

19 Let's find out about Jesus

Jesus the storyteller –

The story of the sower



Play time



Sand play

Theme your sand pit by adding an assortment of plastic plant pots, small spades, rakes and other plastic gardening tools, plus a few artificial flowers to 'plant' in the pots.

Supermarket shopping

Set an area out as a shop with a checkout till at an accessible height. Include a display with empty packets of food items made from flour and cereal crops. You will also need toy money and shopping bags (be aware of safety issues if using plastic).

Play dough

Use your favourite recipe to mould and shape. Or you might like to try this one:

Jelly play dough

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon/ 15 ml oil
- 2 teaspoons/ 10 ml cream of tartar
- 1 packet gelatine
- small quantity food colouring



Mix all the ingredients together in a saucepan and cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly, until dough is the consistency of mashed potato. Leave to cool.

This can be used for pretend 'baking' activities if pastry and biscuit cutters, rolling pins and baking tins are provided. Alternatively, allow free play and the experience of feeling, prodding and moulding the dough. Do not allow the children to taste the dough as it is very salty.

Bread rolls

You will need: a packet of bread mix – many varieties are available in supermarkets, but be aware of allergy, hygiene and safety issues.

Follow the directions on the packet. The dough can either be formed into a loaf or

small rolls. If time is short, the latter are quicker. Ask a helper to be responsible for the cooking. Keep the children away from the hot areas. This is a directed activity which allows the children to discover how bread is made and what dough feels like, as well as one use of flour and seeds, and the smell and taste of fresh bread.

Game time



What's inside?

You will need: a variety of fruits, (eg pear, apple, peach, melon, tomato).

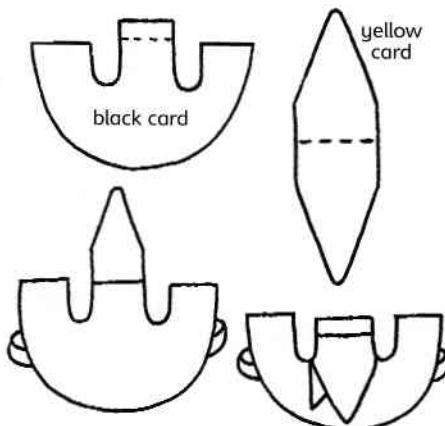
Ask the children to guess how many seeds are inside each fruit. Use appropriate words (seed, stone, pip). One at a time, cut the fruit open and ask for help in counting the seeds to see which person has guessed most accurately. Explain that, with good soil, warmth and water, the tiny seeds could eventually grow into plants or trees that will produce more.

You could also devise a game using bean bags, eg catching or throwing into bucket or hoop targets.

Making time



Bird headbands

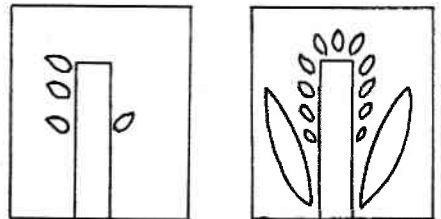


Give each child a headband, 2.5 cm deep, cut from coloured card. Staple or tape it to the size required. Add a bird's head shape, completed as shown, to the centre of the headband.

Corn pictures

You will need: for each child a piece of A4 card with a green line drawn on it to represent a stalk of corn; yellow card; pots of golden brown or yellow paint, mixed thickly; some small oval printing blocks to represent ears of corn.

Show the children how to print the blocks in pairs on either side of the stalk. Give each child two leaf-shaped pieces of golden-yellow card, to represent the leaves. Glue in place, as shown.



Poppy field

For very young children, provide paints in harvest colours (yellow, golden brown) and some poppy shapes cut from red tissue paper, to collage on to the painted background.

Story time



The sower

You will need: a shoulder bag containing small pieces of brown tissue paper to represent seeds.

Ask someone to walk around the room as you tell the story and scatter the 'seeds' as they go and mime to the story. You might like to say that this story is like one that Jesus told his friends.

Farmer Joe wanted to grow some corn. He hoped it would grow big and strong because he wanted to make it into flour – some to sell, and some to make into bread and cakes for himself and his family to eat.

So, he ploughed his field and began to sow the seed. He walked up and down the field, throwing the seeds from his bag as he walked.

Some of the seeds landed on the path. Some birds flew by and saw the seeds

lying there. 'Delicious!' they chirped and they swooped down and gobbled it up. Oh dear, that seed wasn't going to grow into corn, was it?

The wind blew some of the seeds onto rocky ground at the edge of the field. The seeds started to grow, but the soil was too hard and dry. The plants did not have enough water for their roots to drink. The sun shone, and the little plants began to droop. Their leaves went dry and shrivelled, and the plants died. Farmer Joe wasn't very pleased. Those seeds weren't going to grow into corn either.

Some other seeds were blown into a patch of prickly weeds. Soon they sprouted and began to grow. But the weeds grew even quicker and soon they were enormous. The corn had no room to grow and so the little plants went yellow and died. Oh dear, what was Farmer Joe going to do?

But most of the corn seed fell onto the part of the field which had been ploughed. The soil there was good and there were no rocks or weeds. The rain watered the ground and the plants grew big and strong. The sun shone and turned the corn a golden brown colour ready for it to be harvested.

Farmer Joe cut the ripened corn, and ground the seeds into flour. He put it into sacks. He sold some of it at the market, and the rest was used to make bread and cakes for him and his family. And that made Farmer Joe a very happy man.

Rhyme time



Improvise actions as you chant this rhyme. Some children might like to wear bird headbands and peck up the seeds!

These are the seeds the farmer sowed,
So that he would have lots of corn.

These are the seeds that fell on the path,
But the birds ate them up,
So the farmer had no corn. (*Shake head, look sad.*)

These are the seeds that
fell near the rocks,
But the ground was too hard,
So the farmer had no corn.

These are the seeds that fell into thorns.
There was no room to grow,
So the farmer had no corn.

These are the seeds that fell on good soil,
The plants grew and grew, so
The farmer had lots of corn. (*Big smile.*)

Song time



The farmer sows the seed

Sing this song to the tune: 'The farmer's in his den'. Sing it through a couple of times, adding your own mimed actions as you go.

The farmer sows the seed, (*repeat*)
Here, there, in his field,
The farmer sows the seed.

Some seeds fell on the path, (*repeat*)
Birds flew down, they gobbled up
The tasty seeds for lunch.

Some seeds fell near the rocks, (*repeat*)
The sun was hot, the small plants died,
The soil was much too hard.

Some seeds fell near the weeds, (*repeat*)
The small plants died, they could not grow,
The weeds were much too big.

Some seeds fell on good soil, (*repeat*)
They grew and grew, into lots of corn,
The farmer was so pleased!

Pray time



Good food

You will need: objects or pictures to represent the words in italics in the prayer, eg a packet of seeds, a toy tractor, a paper bag.

Make sure everyone is holding one of the objects. Ask the children to wave their object or picture in the air when they hear it mentioned. When the word 'food' is mentioned, all children holding a food item should respond. When 'everything' is mentioned, the whole group should respond. Practise this first and then lead the prayer:

Thank you God, for *farmers* who grow food for us to eat.

Thank you for sending rain and sunshine to make *seeds* grow into strong plants.

Thank you for people who work in *bakeries* and *food factories*.

Thank you for all the people who work in *shops* and *supermarkets*.

And thank you for our families who make

sure we have enough food to eat.
For everything you give us, thank you,
Father God. Amen.

Extra time

•Read *Stories Jesus Told*, Make and Learn series, SU. *Little Red Hen*, traditional; *The Little Seed* by Eric Carle, Puffin.

•Plant grass seed in polystyrene cups almost full of soil. Draw a face on the front of each cup. The seeds will, if watered, grow into 'hair'.

•Play with a toy farm.

Adults too

The parables Jesus told could be enjoyed by everyone, whatever their age and understanding. They were stories related to everyday life. Children can enjoy exploring this theme at the level of seeds, plants, soil, growth, harvest and to discover where their food comes from. However, at a deeper, spiritual level this story is about ensuring conditions for growth. The way we care for the adults who come to groups with their under-fives is also vitally important. Providing a friendly welcome, support, time to listen, encouragement and understanding; accepting and loving them as people in their own right (rather than as someone's parent or guardian). These things help to build up relationships and trust and, when the opportunity arises, give us the opportunity to speak to them about the Christian faith.

Top tip

Children learn through 'looking with their fingers'; a curiosity that wants to find out about things through touch as well as looking, or questioning. Encourage them to find out about soil, sand, and dough through 'hands-on' experiences. It's a fun way to discover about texture, but can also be used as an opportunity to develop language skills, eg think about words that describe uncooked dough: 'soft', 'squidgy', 'sticky'. Does it feel, look or smell the same when cooked?

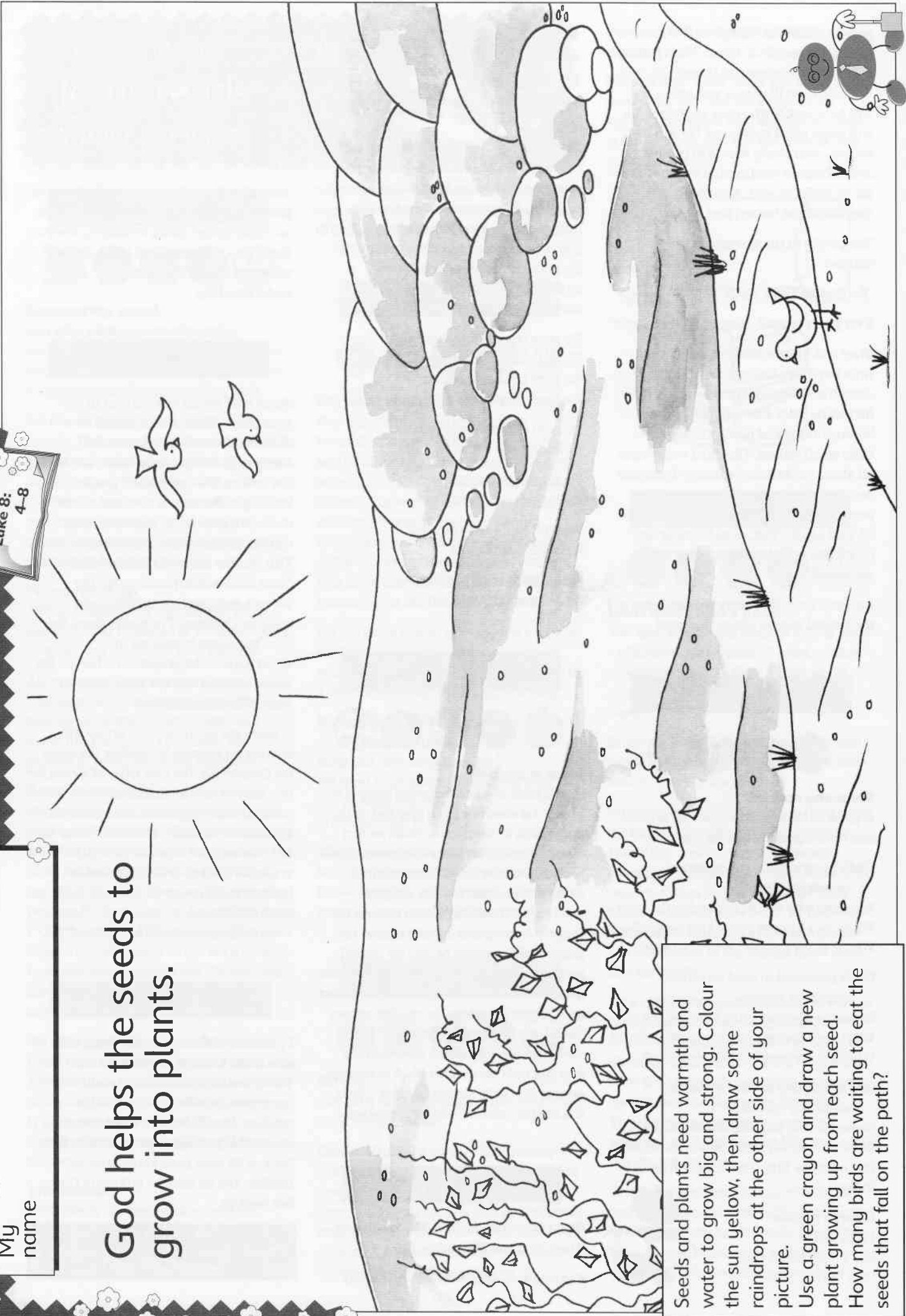
ACTIVITY PAGE:

The photocopiable activity page for this outline is on page 72

My
name

God helps the seeds to
grow into plants.

Luke 8:
4-8



Seeds and plants need warmth and water to grow big and strong. Colour the sun yellow, then draw some raindrops at the other side of your picture.
Use a green crayon and draw a new plant growing up from each seed. How many birds are waiting to eat the seeds that fall on the path?