



Planting A Tree! The Mystery of Faith

In this milestone we will consider ways to help children learn more about the mystery of faith through the caretaking act of planting a tree.

Trees are all around us. Children love trees. They love climbing them, looking at them, and watching the birds in their branches.

Supplies:

an outdoor space appropriate for the tree you plan to plant, a seed (or sapling) to plant, cardstock that can be used for a bookmark, tape, and the book, *The Marvelous Mustard Seed*, by Amy-Jill Levine

Set-up the space:

Have all of your gardening supplies nearby. If you choose to begin with a sapling (which is advisable for a tree), also have some seeds ready—mustard seeds would be ideal, but any small seed will do. In addition to the Levine book, you may want to have a children's Bible open to the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

Milestone

Opening prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the gift of faith and the gift of trees! Thank you for the dirt, for the sunshine, and for the rain that makes trees grow. And thank you for the people and stories and songs that help our faith grow. Amen.

Scripture: In the Bible, Jesus tells a lot of stories. Some of his stories are called "parables." A parable is a story about everyday things that help us understand God and the kingdom of heaven. One of the stories Jesus tells is called the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

If you are going to read the story book, read it here. If not, read the parable from one of these gospel texts: Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, or Luke 13:18-19. After reading the story from the book or the Bible, wonder aloud about the story. **I wonder what you think about this story.** Give your child a few seconds to wonder. If they don't say anything, offer thoughts such as: **I wonder how something so small grows to be so big. I wonder what happens to seeds in the ground? I wonder how the tree grows from such a tiny seed to a giant tree. Jesus tells us faith is like that. I wonder what that means.** Affirm any responses from your child. It is important for children to have the opportunity to recognize the power in something so little.

I thought we might plant our own tree. We can watch it grow bigger and bigger. I wonder what it will look like when you are a grown-up. I wonder what you will be like when you are a grown-up. Isn't it amazing how God can start with something so tiny and make it grow so much?!

Tell the child about what type of tree you bought and where you are going to plant it. Take time helping your child plant the seeds, paying attention to the requirements for depth and spacing. Water gently. After you plant the tree, find a picture of the mature tree to show your child. Provide the child with cardstock paper cut in the shape of a bookmark, and invite them to draw the tree. Then tape a seed to the bottom of the drawing to remind them that amazing things—like faith and trees—start out really, really tiny.

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for soft soil, bright sun, and gentle rain. Thank you for seeds that wake up and grow into flowers and fruits and veggies. Help us to take good care of our plants and enjoy all of the beauty you have made. Amen.

Notes

If your child does not like to get their hands dirty, you may find them some small gardening gloves and/or a shovel.