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# Workers in the Vineyard



## Lesson Text

Matthew 20:1-16

## Lesson Objectives

- The students will explain that in this parable, the landowner, the vineyard and the workers represent God, his kingdom and us.
- The students will conclude that what they receive from God comes only from his grace, not by their effort.
- The students will identify one chore or job each day that they will do for their parents out of gratitude.

## Materials Needed

For each student:

- pen or pencil

For the teacher:

- cookies (or candies)
- games for several game centers
- 1 copy of "Good News from the Kingdom"
- globe or map of the world
- props for the skit (baskets, vines, material to drape over the students' heads for costumes, a "denarius" for each of the six workers)
- extra Bibles
- Parable Poster (included with the unit)
- special teacher insert for Unit 16 Lesson 4—key for identifying "The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard" on the Parable Poster
- blue highlighter

Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 8 copies for the students, 1 copy for the teacher
- Page B, 1 copy for each student

## Lesson Plan

### Getting Ready

- Faithful Instruction
  - Teacher Focus
  - Teacher Tips
- Preclass Activity: That's Not Fair!
- Starting Up
  - Welcome and Singing
  - Opening Prayer
  - Victories
  - Good News from the Kingdom

### Getting into God's Word

- Guest Speaker
- Activity: The Workers in the Vineyard
- Scripture Study

### Getting It to Others

- Scripture Memory: John 1:17
- Weekly Challenge and Snack Time
- Conclusion

## Scripture Memory

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17





## Faithful Instruction

### Teacher Focus

Pray before preparing this lesson. Read and meditate on Matthew 20:1-16. Place yourself in the shoes of the first-hour worker. How would you have responded to the landowner? Now place yourself in the shoes of the last-hour worker. Does thinking about him cause you to change your initial response? What does it show about God's heart toward us? What motivates you to serve in God's kingdom with all of your heart each day?

### Teacher Tips

During your class, you will be introducing a guest speaker. At least a week before the class, seek advice and invite an older teen disciple, college student or teen worker who is able to relate to your students and who is very grateful for God's kingdom. Have your speaker share about how gratitude motivates him or her to do their best in the kingdom. Have the speaker read over the lesson objectives and lesson text. Encourage the speaker to put great thought into what he or she will say, in order to have a great impact on the hearts of your preteens. The speaker should be prepared to speak for five to ten minutes and to answer questions. Be sure to review the speech with the speaker before the day of class arrives. Call your students during the week to let them know who the speaker will be and to remind them to write a thank-you note for that person.

Using the teacher insert, identify the location of this parable on the Parable Poster. During the Scripture Study portion of the class, the first group of students who use the poster will highlight the location of the parable being studied. A different color of highlighter will be used for each parable. The already highlighted poster will be saved and reused in subsequent years.

## Preclass Activity

### That's Not Fair!

The students will play games while the teacher uses the distribution of a treat to introduce the lesson concept.

### Materials Used

For the teacher:

- cookies (or candies)
- games for several game centers

### Preparation

Arrange the game centers before the students arrive at class.

### Instructions

1. As students enter the classroom, direct them to one of the game centers and hand each of them at least one cookie.
2. At your discretion, give certain preteens two, three or even four cookies. Do not offer additional cookies to students who have already received some. It should be obvious that you are passing out a different amount of cookies to some of the preteens.
3. Be prepared for some attitudes, but do not engage discussions about why you are doing this.



## Starting Up

### Welcome and Singing

Call the students together in a circle. Welcome everyone by name, being sure to recognize anyone who is visiting. Let them know how glad you are to see them and how much you have been looking forward to being with them. Sing a few great songs.

### Opening Prayer

Who would like to say a prayer to start today's time together? Let a few students lead the prayer. Encourage the students to mention missing students, special church activities, illnesses and to be especially thankful for the chance to be together.

### Victories

Take the time to have the students share about the challenge they were given at the end of last week's class. Did everyone complete their challenge? How did it go? What fears did you face as you met the challenge to put the lesson into practice? How did everyone do with having consistent quiet times? Who would like to share something they learned this week?

Praise and encourage all the students' efforts, especially noting any area of significant growth. Offer help and suggestions so they can have even more victories in the coming week.

## Good News from the Kingdom

### Materials Used

For the teacher:

- 1 copy of "Good News from the Kingdom"
- globe or map of the world

### Instructions

Now let's take a few minutes to share "Good News from the Kingdom." Be excited as you read about what is happening around the world. Have a globe or map ready, pointing out the location as you share. Remind your students that the kingdom of God is worldwide and that the victories of our brothers and sisters in other countries can inspire us and spur us on.





## Guest Speaker

### Instructions

1. Introduce the guest speaker to the students, giving some brief background information.
2. Have the speaker share for five to ten minutes.
3. After the sharing, the speaker should ask the students the following question:
  - What are you grateful for in God's kingdom?
4. Allow your students to ask questions when the speaker is finished. NOTE: Always make sure the questions are appropriate. If you need to jump in and rephrase or even delete any questions, do not be hesitant to do so.



## Activity

### The Workers in the Vineyard

The students will act out the parable that is the basis for the lesson.

### Materials Used

For the teacher:

- props for the skit (baskets, vines, material to drape over the students' heads for costumes, a "denarius" for each of the six workers)

Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 8 copies for the students, 1 copy for the teacher

### Preparation

1. Ask for seven volunteers to act out a skit based on Matthew 20:1-16.
2. Choose a class assistant as the skit leader (narrator) to work with the actors.
3. Hand each participant a copy of Reproducible Page A (The Workers in the Vineyard). Send the skit leader and actors to a quiet area to prepare. Encourage each actor to be expressive and lively.
4. Involve the rest of the class in preparing the room for the skit with the available props. The room should be divided into a marketplace and a vineyard.

### Instructions

1. Ask the students in the class who are not participating in the skit to sit as a group facing the stage that they have set up.
2. Have the narrator and actors enter, take their positions and perform the skit.
3. When the students are finished, applaud them for a job well done.



## Scripture Study

### Materials Used

For the teacher:

- extra Bibles
- Parable Poster (included with the unit)
- special teacher insert for Unit 16 Lesson 4—key for identifying “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” on the Parable Poster
- blue highlighter

Before we begin discussing this parable, I would like to go around the room and have each of you talk about the following:

- How many cookies did you receive when you first entered the class today?
- How many of you were envious of the students who received more?
- Do you think that it was fair of me to hand out a different number of cookies to each of you?

Encourage the students to be open with their feelings.

In the first century, people often did not have permanent jobs on which they could rely. The people of this time used their skills to earn money at daily jobs. In the parable we will be reading, the people were skilled at working in vineyards. Each day they would travel to a common location and hope for someone to hire them for the day. A denarius was an appropriate wage for a day, being barely sufficient to meet the daily needs of a family. In reality, if you were not able to find work, then you and your family would not be able to eat.

Select a volunteer to read Matthew 20:1-2.

- How do you think these first-hour workers felt when they were chosen? (relieved / grateful)
- Why? (because they would be able to feed their families that day)

Select another volunteer to read Matthew 20:3-7.

- As each group of workers was hired, how do think they felt? (grateful / joyful / relieved)
- Which group do you think would be the most grateful? (the last group hired)
- Why? (It looked like they wouldn't be hired. / They had probably lost hope. / They were probably concerned that they would not be able to feed their families.)

- Why do you think that the landowner kept going back every few hours? (He was concerned about the welfare of the people. / He knew that they needed jobs. / He needed more workers to finish the job.)
- Who does the landowner represent in this parable? (God)
- What does this parable teach you about God? (He cares about us. / He wants to meet all of our needs. / He loves everyone the same.)
- Why did the workers who were hired first feel that they had been treated unfairly? (They had been working all day in the hot sun. They thought they should get more and the late workers should get less.)
- How should all the workers have felt? (grateful for being able to work / thankful to be able to feed their families)

Select another volunteer to read Matthew 20:8-16.

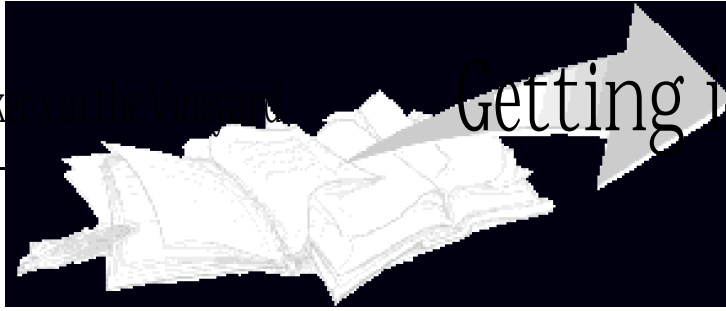
- How did the landowner respond to the workers who thought that he was unfair? (showed them that they did not have grateful hearts / exposed their envy)

The workers that were hired in the eleventh hour were the most grateful. They did not deserve a full day's wages. God wants us to understand that he will always meet our needs. It is God's grace that motivates him to meet our needs, even when we do not deserve it. God does not bless us because of what we do, but because he is full of grace and love and because we obey him.



Parable Poster

Have the students try to locate the places on the Parable Poster where the action of “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” is taking place. The first class to study this unit should highlight this parable's action with a blue highlighter. Subsequent classes will simply refer to the blue highlighted area to see where the parable takes place.



## Scripture Memory

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

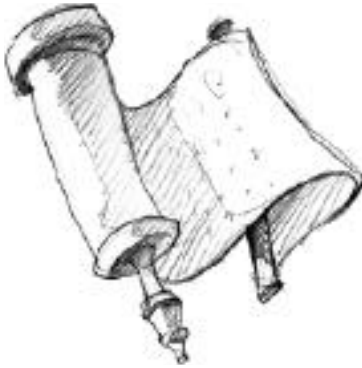
### Materials Used

Reproducible Pages:

- Page B, 1 copy for each student

### Instructions

1. Review the verse with the students.
2. Discuss the meaning of the verse with the class.
3. Repeat the verse twice as a class.



## Weekly Challenge and Snack Time

If your students bring a snack, allow them to eat while you explain to them the challenge for the week.

Review the lesson and emphasize how God's grace motivates us to be grateful. Ask the students to discuss what they are grateful for and how God's grace is demonstrated in their lives. Then ask, "In what ways do you need to be grateful to your parents? How can you show them that you are grateful?"

This week, the students should commit to doing one chore daily at home to demonstrate how thankful they are to their parents for meeting their needs. This deed should be something that is not normally required of the student, and it should be done joyfully and without expecting any recognition or praise. Have the students discuss what they would like to do and help them to get excited about serving their families in this way.

Follow up with how the plans are going for the banquet. Review each student's responsibilities and ask if there are any problems or questions that need attention. Be sure that every student is feeling good about his or her responsibilities. Ask: "Is everyone feeling good about the participation in their groups? Encourage the students to be open and honest with each other. Make sure that no one is overwhelmed. The goal is for everyone to be victorious. Find out how they are doing with inviting their friends."

## Conclusion

End the class with a prayer.

## Weekly Challenge

Do at least one chore each day this week to demonstrate your gratitude to your parents for all they have done for you.



# Workers in the Vineyard



## Lesson Text

Matthew 20:1-16

## Lesson Objectives

- The students will define God's grace and its role in their lives.
- The students will identify at least two sins that lead them to a lack of gratitude for God.
- The students will identify one chore or job each day that they will do for their parents out of gratitude.

## Materials Needed

For each student:

- green or purple balloon

For the teacher:

- articles from home that a mom or dad would wear or use (hats, jewelry, suit jacket, apron, kitchen bowls, rake, towels, trash can, etc.)
- scissors
- dictionary
- extra Bibles
- 2 brooms
- 2 spoons
- 4 bowls
- raisins
- prizes (gum, candy or pencils)
- 1 index card, 3" x 5"

Reproducible Pages:

- Page C, 2 copies for the teacher
- Page D, 1 copy for the teacher

## Lesson Plan

### Getting Ready

- Faithful Instruction
  - Teacher Focus
  - Teacher Tips
- Preclass Activity: What Would You Do?
- Starting Up
  - Welcome and Singing
  - Opening Prayer and Review
  - Great News Sharing

### Getting into God's Word

- Scripture Study
- Activity: Vineyard Games

### Getting It to Others

- Scripture Memory: John 1:17
- Weekly Challenge and Snack Time
- Conclusion

## Scripture Memory

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17





## Faithful Instruction

### Teacher Focus

Pray before preparing this lesson. Read and meditate on Matthew 20:1-16. Look at each worker's response to the landowner. Which worker are you? What motivates you to serve in the kingdom? How has your character grown in this area in your years as a disciple? Is your gratitude evident to all those around you and especially to your students? Share what you learn about your character with your discipler.

### Teacher Tips

The two main points of this lesson are God's grace and our gratitude. Preteens can lose sight of their gratitude easily. Be alert to any actions or attitudes that show your students to have ungrateful hearts. Correct them gently and lovingly, practicing God's grace in your correction.

## Preclass Activity

### What Would You Do?

The students will act out their responses to several situations that deal with the issues of fairness and gratitude.

#### Materials

For the teacher:

- articles from home that a mom or dad would wear or use (hats, jewelry, suit jacket, apron, kitchen bowls, rake, towels, trash can, etc.)

- scissors

Reproducible Pages:

- Page C, 2 copies for the teacher
- Page D, 1 copy for the teacher

#### Preparation

1. Copy and cut out the "money" (Reproducible Page C) and situation cards (Reproducible Page D).
2. Place the situation cards face down in a random order on one table.
3. Scatter all of the props from home and the "money" from Reproducible Page C on another table.
4. NOTE: This activity will extend into the class time more than a usual preclass activity would.

#### Instructions

1. As the students arrive, divide them into four groups.
2. Have each group send up one representative to select a situation card.
3. Have each group discuss how to act out the situation on their card using the props provided. Only allow one situation to be performed at a time so that the groups can share the props.
4. Allow ample time for the students to prepare. Encourage your assistants to circulate and assist the groups with creative ways to present their situations.
5. Once all of the groups are prepared, have them perform the skits one at a time.
6. Encourage a discussion after each performance:
  - What was going on in this situation?
  - Was the parent fair?
  - How would you have reacted to the situation?



## Starting Up

### Welcome and Singing

Call the students together in a circle. Welcome everyone by name, being sure to recognize anyone who is visiting. Let them know how glad you are to see them and how much you looked forward to being with them. Sing a few great songs.

### Opening Prayer and Review

- Open with one of the students praying for each student to be motivated in all they do by their gratitude for all God has done for them.
- Have one student recite the memory verse for this lesson: John 1:17.
- Have a student briefly review the previous lesson (Core Lesson).

### Great News Sharing

Allow several minutes for the students to share great news about their lives. This could be about a family member who became a disciple, someone healed from an illness, someone studying the Bible, great grades, etc. Remind the students to be brief so as many as possible can share.





## Scripture Study

### Materials Used

For the teacher:

- dictionary
- extra Bibles

Have your students sit in a circle. Ask: Does anyone know the definition of "grace"? Discuss this for a few minutes and then have one of the students recite the memory verse, John 1:17. Ask another student to use the dictionary to look up the definition of "grace." How does this definition apply to God's grace?

Have you ever received a gift that you felt you did not deserve? How did it make you feel? Encourage the students to respond. (Be ready to share here if they do not come up with examples.)

Ask your students to turn to Matthew 20:1-16. Select several volunteers to share the reading of the passage. Discuss:

- Which of the workers worked the longest? (the first-hour workers)
- Did they receive anything extra for working longer than the rest of the workers? (no)
- Can you think of a situation in which you felt like you were treated unfairly because you did a better job than someone else, but you didn't get any more credit or recognition for it?
- How hard do you think the eleventh-hour workers worked? Why? (They probably worked very hard. / They were grateful to the landowner for hiring them. / They had more energy since they had not been working all day.)

- Did the landowner treat anyone unfairly? (no)
- What do you think the landowner was thinking about as he was hiring the men? (He wanted to make sure that everyone was paid enough to provide for their families.)
- What were the workers thinking? (Some thought that they were being treated unfairly.)
- Which one do you most relate to, the first-hour worker or the eleventh-hour worker? Why?
- What sin caused the first-hour workers to be ungrateful? (envy / pride / selfish ambition)
- What does this teach us about our characters? (We can become ungrateful quickly.)
- What sins can cause us to be ungrateful toward God? (jealousy / pride / resentment / selfish ambition / impatience)
- What does this parable teach us about God's character? (He wants us to be taken care of and he is gracious. / He blesses us although we aren't perfect. / He loves us all the same amount.)

Help the students to understand that we need God's grace to enter the kingdom. We can never do enough or work hard enough to gain our own salvation. Therefore, if we feel God is being unfair with us, we have forgotten his grace and are envious of what he has given others.

# GRACE



## Activity

### Vineyard Games

The students will participate in two games to build unity and teamwork. They afford a fun way to be reminded of some elements of today's parable.

#### Materials Used

For each student:

- green or purple balloon

For the teacher:

- 2 brooms
- 2 spoons
- 4 bowls
- raisins
- prizes (gum, candy or pencils)

#### Preparation

1. Set up the room for the action games by moving all of the chairs and tables out of the way.
2. Divide the class into two teams, as even as possible. Everyone should participate.

#### Instructions

##### Game 1: Grape Smashers

NOTE: If the teams are not even, tell the first person on the smaller team to go twice.

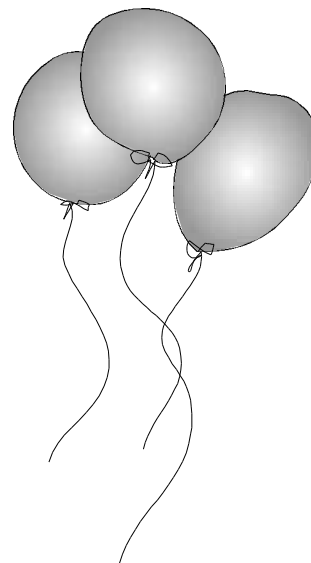
1. Give each student one balloon.
2. Have both teams line up on one side of the room.
3. On your signal, the first student on each team is to blow up a balloon, tie it and then place it on the floor.
4. Have the students sweep their balloon to the other side of the room with the broom, sit on it until it pops and run back to the starting position.
5. When the first student finishes, the second student is to begin. Continue until all of the students in each group have competed.
6. The team that finishes first wins.

##### Game 2: Grapevine

1. Give each team a handful of raisins and a spoon.
2. Have both teams line up on one side of the room.
3. Place one bowl for each team on the other side of the room.
4. On your signal, the first person on each team is to put a raisin in the spoon, walk backward to the opposite side of the room, put the raisin in the bowl and run back to the starting position.
5. When the first student finishes, the second student is to begin. As they finish, each student goes to the back of the line for a second turn if time allows. Continue until three minutes have passed.
6. Anyone who drops a raisin must go back to the starting line to get a new raisin and begin again.
7. The team with the most raisins in the bowl after three minutes wins.

After both relays are completed, hand out prizes for all of the players.

Remind the students that the message of "The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard" is that God gives us much grace, and we must be very grateful. Also, tell them that as we are workers in the vineyard (kingdom), we also have a great time with each other.





## Scripture Memory

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

### Materials Used

For the teacher:

- 1 index card, 3" x 5"

### Preparation

Write the memory verse on the index card for your reference during the activity.

### Instructions

1. The goal is for the students to learn to say the scripture "forward and backward."
2. Divide the students into pairs. Have them practice saying the scripture both forward and backward.
3. After five minutes, have each person recite the scripture both forward and backward.
4. Optional: Give the students extra prizes left over from the relays after they are able to do it.

## Weekly Challenge and Snack Time

If your students bring a snack, allow them to eat while you remind them of the challenge for the week.

The students were to commit to doing at least one chore each day at home to demonstrate how thankful they are to their parents for meeting their needs. This should be a chore that they are not generally responsible for doing. Discuss any obstacles the students have encountered in carrying out the challenge this week. Remind them of why they are serving their families in this way. Have the students who have already completed the challenge share about their parents' responses.

Be sure to encourage the students who did an outstanding job in class and praise any students who had a more successful time than in previous class periods.

## Conclusion

End the class with a prayer.

## Weekly Challenge

Do at least one chore each day this week to demonstrate your gratitude to your parents for all they have done for you.

## The Workers in the Vineyard

(Matthew 20:1-16)

Skit:

The narrator and actors enter and take their positions. The landowner should be in the vineyard and the workers should be standing around in the marketplace.

NARRATOR: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard."

The landowner walks over to the workers and chooses one to come to the vineyard to work. The landowner and worker walk back over to the vineyard. The first-hour worker should be happy and grateful. The worker takes his place in the vineyard, working.

NARRATOR: "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went."

The landowner walks back over the marketplace and chooses two other workers to come to the vineyard. The landowner and the workers walk back to the vineyard. The workers take their places alongside the first-hour worker.

NARRATOR: "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'"

The landowner walks back over to the marketplace and chooses the rest of the workers. All three walk back over to the vineyard and start working.

NARRATOR: "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius."

The landowner hands the eleventh-hour workers a denarius. The workers are obviously grateful.

NARRATOR: "So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'"

The landowner hands each of the other workers a denarius. The first-hour and third-hour workers become obviously agitated and grumble against the landowner.

NARRATOR: "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

All workers exit the stage!



Scripture Memory

For the law was given through Moses;  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17



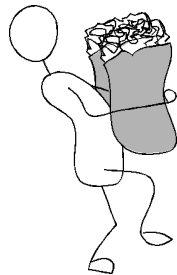
Weekly Challenge

Do at least one chore each day this week to demonstrate your gratitude to your parents for all they have done for you.



Money



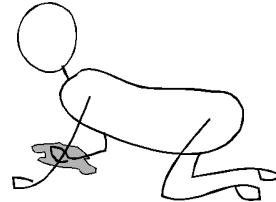


## What Would You Do?

### Situation 1

STUDENT: Your parents give you \$5.00 per week for doing your chores around the house. This week you had extra trash to take out and more dishes to load in the dishwasher because your relatives visited and stayed all week. The day arrives and it's time for your payment...

PARENTS: Here is your \$5.00 allowance. Good Job!



### Situation 2

STUDENT : You agreed to baby-sit for your younger brother and sister so that your mom and dad could go out on a date. Your parents agreed to pay you \$10.00. Your brother gets sick on the pizza you made and throws up. You have to clean up the mess. The next morning your parents go to pay you...

PARENTS : Here is your \$10.00 for baby-sitting. Good Job!



### Situation 3

STUDENT : You are trying to raise money. You agree to clean the kitchen for a whole week and your parents have told you that they will pay you \$20.00. On Monday, the dishwasher breaks and now you have to wash and dry all of the dishes by hand. On Thursday, your sister has a party and invites all of her friends over for pizza—and they don't use paper plates. You do all of these chores and you are ready to get paid...

PARENTS : Here is your \$20.00. Good Job!



### Situation 4

STUDENT : Your parents offer to pay you \$5.00 for raking leaves in the front yard early Saturday morning. You rake for about one hour, and then your sister comes out and helps you. You are both finished about thirty minutes later. Your mom and dad come out and pay you...

PARENTS : Here is your \$5.00 each. Good Job!