

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Weeds (Tares)

The Parable of the Weeds, also known as the Parable of the Tares, can be found in Matthew 13:24-30 and Matthew 13:36-43. Jesus used parables to teach important lessons using everyday activities and real-life examples. In this parable, Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a farmer sowing his wheat seed in his field. However, an enemy committed an act of sabotage by planting tares or weeds in the same field. The crucial point of this story is how the plants need to be separated. Jesus provides a proper way to maintain the health of the wheat and yet remove the weeds.

This parable is broken into two sections. The first section, Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus is explaining the parable to a crowd on the beach of the Sea of Galilee. Have someone read Matthew 13:24-30. There will be several metaphors and parables asked in this story and we'll either identify them or put them on hold until explained in the next section.

Description of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Leader should read Matthew 13:24 outlined in black): Another parable He put forth to them saying: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."** There are three elements here, answer them if you know them. If not, we will come back.

1. **Who is the man?** **do not reveal yet** "Jesus."
2. **What does the good seed represent?** **do not reveal yet** "the sons of the kingdom"
3. **What does the field represent?** **do not reveal yet** "the world."

The sabotage. (Have someone read Matthew 13:25 outlined in blue): **"but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way."**

4. **Who was the enemy?** **do not reveal yet** "the devil."
5. Tares, are also known as weeds. But it has a specific name. **Do you know the name?** Back in Jesus time, it was called a "Darnel," botanists today call it (Lolium Temulentum) The original Greek word for "tares" was ζιζάνιον (zizanian).

The tares (weeds) grow among the grain. (Have someone read Matthew 13:26-27 outlined in orange) **"But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'"**

6. **What do the weeds represent?** **do not reveal yet** "the sons of the wicked." Servants ask, "How then does it have tares?" Jesus answers this question in the next verse.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Weeds (Tares)

Jesus identifies the saboteur. (Have someone read Matthew 13:28 outlined in blue) "He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'" Answer to #6 is "An enemy" planted the weed seeds.

7. **Under Roman law, was it a crime to sow weeds in another person's field?** Yes Alastair Kerr, a legal scholar, explains that in 533 C.E., the Roman Emperor Justinian compiled a summary of Roman law. One jurist was Ulpian, who referred to a case that had been considered by the Roman statesman Celsus in the second century. The case involved the malicious sowing of weeds in someone else's field, which resulted in damage to the crop. The Digest, 9.2.27.14 a part of Justinian's work, explains the legal remedies that were available to the victim to seek compensation from the wrongdoer.

The servant's solution: (Leader read Matthew 13:28 in gray only) "The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'"

Jesus' answer on how to solve the weeds mixed in with the wheat dilemma. (Have someone read Matthew 13:29-30 outlined in green only) "But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers,'"

8. **What was the enemy's plan?** The enemy intends to ruin the farmer's harvest by either getting the servants to pull up the wheat along with the weeds or by suffocating the field with too many weeds, which would hinder the growth of the wheat.
9. **How does the farmer's solution combat the enemy's agenda?** The farmer instructed the servants not to gather the weeds, as he had discovered the enemy's plot in time to prevent it. The harvest has been saved, and the wheat will continue growing until it reaches maturity, or until the weeds interfere.
10. **Why does the farmer tell the servants to not gather up the weeds?** (1) The roots of the weeds are intertwined with the roots of the wheat. Removing the weeds would damage the wheat roots and could result in stunted growth or the death of the plant. (2) It is not the appropriate time to remove the weeds. The servants should wait for the wheat to grow, harvest the weeds, and then the wheat. (3) The servants are not qualified to handle such a responsibility. The farmer has a different solution to who will harvest the wheat.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Weeds (Tares)

The harvest. (Have someone read Matthew 13:30 outlined in red and purple) **“First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”**

11. **Who is responsible for the harvest?** The reapers. The reapers collect the weeds, bind them in bundles and burn them. As a metaphor, the reapers are better equipped to determine who is a Christian and a hypocrite. They also have no biased opinion when making their decision.
12. **Why do the reapers gather up the weeds first?** (1) When all the plants grow together, it becomes easier to distinguish between the wheat and weed plants. (2) The reaper does not have to be careful in removing the weeds, as they can be pulled out easily. (3) When the weeds are uprooted, their roots come out together with the plant. This way, even if the roots of the weeds are tangled with the wheat roots, they can still be pulled out of the soil.
13. **What happens to the weeds after they are bundled together?** Once the weeds have been gathered together, they are bundled and burned, signifying the purification of the land.
14. **After the reapers gather up the wheat, where does the reaper put the wheat?** In the barn.

Parable of the Weeds Explained

Have someone read Matthew 13:36-43.

Jesus explains the parable only to the disciples. (The leader should read Matthew 13:36) **“Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’”**

Jesus explains who the man is, what does the field and good seed represent. (Have someone read Matthew 13:37-38 in black only) **“He answered and said to them: ‘He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom,’”**

Refer back to question #1 “The son of man.”

Refer back to question #2 “The sons of the kingdom” also known as “God’s people.”

Refer back to question #3 “The world.”

15. **Who is the son of man?** The Son of Man is used 80 times in the New Testament. Jesus referred to himself as the “Son of Man” on many occasions.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Weeds (Tares)

Jesus identifies who the tares or weeds. (Have someone read Matthew 13:38 in orange only) **“but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.”**

Refer back to question #6 “the sons of the wicked one.”

16. **Who are the sons of the wicked one?** Those who have refused to be born again in Christ and who have instead chosen to follow their own desires and inclinations. They are said to be under the dominion of Satan and to be constantly at odds with the followers of Christ.

Jesus identifies who is the enemy. (Have someone read Matthew 13:39 in blue only) **“The enemy who sowed them is the devil,”**

Refer back to question #4 “the devil.”

17. **What is the parable here when the enemy sows his seed alongside the seed Jesus has planted?** The devil, plants his seeds among the ones that Jesus has planted. The devil knows that his seeds will grow alongside Jesus' seeds, and he hopes that they will intertwine and take root in the hearts of the people.

The inferred parable. Jesus does not explain this part of the parable. (Leader read Matthew 13:29-30 in the green only) **“But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers.’”** Jesus allows the tares to grow alongside the wheat, so the plants are not uprooted, and they continue to grow until the harvest. Assuming the rest of the story remains consistent, and Jesus explains the remaining parables of the harvest, the reapers, tares being burned, and the wheat into the barn.

18. **What would be the parable of the tares growing alongside the wheat? Explain the risk and benefit.** The children who grow up in the church, the children of the devil will grow and mature alongside the children of the kingdom. They will attend the same schools, live in the same neighborhoods, and work in the same offices. They will look like everyone else, but they will have a different agenda. They will try to influence the righteous and lead them astray, hoping to intertwine the roots of both plants. The children of the kingdom and the wicked must remain together until the end when they shall be separated. The righteous will be saved, and the wicked will be burned up in the fire. It is important for the righteous to be vigilant and not be led astray by the devil's seeds. They must keep

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Weeds (Tares)

their faith strong and resist the temptations of the wicked. Only then can they be assured of their salvation and eternal life in the kingdom of God.

The harvest explained. (Have someone read Matthew 13:39 in green only) **“the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.”**

19. **What does the harvest represent?** The end of the ages.

20. **Who are the reapers?** The angels.

21. **Why did Jesus choose his angels over the servants to harvest and separate the weeds and the wheat?** Because He knows that His servants, or disciples, are not as qualified to make such decisions. Human beings are not capable of discerning the true nature of an individual's eternal being. Angels, on the other hand, are spiritual beings created by God, and they possess a higher level of knowledge and discernment than we do. It is more appropriate for Jesus to entrust this task to His angels. They have a deeper understanding of God's plan.

The tares burned in the fire. (Have someone read Matthew 13:40 in red) **“Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.”**

22. **Who do the tares represent?** The tares belong to Satan, also known as the sons of the wicked one. (Matthew 13:38) The analogy suggests that just as the tares are separated from the wheat, so will the wicked individuals be separated from the righteous ones at the end of the age. The tares, also known as the sons of the wicked one, will be gathered to be burned in the fire as a symbol of their punishment. This refers to the final judgment, where the wicked individuals will receive their punishment.

The angels are sent out. (Have someone read Matthew 13:41 in green) **“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.”**

23. **Who does the Son of man send out to be gather up first?** Jesus instructed the reapers to gather the tares. Similarly, He sends out His angels to gather the children of the devil who have sown evil in the world. These angels are tasked to gather all who offend and practice lawlessness.

The furnace of fire. (Have someone read Matthew 13:42 in red) **“and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”**

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Weeds (Tares)

24. **What happens to those that offend and who practice lawlessness?** They will be thrown into a fiery furnace where they will weep and gnash their teeth. This language is often used by Jesus to describe the eternal judgment of those who do not repent of their sins. The weeping and gnashing of teeth are a metaphorical expression that conveys the idea of great anguish, despair, and hopelessness. The lost wicked will be shut out from the light of heaven, peace, joy, and hope. They will be weeping in hopeless grief, gnashing their teeth in displeasure against God, and murmuring against justice.

The righteous people. (Have someone read Matthew 13:43 in purple) **“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”**

25. **What happens to the righteous people?** Jesus explains that they will shine in the kingdom of their Father like the sun.

26. **What is the parable of the wheat being put into the barn?** This means that not only will they be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven, but they will also shine brightly as children of God the Father. The idea of shining like the sun is a metaphor for being fully realized and glorified in the presence of God. The New Testament is very clear that the only way to enter this kingdom is through faith in God's Son, Jesus.