

The Parable of the Vineyard

GENEROSITY

MATTHEW 20:1-16

What is happening in this story?

It is a parable that fits within a larger section of stories that illustrate God's great reversal of society. Jesus persistently promised people in difficult situations that their reward was coming. He similarly warned those who had power and authority in this life that their earthly power would be meaningless in the kingdom of God. This story reveals that the kingdom of God operates according to God's notions of fairness, grace, and generosity—not our notions of those things.

Why does this story matter for kids?

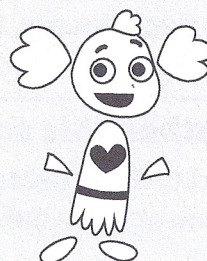
Kids are very tuned in to what is fair and what is not. This story can help reframe their notion of what's fair and help them understand what Jesus taught about fairness. It helps expand a kid's concept of God, which, generally speaking, is one of fairness and judgment. This lesson is one of many in Jesus' ministry that seems to tell us that "God's math doesn't add up." God welcomes everyone to the vineyard to help, to serve, and to do God's work. No matter how early or late we arrive, we can believe that we will each receive God's generosity.

Why this theme?

Most kids understand the concept of generosity. However, tying it to God's generosity toward the world gives us a glimpse into what the word actually means, and the revolutionary way we are asked to incorporate it into our lives.

TEACHING TIP

Kids may identify with the morning laborers and find this parable to seem very unfair. This is a great opportunity to emphasize the generous, sometimes illogical love of God that embraces us all!



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Colored pencils
- ~~Masking tape~~
- Markers

LESSON SUPPLIES

- ~~Grapes~~
- ~~Hand sanitizer~~
- ~~Napkins~~
- Spoons (2)
- Cotton balls (or pom pom balls)
- Bowls (4)
- ~~Stickers~~
- ~~Yarn (brown)~~

WELCOME 15

DO SOME KIDS ARRIVE EARLY? TRY THIS.

Wash and set out grapes for kids to enjoy as they arrive. Set hand sanitizer nearby for kids to use before they eat.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

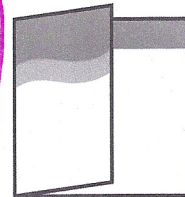
~~Ask everyone to stand in a line facing you. Leave about 8-10 feet between you and the line of kids. Take one big step forward for each year old you are. Now sit down. Those of you who are oldest and closest to me are the kids I like the most. Wait, do you think that's true? Wait for responses. Of course it isn't true, I like you all equally. God is like this too. In our story today, Jesus teaches about God's generosity—God's love is big and generous, and God loves each one of us.~~

Pray together: Dear God, thank you for loving us so much more than we can even imagine. Please help us to love others with your great big, generous love! Amen.

→ Be still and know that I am God...

Pass out leaflets and colored pencils.

In the story today, there are people who feel like they have been treated unfairly. Next to one blank face on your leaflet it says "FAIR." Draw a happy face there. Next to the other face it says "UNFAIR." Draw an unhappy face there. I'll read some situations, and you'll choose the "FAIR" or the "UNFAIR" face. Read the situations, pausing after each for kids to flip their leaflet to the "FAIR" or "UNFAIR" face. **Your classmate gets four cookies; you get one. You clean the bathroom, and your sibling cleans the kitchen. Your friend swings for five minutes, then you swing for five minutes.** Continue with your own ideas, then give kids a turn to create situations. Collect their leaflets until Respond.



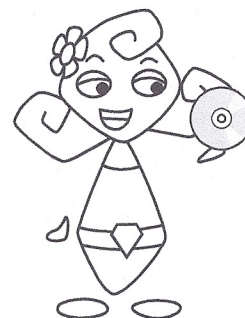
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Today Ruby deals with a situation that may seem very unfair. While you're watching, think about what you would do if you were in Ruby's situation.

View Episode 8, "Funtopia," on the Year Blue Winter DVD. (4 min, 17 sec)

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- How does Ruby motivate herself to finish cleaning the pipes?
- Why does she think it isn't fair for Mimi to get tickets to Funtopia?
- What did Ruby think she had earned?
- * When have you felt you didn't get what you thought you had earned?
- What do you think God thinks about fairness?



HEAR 15

Use Whirl Kids Story Bible,
"The Parable of the Vineyard"
pg. 211

Open your Whirl Kids Story Bibles and Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Have younger kids find an older buddy. Invite them to find Matthew 20:1-16 on page 1181 of the Whirl Kids Study Bible. Today's story is a parable. A parable is a story about something that teaches us about something else. In this parable, Jesus was teaching about God's generosity. Jesus wanted people to know that God's love isn't about fair or unfair—God's limitless love is given to everyone, no matter what.

Tell kids to listen for the four times of day in the story. When they hear an hour of the day, they should hold up that many fingers. For noon, they'll need to hold up ten fingers, then two. Read the story, pausing briefly when reading the times that laborers are hired. **The kingdom of heaven is a place where God gives love generously to everyone, no matter what!**

Read "WHY is this book important?" on page 1156. Then read Ada and Otto's questions and comments on pages 211 and 212 of the Whirl Kids Story Bible.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What were the laborers hired to do?
- Who do you think deserved to be paid the most?
- What was Jesus trying to tell people through this story?
- How do you think the laborers felt about being paid the same as everyone else, no matter what time they began work?
- Who do you know that is very generous?

Play together! A fun game!

In today's story we heard about the workers in the vineyard. Let's pretend we are workers harvesting grapes. Divide the class into two mixed-age teams. On one end of the room, place two empty bowls a few feet apart. Across from them, on the other end of the room, place two bowls of cotton balls. Have each team line up behind one of the bowls of cotton balls. **The goal is to transfer all the cotton-ball "grapes" to the bowl at the other end of the room. Using a spoon, scoop up one grape, carry it across the room on the spoon, and place it in the other bowl. Then hurry back and give the spoon to the next worker on your team. Continue until all grapes have been transferred.** If this task is too easy, add additional challenges such as walking backwards, jumping, or tiptoeing.

BIBLE BIT

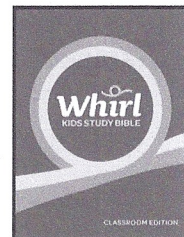
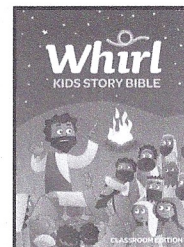
The usual daily pay for a vineyard laborer was one denarius. We don't know exactly how much a denarius is worth in today's dollars, but it was likely just enough to feed a person for one day.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, compare the sanctuary Ruby is cleaning to your church's sanctuary. Are there similarities? What part of your church would you least like to clean?

OUR CHURCH

Talk about the ways we can show generosity with our church, including with our resources. Choose a cause to donate to, and work as a class to meet your goal.



RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets, markers, and some of the stickers.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. Ask kids to draw something they did in the past week on the blank square (square 3).
2. Invite kids to put a sticker on their free square (square 7), then start the game of "Vineyard Bingo." **When I call out something you did this week, put one sticker on that square.** Start by inviting kids to put a sticker on the square where they drew their own idea.
3. Continue to call out bingo squares randomly from the following options: helped a parent with an errand (square 1); set the table (2); did a cleanup chore at home (4); played a game with friends (5); showed love to siblings or a friend (6); packed my lunch (8); ate healthy food (9); shared something with a friend (10); tried a new skill (11); brushed teeth (12).
4. If a kid fills all of their bingo squares, say, **(Name) just won Vineyard Bingo!** Have kids cheer and congratulate the winner. If all the squares are called and no one wins, say, **No one won Vineyard Bingo.** Move on to next step whether or not someone won.
5. Pass out more stickers to kids. **I'm giving everyone enough stickers to fill in their bingo card, even though some didn't win/no one won. Put a sticker in every square!**
6. Discuss how the game ended. **Why did I give everyone the same number of stickers? What would have been fair? Is it more fun to play the game fairly or generously? Why?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Jesus told a parable about a vineyard owner who hired workers at different times throughout the day, but paid everyone the same amount at the end of the day, which tells us about the generous love of God. When have you experienced the generous love of God?

Pass out leaflet panels and markers.

Make a yarn grapevine on the wall. ~~God shows us generosity by giving us people who love us. Draw someone who loves you, then tape it on the grapevine.~~

~~Send kids out with a blessing.~~ → Help and Thanks prayers

~~Circle up with kids. God blesses all of us. And that means me (place a hand on your chest). And that means you (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, Go and bless the world.~~

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.