Growing a New Tree



King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he appeared as a tree. The Word often compares people with trees. Nebuchadnezzar's tree was cut down because it represented his great selfishness—he thought he was fine on his own and did not need to pay attention to the Lord.

Like Nebuchadnezzar we are born into the appearance that life is our own. This attitude can only change if we learn from the Word that the Lord is the source of all life. The first perspective must be cut down and removed. Then the Lord can give us a new heart and a new mind, so we truly grow into a new "tree", motivated by love to the Lord and love for others. Choose whether to have children plant seeds in the classroom or transplant a seedling outside on church grounds.

1. Have you ever planted a tree? What was the seed like? How big is it now?
2. Trees produce thousands of seeds. Many never grow into trees. Some are eaten by people (e.g. nuts) or animals (e.g. acorns). Some grow near the tree they came from. If you look near a tall tree you may see small seedlings. People sometimes move seedlings to a place where they want a tree to grow. This is called *transplanting* a tree.
3. Today we are going to plant (or transplant) a tree. Continue with the directions below for planting seeds. Or see the directions *For transplanting a seedling tree* outside in the sidebar.
4. Gather children to look at the seeds. Ask questions such as, "What's inside a seed?" "What do seeds need to grow?" "What part of the tree develops first?"
5. Give each child a seed, container, small stones and dirt. Start by putting stones in the bottom of the container to give the seed good drainage. Add a layer of dirt. Make a little hole in the soil with your finger and put the seed inside it. Cover the seed with more soil. Give the seed water.
6. Your seed will need sunlight and water to grow. Put it near a window and water it regularly. Once it has sprouted you can plant it outside.
7. Remind students that beautiful trees symbolize the new heart and mind the Lord plants in us when we turn to Him.

Materials Needed

For Planting Seeds in the Classroom

Seeds from a fruit tree such as apple, pear or orange, etc., *or* seeds from a tree where you live such as acorns, maple "wings", pinecone seeds, etc.; soil; small stones for drainage; water; containers such as a sturdy plastic bags, plastic cups or small plant pots

For Transplanting a Seedling Tree Outside

Look for seedlings approximately 6-12" (15-30cm) tall. Woodlands often yield more seedlings than gardens. Woody-stemmed bushes (e.g. Rose of Sharon) may also be a good source for seedlings.
Dig up the seedling with a shovel, being careful to get all the roots. Keep the roots moist in a plastic bag. Re-plant the seedling near your church in an appropriate (sunny/shady/moist/drained) spot. You will need a shovel, a large watering can and a place to wash hands afterwards. *Optional*: gardening gloves.

Note: This activity will be most successful in the spring or fall. Seedlings transplanted when it is very hot or cold often struggle.

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