

## Lesson Overview

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<b>Biblical Passage</b>	Luke 13:18-21
<b>Supporting Passage</b>	Matthew 13:31-35
<b>Memory Verse</b>	Matthew 13:31-32
<b>Table Talk Question</b>	How does the Kingdom of God grow?
<b>Biblical Truth</b>	God's Kingdom, from small beginnings, grows at an incredible rate and to an extraordinary size.
<b>Context</b>	Jesus continued to move among the people, teaching as He went. On one occasion, a woman approached Jesus and begged Him to heal her. In response to the criticism of His actions by the synagogue ruler, Jesus replied using two parables, one of a mustard seed and one of yeast, to describe the exponential growth of God's Kingdom.
<b>Learning Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will describe the ways God's Kingdom grows.</li><li>• Students will identify ways they can personally work to expand God's Kingdom.</li></ul>
<b>Prayer Suggestions</b>	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for those in your group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pray that students will describe the ways God's Kingdom grows.</li><li>• Pray that students will identify ways they can participate in expanding God's Kingdom.</li><li>• Pray that students will become desire to grow spiritually so they can actively spread the seed of God's Kingdom.</li></ul>

## Biblical Commentary

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### Investigation

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Jesus spent much of His time teaching His disciples and the multitude of people who followed Him as He moved throughout Galilee. Following an encounter with a Jewish leader (Lk. 13:10-17), Jesus was approached by a sick woman requesting His healing. After Jesus had healed the woman, a synagogue official began to incite the crowd against Him because He had healed her on the Sabbath. Jesus answered by chastising the man and the other **hypocrites** who took care of their animals on the Sabbath but refused to help a fellow human being.

Jesus continued His teaching through the use of parables. In this particular encounter, Jesus used two parables to describe the Kingdom of God. Both Matthew and Mark also recorded the Parable of the Mustard Seed in their accounts, and Matthew included the Parable of the Yeast as well. Both parables used very small things to describe how the **Kingdom of God** would grow. Through Jesus' ministry, the Kingdom of God was inaugurated. Jesus' words and actions helped people begin to understand what God and His rule were like. God's Kingdom had small beginnings on earth, but it would continue to increase until it resulted in something of incredible size.

### Importance

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This passage of Scripture is important for students because it teaches an Essential Truth about the nature of God's Kingdom: **The Church is God's Plan**. The body of believers making up God's Kingdom is known as the **Church**. The gospel had small beginnings on earth, but it has vastly expanded over the last 2,000 years. As part of the church, believers should actively share their faith, realizing that as they do so God will grow His Kingdom.

This passage also teaches other key truths: **The Future is in God's Hands** and **Jesus is God and Savior**.

### Interpretation

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**Luke 13:18-19** Jesus often used **parables** —everyday illustrations that included deep, spiritual meaning—in His teachings. Two of Jesus' parables taught about the nature of God's Kingdom. In the first, often called the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus used a farming analogy to illustrate a Kingdom principle. Since agriculture was an essential part of common life in first-century Israel and many of Jesus' listeners were farmers, this parable related well to their everyday experiences.

Jesus used three features of the mustard seed to help His listeners understand the Kingdom of God: the size of the seed, the size of the plant it produces, and the rapid growth rate it experiences. A mustard seed is quite small—only one-eighth of an inch. Although the seed is not the smallest in existence, it was the smallest seed used in Israel during this time. In addition, when the mustard seed is planted, it can produce a plant that reaches

a height of eight to 12 feet in only one season. Few other plants grow so tall so quickly. Few seeds germinate at such a rapid pace as the mustard seed.

When it is fully mature, the plant resembles a tree and is so large and strong that birds can nest in its branches. Jesus' audience understood the importance of a tree from Old Testament teachings. Within Ezekiel, a tree was known as a symbol of a great empire and was used to describe the day when the Lord would establish Israel as a place where all kinds of birds could nest on a large cedar (Ez. 17:23). "Birds of every kind," meaning people of every nationality, would rest under His protection, provision, and love. Jesus used the illustration to show that God's Kingdom—made up of members of the global spiritual body, the church—might start small but would one day grow to an astonishing size.

Like the mustard seed, the gospel's beginnings were small. When Jesus was raised from the dead, a relatively small number of people believed. In the time since, countless people have heard and believed. The Kingdom is extensive in its nature. It has many members and is extremely vast. The Kingdom applies to all who have faith in Christ.

**Luke 13:20-21** In the second parable, Jesus compared the Kingdom to yeast. Yeast is an essential ingredient in the bread-baking process. A fluffy loaf of bread requires yeast to rise before the dough is baked. Without yeast, the bread will be flat or unleavened.

Because yeast is a living organism, it multiplies and works through the dough. Consider the process of making bread. Tiny, living organisms must grow before the yeast can be mixed with other ingredients and baked. A little bit of yeast can make a large amount of dough rise. In this passage, Jesus explained that "three measures" (ESV) or "about sixty pounds" (NIV) of flour was mixed into dough. In the Greek, three *satas* described the amount of flour. In modern terms, approximately half of a bushel, or 22 liters, of flour was used in the dough. As a breadmaker kneads dough, the life in the yeast permeates the dough from within, causing the entire loaf to rise. Likewise, the Kingdom of God will permeate the believer from within before the change is seen from the outside.

## Implications

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The images of the mustard seed and yeast picture two aspects of Kingdom growth. The mustard seed points to the external growth of the Kingdom; the yeast points to the internal growth. As students go through their lives, they can depend on knowing that **The Church is God's Plan** for His Kingdom to grow. In the church, students have the chance to connect with other believers. Together, they can seek internal and external growth for the Kingdom of God.

Believers carry the message of the Kingdom with them wherever they go. The role of people in growing the Kingdom is not an activity to add to the calendar. Kingdom involvement includes every item on our calendar. Every person whom we meet can be prayed for, served, or loved in the name of Jesus. The Kingdom will grow as we seek to imitate Christ's servant role and share the Good News with others. Encourage your students to yield every area of their lives to Christ so they will experience personal spiritual growth and become equipped to participate with God in producing Kingdom growth.

## Teaching Plan

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### Connect

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#### Review Questions

*(5–8 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.*

*Print one copy of the “Review Questions” activity sheet for your use.*

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide context for today’s lesson.

#### Master Teacher Option: Spreading Trends

*(10 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will discuss the growth of different trends.*

Divide students into groups of four or five. Share that students will be identifying trends, particularly trends that seemed to spread overnight and grow wildly popular. Explain that for the following categories, each group should come up with one of the fastest growing trends they have observed.

- **Fashion**
- **Sports**
- **Toys**
- **Media/Social Media**
- **Sayings**
- **Music**
- **Activities**

After a few minutes of discussion, allow students to share what they considered to be the fastest growing trend from each category. After responses, share that today’s lesson deals with the quick and widespread growth of the Kingdom of God. Say: **While trends come and go, the Kingdom of God has been expanding, oftentimes very rapidly, for 2,000 years all around the world.**

### Explore

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## Master Teacher Key Study: The Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast

*(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will study Luke 13:18–21 to describe the ways God’s Kingdom grows.*

*Print one copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen for each student.*

**Learning Goal:** Students will describe the ways God’s Kingdom grows.

Pass out pens and copies of the Student Worksheet. Then, use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Luke 13:18–21.

## Transform

### Deeper Discussion

*(10 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will identify ways they can expand God’s Kingdom in their communities and around the world.*

**Learning Goal:** Students will identify ways they can personally work to expand God’s Kingdom.

**Ask: As you hear about the growth of the Kingdom of God, do you sometimes feel you don’t see that kind of growth in our community or nation?** Explain that the expansion of the Kingdom of God doesn’t necessarily mean we’ll always see it in our immediate surroundings. Remind students that we can often be complacent—not noticing opportunities we have to spread God’s Kingdom in our churches, schools, and neighborhoods. Lead students to discuss these questions:

- **Who planted the seeds of faith into your life?**
- **When did your faith take root? How has God brought about growth in you since then?**
- **What steps can you take to work with God to strengthen your faith?**
- **How can your faith become so strong that you can share it with others?**
- **How has God used your faith to bring growth to the Kingdom of God?**

Remind students that it only takes one person, through the power of God’s Spirit, to bring change and start spreading the Kingdom of God. Ask students: **Could you be that one person? How could God use you to spread the Kingdom of God where you are?**

**Ask: What do you know about how the Kingdom of God is spreading around the world?** Explain that while we might not always see rapid Kingdom growth in our surroundings, many areas of the world are seeing God’s Kingdom spread rapidly—just like in the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Remind students that God isn’t just a God of their city, their nation, their language, or their race. He is the God of the whole world and He is spreading His Kingdom all over the world. Ask: **What are some ways you can encourage Kingdom growth in other parts of the world?** *(Pray, stay in contact with foreign*

*missionaries, give to organizations that spread the Kingdom in other parts of the world, go on a foreign mission trip). As you close, lead students to pray that God would give them wisdom on how they can spread His Kingdom—both in their communities and around the world.*

### Master Teacher Option: Extending the Kingdom

*(10 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will discuss how they can extend God's Kingdom to others.*

*Provide a dry erase board and markers or a presentation system.*

**Learning Goal:** Students will identify ways they can personally work to expand God's Kingdom.

Write the following categories on the board or a presentation slide:

- **Family members**
- **Friends**
- **Neighbors**
- **Classmates**
- **Social Acquaintances**

Note that most of us come in contact with someone in at least one of these categories every day. Explain that each of us has the chance to join God in His work of growing His Kingdom as we go about our everyday lives. Say: **As we go about our lives, we can help grow the Kingdom of God by loving, serving, encouraging, and sharing Jesus with these people.**

Encourage students to take a few moments to think of at least one person in each of these categories that they can influence by extending the Kingdom of God to them. After a few minutes, ask: **What are some ways you can serve or extend the Kingdom of God to the people you thought of?** After responses, lead students in prayer that God will show them the opportunities available during the week to spread the Kingdom by loving and serving the people they thought of.

## Take Home Activity

### Family Devotion

*(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)*

*Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.*

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

*Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 26: "Learning to Pray"  
The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.*

1. With whom was Jesus sharing the model prayer?
  - a. Nicodemus
  - b. Peter
  - c. *The disciples***
  - d. John
  
2. Jesus' model prayer is part of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Jesus' prayer for His disciples in John 17
  - b. *the Sermon on the Mount***
  - c. the Ten Commandments
  - d. the Pentateuch
  
3. In Jesus' model prayer, He told His disciples to address God as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. *Father***
  - b. The man upstairs
  - c. Jehovah
  - d. The Holy One
  
4. When Jesus said, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," He meant \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. that Jesus would become an earthly king
  - b. that we would all go to heaven
  - c. *that we would desire to be faithful and obedient to God's will in all aspects of our lives***
  - d. that we would experience a new heaven and earth
  
5. When Jesus said, "And lead us not into temptation . . ." He meant \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. that God would tempt us if He wanted to
  - b. *that God would provide an escape from temptation***
  - c. that temptation is our fault
  - d. that temptation and testing are all the same

## THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND YEAST

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

*Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.*

**Introduction:** When Jesus taught about the coming of the Kingdom of God, He described its beginnings as small and pretty unremarkable at first—but with huge, lasting results. History records that God’s Kingdom on earth began very small, with just Jesus and His first disciples. Yet the Kingdom has grown throughout the centuries into something that has touched people throughout the world. To this day, God’s Kingdom continues to grow into something incredible.

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### 1. The Kingdom of God can be seen growing in the world (Luke 13:18–19).

**Biblical Background:** After yet another run-in with the religious leaders, Jesus used a parable to help His audience understand the scope and the purpose of the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ parables used settings and situations that would have been familiar to His audience (v. 18). Since much of Israel was agricultural during this time, the idea of a farmer planting seed would have been familiar to them. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was like a tiny mustard seed planted into the ground. Even though it was one of the smallest seeds, it quickly grew into a giant bush anywhere from eight to twelve feet high—so big that birds actually made their nests in its branches. In the same way, the Kingdom of God had a small start on earth, but it grew and continues to grow rapidly. People from all over the world can take part in the Kingdom of God (v. 19).

**Illustration:** *The New American Commentary* writers noted: “Although the present realization of the kingdom may appear insignificant (like a mustard seed or a little yeast), its power is already manifest (13:10–13), and its consummation will be immeasurable” (p.376). **How do you know the kingdom of God still exists today? What evidence do you see that God’s Kingdom continues to grow throughout the world? What can you do to help God’s Kingdom grow in significance and scope?**

**Application:** Because The Church is God’s Plan to spread the seed of the gospel throughout the world, the Kingdom of God will grow rapidly when believers join in God’s work.

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### 2. The Kingdom of God grows within us as believers (Luke 13:20–21).

**Biblical Background:** Jesus’ next parable communicated another familiar scene to His listeners: making bread (v. 20). While sowing seed was somewhat random and passive, baking bread was a very intentional and active process. The yeast—a living and active particle—had to be intentionally worked into the dough so the whole loaf would rise. While the first parable spoke more broadly about the growth of the Kingdom of God all over the world, this parable spoke more about the personal work of the Holy Spirit bringing about the Kingdom of God in the lives of individuals. The Holy Spirit is at work around the world and in the lives of those who follow Him so that the Kingdom of God continues to grow (v. 21).

**Illustration:** If you've ever used food coloring, you know that it only takes a few drops to get the result that you want. Just a little bit of the food coloring and a couple of stirs will change the color consistently throughout the entire bowl or cup. God's Spirit is active and purposeful in our lives. He brings the Kingdom of God into our hearts and can change every part of who we are.

**Application:** For those who follow Christ, the Holy Spirit is constantly and actively working to bring about growth and change. Believers can be assured that this growth is occurring and should be aware of how the Spirit is working in them.

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**Conclusion:** The Kingdom of God continues to grow today. We can never perceive how large the Kingdom will be when it reaches its final point in God's plan. Our desire should be to do all we can to help facilitate that growth—both within ourselves and throughout the world.

# LESSON 27

## THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND YEAST

**Biblical Passage:** Luke 13:18-21

**Memory Verse:** Matthew 13:31-32

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

1. The Kingdom of God can be \_\_\_\_\_ growing in the \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 13:18–19).
2. The Kingdom of God \_\_\_\_\_ within \_\_\_\_\_ as believers (Luke 13:20–21).

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who planted the seeds of faith into your life?
- When did your faith take root? How has God brought about growth in you since then?
- What steps can you take to work with God to strengthen your faith?
- How can your faith become so strong that you can share it with others?
- How has God used your faith to bring growth to the Kingdom of God?

### MUSTARD SEED

Use a smart phone find out the following facts about mustard seeds.

What is the size of a mustard seed?

What color is a mustard seed?

Where are mustard seeds grown?

Which country produces the most mustard seeds?

How big do mustard seed plants grow?

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

"The kingdom is not an exclusive, well-trimmed suburb with snobbish rules about who can live there. No, it is for a larger, homelier, less self-conscious caste of people who understand they are sinners because they have experienced the yaw and pitch of moral struggle."—*Brennan Manning*

# LESSON 27

**CHRISTOS**  
STUDENT EDITION

## THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND YEAST

**Biblical Passage:** Luke 13:18-21

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As a family, make a list of items that grow or spread rapidly in each of these categories: plants, illnesses or diseases, new word or phrases, new technologies and social media. After your lists are complete, choose one item within each category, and then answer these questions: How would the rapid spread of this item affect a person, a community, a nation, and the world? How quickly did this item lose its threat (for illnesses) or its appeal (for technology/social media)? Point out that even though something initially spreads and gains popularity rapidly, that's no guarantee that it will remain popular and effective.

Read Luke 13:18-21. As Jesus ministered to the people, He quickly realized that their concept of the Kingdom of God differed from the Kingdom He came to inaugurate. When Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler chastised the people for seeking healing on the Sabbath. Jesus responded by telling the parables of the mustard seed and yeast. The mustard seed, tiniest of the seeds commonly planted by the people, within a season grew into a tree up to twelve feet tall where birds could build their nests. This highly visible growth illustrated that the Kingdom of God would grow radically large from its tiny beginnings with Jesus and His disciples. In contrast, when the woman kneaded a bit of yeast into a very large batch of dough, the nature of the entire dough changed. This less visible growth illustrated the changes that would take place within those who followed Jesus as the Holy Spirit brought radical changes within them to make them more like Jesus.

While the growth and popularity of the items we listed in each category may lose their effectiveness and appeal, the Kingdom of God has continued to expand throughout the last two thousand years, and will continue to grow and strengthen until Jesus returns and all His followers are united with Him for eternity. As His followers, we know the Holy Spirit lives within us, changing and strengthening us to join with God in spreading the message of the Kingdom to others both near and far away.

### CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- Why is it important to remember the small beginnings of God's Kingdom?
- How does it feel to be a part of such a significant movement—the growth of God's Kingdom?
- What changes have you experienced as you've allowed the Holy Spirit to influence your life?
- How has God used you for His Kingdom work in the past? How might He want to use you in the future?