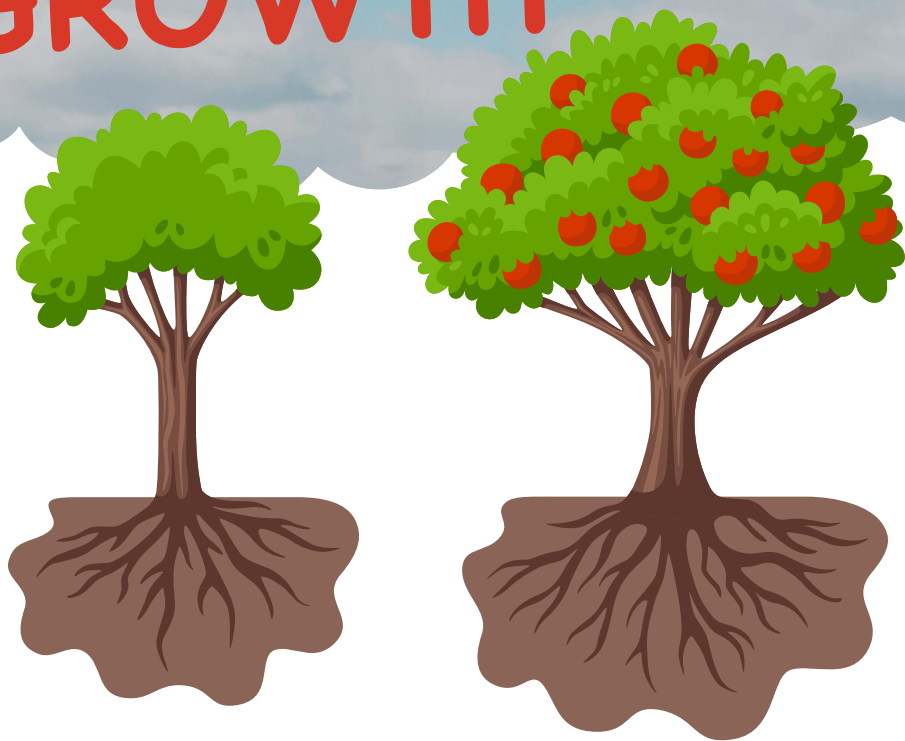


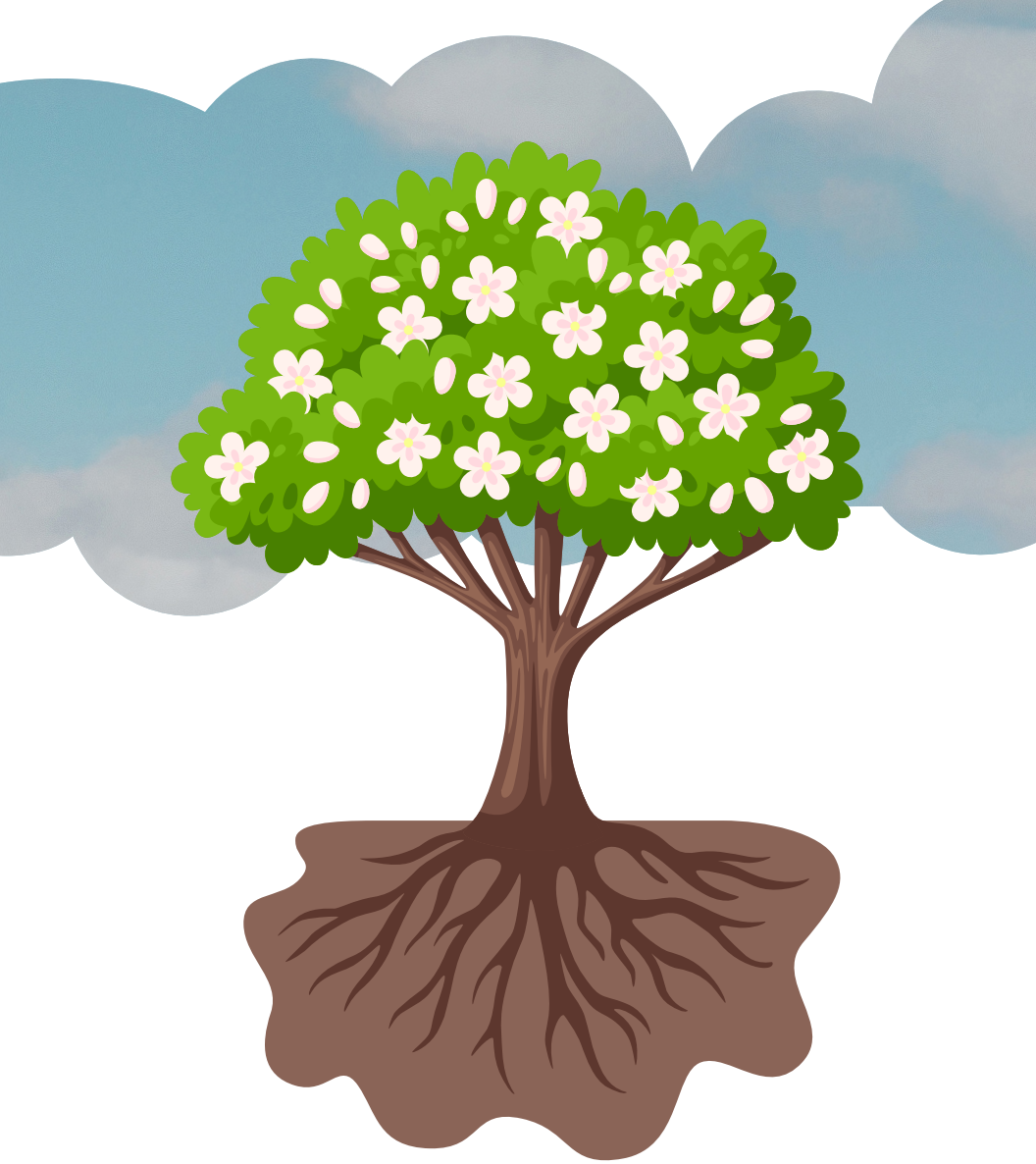
**FAMILY GUIDE - 4 WEEKS**

**SPIRITUAL**



**GROWTH**





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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## WEEK 1

Get Ready ..... 4

## WEEK 2

Get Set ..... 7

## WEEK 3

False Start..... 9

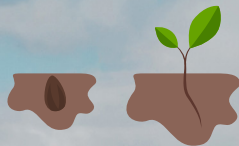
## WEEK 4

Find Your Teammates, and Go!..... 11

Memory Verses ..... 14

# GET READY

week 1



## Start Talking:

What kind of plants do you see in growing in the fields? What kinds of things do those plants need to grow well?

(good soil, fresh water/nutrition, sunlight)

## Big Idea:

Jesus' love grows inside of us when the "soil" in our hearts is ready and good.

## Key Verses:

Matthew 13:1-9

*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear."*

Matthew 13:18-23

*"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last*

*only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

## **Start Sharing:**

Break the parable down into its parts. Have the kids identify the parts with your guidance as well as what the parts represent.

SAY: In the parable, we see three main characters/parts. What are they?

1. The Farmer (God/Jesus)
2. The Seeds (God's Word/the Bible)
3. The Soil (Our hearts/lives)
  - Rocky (a life that doesn't really know about God)
  - Thorny (a life that knows about God but isn't really following)
  - Good (a life committed to following God)

## **Start Doing:**

**What you need:** Your family and seeds. If you don't have seeds, use grains of rice, cheerios, or anything small to represent a seed and give some to each child.

**Begin:** After doing the sharing part of this study guide, identifying the parts of the story, give everyone a handful of seeds (or whatever you are using for seeds). Take a walk outside and find all three types of soil that were talked about in the parable. Scatter some seeds on each type and talk about whether or not they could grow there.



**Examples:** →

## Examples:

- Rocky** sidewalk: a weed or two might grow in between the cracks of the sidewalk, but nothing really grows there for long
- Thorny** inside a bush, under a pine tree: might grow a little bit for a while but the plant will block the sun, grow other weeds, etc.
- Good** garden bed, flower patch: seeds will grow when the soil is ripe for planting and taken care of

## Start Applying:

Jesus wants our hearts to be like good soil. But, what does that mean, and how do we make our hearts ready for the love of God to fill it? We can start by reading God's word, the Bible. It will help us know what to do and how to live more like Jesus. Find the following passages in your Bible and write one down. Put it in a place to read it all week long.

- Psalm 119:105  
Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
- Joshua 1:8  
Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
- Psalm 145:9  
The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

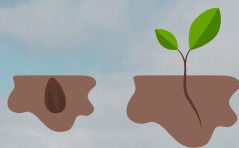
## Start Praying:

Dear God, please create good soil in me. Thank you for letting me read about you in the Bible. Help me to follow you. In Jesus' name, amen.



# GET SET

week 2



## Start Talking:

What is something you prepared for this past week?

## Big Idea:

Learning about what God wants of us is the only way to “fertilize” our heart’s “soil”.

## Key Verses:

Proverbs 3:5

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

Romans 15:13

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

## Start Sharing:

We need to tend the soil that we started building last week! In order for good soil to grow anything, it needs fertilizer/nutrients and good water. What we put into our eyes, our ears, and our minds is like fertilizer to our hearts. Did you know that there can be bad and good

fertilizer? Let’s focus on the good!

God said that reading the Bible makes our soil nice and fertilized. Remember these verses from week 1? Read them again!

- Psalm 119:105
- Joshua 1:8
- Psalm 145:9

1. What is one thing that you learned from any of these verses?
2. Read our first key verse from this week. Proverbs 3:5 (Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding). Now flip it around and read it (Lean not on your own understanding, Trust in the LORD with all your heart). Which way of reading it makes the most sense to you?
3. Think about a time that you learned something at school. What if you just tried

to understand your math or reading without listening to your teacher?

4. Read our second key verse, Romans 15:13. God is asking us to trust him. What should we expect to feel when we do that? (fill us will all joy and peace, overflow with hope)

### **Start Doing:**

Create an acrostic (or two) using the words BIBLE, FERTILIZE, NUTRIENT, SOIL, or HEART.

Example:

**S**avior

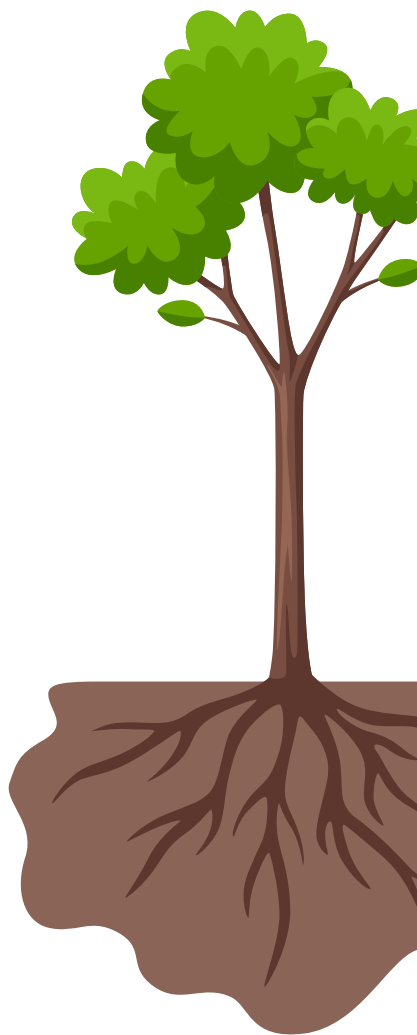
**O**bey

**I**dentify as God's child

**L**ove

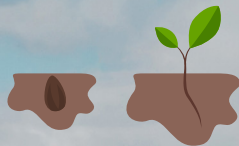
### **Start Praying:**

Dear God, thank you for giving us good soil. Help us to fertilize it with your words from the Bible. In Jesus' name, amen.





# FALSE START



week 3

## Start Talking:

Did someone tell you no this past week? Today? The last hour? What happened?

## Big Idea:

Even though we want to do the right thing, we don't always do it. God forgives us and we can try again.

## Key Verses:

Romans 7:15 (GNT)

I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate.

## Start Sharing:

1. Talk about something that you know you should do, but you don't.
2. Talk about something you know you should NOT do, but you do.
3. Why is it so easy to think of those things? It's so confusing sometimes when this happens. Why do you think it happens?
4. Read Romans 7:15 and talk about how this was true even for really Godly people in the Bible.

## Start Doing:

### Examine the "should" to get to the "will" activity

Take one of your scenarios from question #1 in the start sharing section and apply it to this activity. Answer the questions that follow:

Example scenario: I should clean my room, but I don't.

1. Why should you (clean your room)?  
(my parents say to do it)

2. Why do your parents say to do (it)?  
*(they like my clothes and toys put away)*

Ask the following questions based on your own scenario.

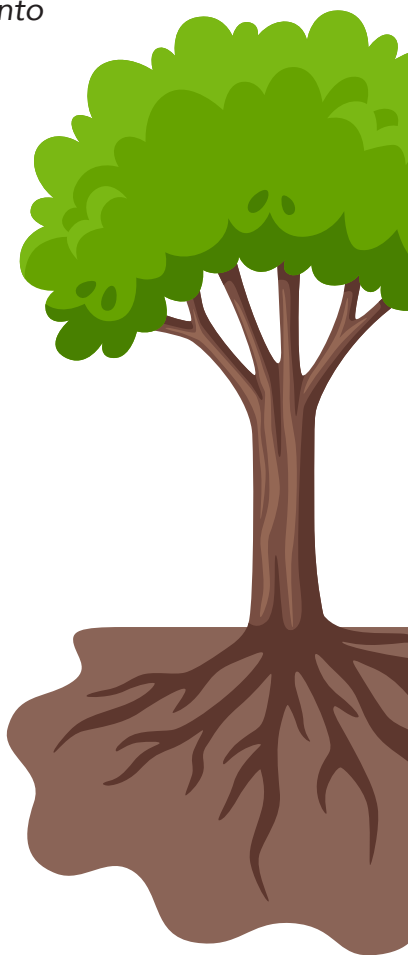
3. Why do your parents like your stuff put away?  
*(then we can find stuff and they say it helps clear my mind)*
4. Why don't you do it?  
*(it's boring and takes time)*
5. What happens if you don't do it?  
*(I get in trouble, I can't find my stuff, my room is messy)*
6. How can we turn your "should" into a "will"  
*(let the kids brainstorm as to how they can take this "should" and make it easier to turn it into something they actually do – is there a 10 minute timer every day that they set to pick up? Do they do it every Saturday? Do they get a fun basket to pick up with? Do they get time doing a special thing with you if they keep their rooms clean for 7 days in a row? Etc.)*

### **More Doing:**

Apply the activity to a Biblical example (I should read the Bible, I should pray, etc.)

### **Start Praying:**

Dear God, please help me to know what I should do and then help me to do it.  
Thank you for listening to me when I pray to you. In Jesus' name, amen.



# FIND YOUR TEAMMATES, AND GO!

week 4



## Start Talking:

What is your favorite fruit?

## Big Idea:

When we nurture our heart,  
God's word takes root and our  
life bears good fruit.

## Key Verses:

Matthew 7:17-18

*Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.*

John 15:5

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

## Start Sharing:

God has asked us to read his word to figure out how to nurture our heart's soil, telling us how to live and how to act. He asks us to follow him – and he also wants us to figure out who else is following Him. Read Matthew 7:17-18.

1. Right now, there are a lot of apple trees that are ripe for harvest. Good apple trees give us what kind of fruit? (ripe, sweet)
2. What if the tree looked like an apple tree, but the trunk and branches were filled with worms, bugs, and rot? What kind of fruit do you think it would give us? (full of holes, bitter, gross)
3. Which tree would you like in your yard?
4. Think of a person who looks nice on the outside but their words are mean and rude. Do you want to be around them?
5. Think of a person who looks nice on the outside, and their words are sweet and nice? Do you want to be around them?
6. Which person do you think has good "soil" in their heart? Is a good "tree"?
7. Which person do you want to be?

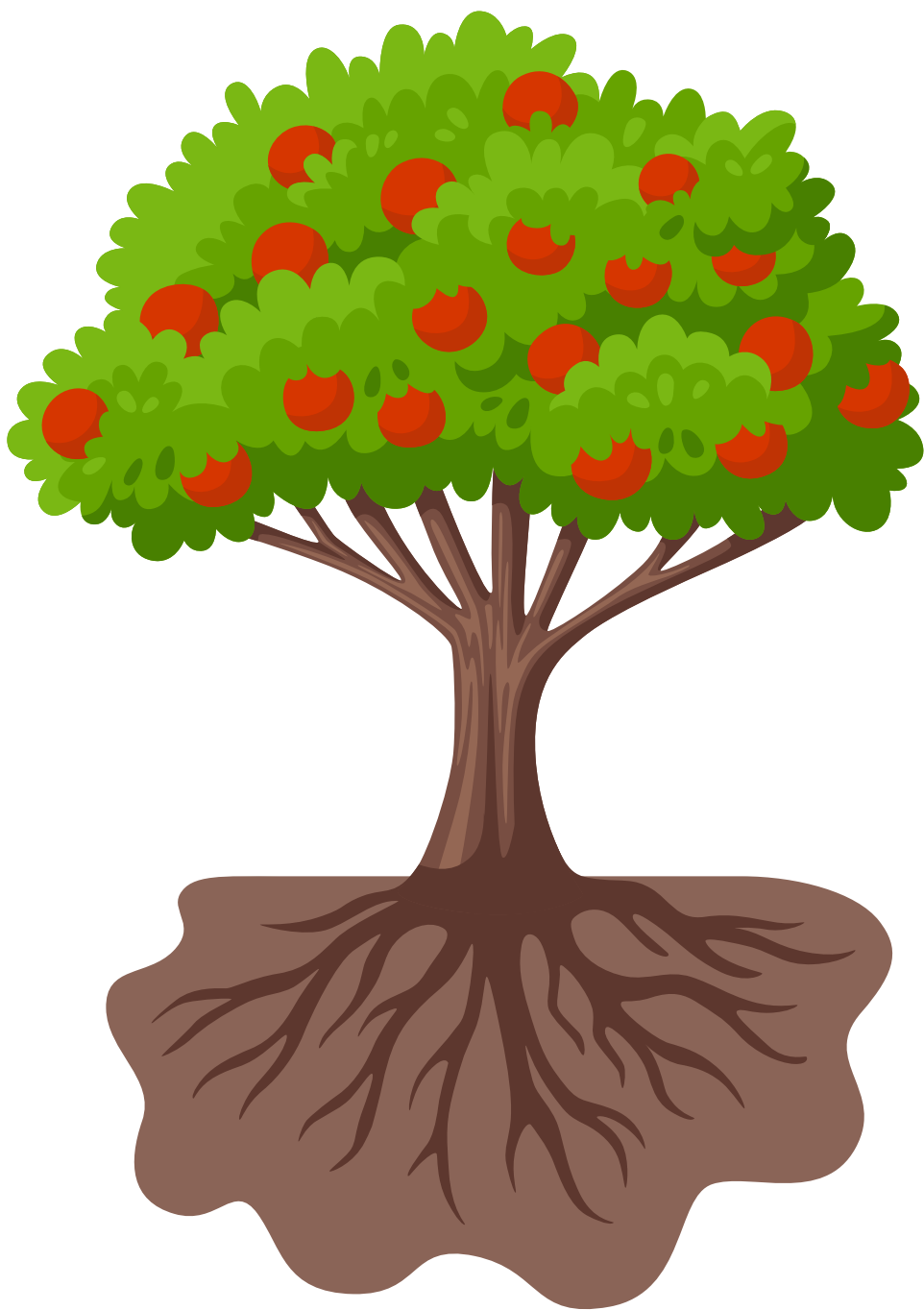
## **Start Doing:**

### **Hear the hypocrite (bad fruit) game**

1. Sit or stand in a circle with one person in the middle.
2. Choose someone in the outside circle to be the bad fruit. The person in the middle closes their eyes or wears a blindfold and tells the group to make a noise like an animal of their choice. The bad fruit, however, makes a different noise. The person in the middle has to guess who the bad fruit is.
3. The bad fruit then takes the middle spot and the person who was guessing silently chooses the next bad fruit.
4. Play until everyone has had a chance to be in the middle or as long as the game is fun.

## **Start Praying:**

Dear God, help me recognize when someone is following You. Help me to follow You and let others see You in my heart. In Jesus' name, amen.



# MEMORY

MATTHEW 7:17-18

Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, .....  
A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, .....

JOHN 15:5

*I am the vine; you are the  
branches. If you remain in me  
and I in you, you will bear much  
fruit; apart from me you can do  
nothing.*



# VERSES

..... but a bad tree bears bad fruit.  
..... and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

PROVERBS 3:5

*Trust in the LORD with all  
your heart and lean not on  
your own understanding.*



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