaves] grew bigger. Each time someone shares a Bible story or tells someone else about Jesus’ love for them, the **plant** [bend knees, hold small leaves] grows bigger. When everyone who loves Jesus tells someone else about Him, the **plant** [bend knees, hold small leaves] turns into a **tree** [stand on tiptoe, hold big leaves]. More and more people want to hear about Jesus, just as people want to rest under a cool, shady **tree** [stand on tiptoe, hold big leaves] and birds want to build their nests in its branches.

Is that what Jesus meant when He said a tiny **seed** [crouch, hold up seed] is like God’s love?

Maybe Jesus meant two things. God’s love is a tiny **seed** [crouch, hold up seed] that grows in your heart every time you learn more about Him and as you ask Him each day to come into your life. And God’s kingdom grows bigger and bigger each time someone else learns about His love.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask:
What can you do now that you couldn’t do when you were a baby?

Show me. (Run, talk, feed myself, etc.)
What do you know about Jesus that you didn't know when you were a baby? (He loves me; He cares about me; His love helps me grow.)
What can you do with Jesus that you couldn't do when you were a baby? Show me. (Pray, praise Him, tell people about Him, sing songs about Him.)
You have all grown a lot bigger. And you are learning more about Jesus and His love for you. Remember . . .

┌ God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Say that with me.

Bible Study

You Need:

- Bible
- Little Voices Praise Him*

Sing "The Bible" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 53).

Open your Bible to Matthew 13:31, 32. Point to the verses and say: **This is where we**

find our lesson in God's Word, the Bible. Read the verses aloud.

Debriefing

Say: **Just as a tiny seed grows into a big plant or tall tree, so do we grow in God's love. The more we know about His love for us, the more we will grow to be like Him.**
Remember:

┌ God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Say that with me.

Memory Verse

Open your Bible to 2 Peter 3:18 and point to the text. Say: **This is where our memory verse is found in God's Word, the Bible.**

Read the text aloud.

Use the motions to teach the verse.

"Grow

Crouch down and gradually stand up.



in the grace . . .

Clasp arms over chest.



of . . . Jesus."

Point upward.



2 Peter 3:18

Palms together; then open as if opening a book.



Repeat the actions and words several times in a rhythmic manner until the children have learned the verse.

You Need:

- Bible

PRAYER AND PRAISE



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study and review the memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"I Know That Jesus Loves Me" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 95). Use these words:

**I know that Jesus loves me;
The Bible tells me so.
He always watches over me,
To help my love to grow.**

"I Love the Lord" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 207)

"Jesus Loves the Little Ones" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 107; first verse)

"Jesus Loves Me" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 102)

Mission

We know that people in other countries are growing in God's love too. Use a story from *Children's Mission*.

Offering

Because Jesus loves us and we love Him, we give Him our offerings. Let's sing the offering song. Use "Giving" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 285).

Say: **We show we love Jesus when we give Him our offerings.**

Say (and have children repeat after you): **Thank You, Jesus, that we can give offerings to help people around the world. Amen.**

Prayer

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray a simple prayer such as: **Thank You, Jesus, for helping us to grow. We want to be more like You. Amen.**

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

3

Applying the Lesson**Sharing Tag Game**

Say: **I will choose one child to be "It." The rest of you will sit on the floor.** (Teacher chooses.) Say to the child: **Jesus loves you! Now (name of child), you go and tell one other child that Jesus loves them. Then that child can stand up.** (Child does this. Now there are two children standing up.) **Now you two children each go and tell another child who is sitting down that Jesus loves them.** (Children do this. Now there are four children standing up.) Continue to play until all children are standing.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **What happened as we played the game?** Ask questions to elicit the answer: The more children who shared Jesus' love, the more children who got to stand up and share. **Let's make a big circle. When the game began, only one person was standing. Now look at all the people who know about Jesus' love. It's just like the big, big mustard tree. Let's remember . . .**

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

4

Sharing the Lesson**Mustard Seed**

In advance, copy the mustard seed card for each child. (See page 142.) Give each child one mustard seed (or other small seed) to tape or glue to the card. Tell the children what the card says. Encourage the children to give their card to someone today.

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **What will you say to the person when you give them your mustard seed card? Can you tell them the story Jesus told about the mustard seed? What do you think they will say to you? Tell us next week what happened. Remember . . .**

You Need:

- copies of mustard seed card (see p. 142)
- small seeds (mustard, if possible)
- tape or liquid glue

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Closing

Sing "Good-bye to You" (*Little Voices Praise Him*, no. 45). Pray and have children repeat after each phrase: **Thank You, Jesus, for teaching us that God's love helps us grow to be more like Him. Amen.**

STUDENT LESSON

The Big, Big Tree

References

Matthew 13:31, 32; *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 76-79

Memory Verse

"Grow in the grace . . . of . . . Jesus"
(2 Peter 3:18, NIV).

The Message

God's love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Have you ever planted a seed? Did it grow fast or slow? Did it stay short or become tall? Are you growing?

Many of the people who came to listen to Jesus were farmers who grew things in the ground. So Jesus used a little story about a seed to help them understand God's kingdom, the place where He is King.

"God's kingdom," said Jesus, "is like a mustard seed." The people who were listening to Jesus knew a mustard seed is tiny—one of the smallest seeds they grew. But when a farmer plants that tiny seed in his field, it grows and grows until it becomes a big tree. Then birds come and build nests in its branches.

What did Jesus mean by saying that a tiny seed is like God's kingdom?

Jesus meant that the first time you choose Him to be in your life, He plants a seed of love inside you. Every time you hear Bible stories, and every time you ask Him into your life, every time you talk with God, the plant grows bigger and stronger. Soon everyone can see it. They know that you have God's love in your heart. They know that Jesus is your best friend. Other people will want to be around you, just as the birds came to build their nests in the branches of the mustard tree.

That's what Jesus meant when He

said that God's kingdom is like a mustard seed.

But He also meant that the story of His love would begin with just a few people. The people who knew Him when He lived on earth are like the tiny seed. As they told other people about Him, more people followed Him, like the plant that grew bigger.

Each time someone shares a Bible story or tells someone else about Jesus' love for them, the plant of God's love grows bigger. When everyone who loves Jesus tells someone else about Him, the plant turns into a tree. More and more people want to hear about Jesus, just as people want to rest under a

cool, shady tree, and birds want to build their nests in its branches.

Is that what Jesus meant when He said a tiny seed is like God's love?

Jesus meant two things. God's love is like a tiny seed that grows in your heart every time you learn more about Him and as you choose to follow His way each day. And God's kingdom grows bigger and bigger each time someone else learns about His love. God's love does help us grow to be more like Him.



Do and Say

Sabbath

Each day this week read the lesson story and use the following to review the memory verse:

“Grow Crouch dow, then stand.

in the grace Clasp arms over chest.

of . . . Jesus.” Point upward.

2 Peter 3:18 Palms together; then open
as if opening a book.

Put a small plant in a sunny window and remember to water it. It will remind you that God’s love helps us grow to be more like Him.



Sunday

Help your child “read” the pictures in the lesson story. Talk about growing up physically, mentally, and spiritually in God’s love. Help your child pray and thank Jesus that God’s love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Monday

Visit a place where plants and flowers are displayed (flower shop, garden store, etc.). Help your child select a plant or flower to give to someone they love. Deliver the gift together. Encourage your child to say “Jesus loves you, and so do I.” Thank Jesus for loving friends.

Tuesday

Help your child measure their plant again today. Has it grown? How much did it grow? Measure your child to see how tall they are. Tell him or her how much they have grown since their last birthday. Have them call a friend and tell them how much they have grown. Remember that God’s love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Wednesday

Have everyone in your family tell about one way they showed love to someone today. Thank Jesus that God’s love helps us grow to be more like Him.

Thursday

Help your child make a healthy treat. For “Ants on a Log” spread some peanut butter (or a spread that is safe for your child) on some celery or a banana and sprinkle it with raisins. Thank Jesus for good food that helps you grow.

Friday

Help your child show your family how a tree starts out as a tiny seed and slowly grows into a large tree. (Roll up into a small ball, then slowly stand up straight until hands are stretched above your head, like tree branches.)

