

Look Closer: Healthy Growing Environments

This activity takes an in-depth look at the part that various environments play in our spiritual lives. Students will use the information to create a group poster.

Supplies Needed for Group Project

- copy of blank *Healthy Growing Environments* chart for each student (see following pages)
- copy of filled-in *Healthy Growing Environments* chart for teacher (see following pages)
- large piece of paper or poster board
- markers, pencils, pens
- optional: collage materials (e.g. pictures from seed catalogs, magazines, ribbons, seeds, sand, glue, etc.)



Activity

1. Introduce the activity. The Lord, the heavenly Sower, spreads His seeds of truth on all grounds—to all people. Like plant seeds, seeds of truth from the Word have the potential to sprout, blossom and bear fruit in people's lives. But not every individual is prepared to receive and nurture the truth.
2. Distribute blank charts to each student. Invite the students to brainstorm as a group. Their goal is to enter an idea or two in each box. It may be easier to start with the *Natural Qualities* sections. If needed, help students with leading questions. E.g.: What do roads do? Are they located inside your home, or outside? Name one physical property of a road surface. What might happen to seeds that fall on this surface?
3. If the students seem stuck, offer them an idea from the completed teacher chart to help get their thinking going. Try not to give them all the answers, rather help them develop the ability to analyze situations.
4. Once the charts are complete, brainstorm ways in which each soil environment could be pictured on a poster. Students may look for ways to incorporate both the natural and spiritual qualities, or they may choose to focus on one aspect or the other.
5. Depending on the size of your group, students may work together or each work on a different section. Encourage them to plan together. If students choose to depict spiritual qualities, their ideas may not resemble the literal story in the Word at all, rather they may picture the spiritual realities represented by different parts of the story.
6. Once the groundwork has been laid, create the poster. Divide the larger paper or posterboard into four sections. Give the poster a title and label the sections. Write key ideas in each section. Optional: use collage materials to convey the ideas in pictures.
7. Display the poster.

Healthy Growing Environments

Teacher Copy

<p>Road or Wayside</p> <p>Natural Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take us to new places and enable communication • Outside of our homes • Does not retain moisture • Seeds here are vulnerable to being crushed or snatched up by birds 	<p>Stony Ground</p> <p>Natural Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stones with little soil • Heats up quickly in the sun • Little moisture for plant growth • It can be hard for roots to go deep • Seeds here are vulnerable to heat and lack of moisture
<p>Spiritual Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental roadways are streams of conscious thoughts that enable us to see choices • Truths in our memory are "out on the street", not "in our lives" or actions • False thoughts from evil spirits snatch away truths that are not part of our life 	<p>Spiritual Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A little love for true ideas (shallow soil) but no deep love for living by them • Sun is like the love of self pressuring us to give in to selfish impulses • Lack of living truth (water in soil) to protect from selfish desires
<p>Choked by Thorns</p> <p>Natural Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good prepared soil • Healthy plant growth cut off by growth of invasive thorns • Plants grow but cannot mature and produce fruit 	<p>Good Ground</p> <p>Natural Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is tilled and prepared by weeding and tending • Retains moisture • Has access to sunlight • Provides nutrients for growth of healthy roots and leaves • Plants can mature and produce fruit
<p>Spiritual Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil represents love for heavenly things • Thorns are the pleasures, riches and worldly concerns that compete for our time and attention and can choke out more important things • A love for heavenly truth grows but is later eclipsed by worldly cares 	<p>Spiritual Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good soil is like the desire to do what the Lord wants that comes from reading and living by His Word • True ideas willingly received bring forth heavenly fruits—useful acts of service to the Lord and neighbor • 100, 60, 30 represent complete connection with God

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