

May 3 Lesson

Bible Passage: Matthew 20:1–16
(Parable of the Workers in the Field)



God Is Gracious

Remember Verse

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

Items to gather:

- Images of farms and fields (picture book about farms, or google search)
- Paper (9 sheets)
- Sticky notes (2 colors)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Coin
- 5 pieces of candy
- worship music
- bible

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

Rows of dainty plants stood protected within yellow tubes and wire. The seedlings were frail, but soon they would be beets, chard, squash, and even some lettuces. All this growth would be under the careful care of my dad, or “Papa” as my children call him. Papa composts beautiful soil out of things I’d sooner throw in the trash: eggshells, coffee grounds, watermelon rinds—even dryer sheets. He is committed. I too want to be a committed gardener. But I forget to water on a hot day, I don’t weed properly, I place the seeds too close together—and the plants die.

That summer, Papa gave me the best advice for my adventure with tomatoes. I had arranged too many plants too close together and hadn’t put up the stakes in time, so the tomatoes were growing into a tangled mass. I had even given them too much water, so some plants were getting mushy. As Papa and I surveyed my mess, I felt embarrassed and discouraged. But he told me to leave them alone and they would get what they needed. Sure enough, within a couple of weeks we began harvesting luscious ripe vine tomatoes. After all of my failed attempts, I saw these tomatoes as a gift.

God’s spiritual gift of grace is like my beautiful summer tomatoes. While I, for the life of me, can’t work my way to have better fruit, God gives it to me anyway through His Spirit. In the midst of my tangled attempts, God alone produces beautiful fruit in my marriage, with my children, and in the many wonderful friendships I enjoy. God is gracious, and He gives grace in abundance.

Amy Palmerton

ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson’s Bible passage*

God is gracious, but His grace doesn’t always look like what we expect. Through the parable of the workers in the vineyard (or “field,” Matthew 20), Jesus gently reminded His listeners to approach God with gratitude for all He’s given His people, because salvation and even our next breath are gifts from Him. While it’s tempting to compare ourselves with others concerning what we think is fair, Jesus shows how God graciously gives to all of us as He chooses.

Before Jesus told this parable, a rich young man had approached the Lord to ask how he could earn his way into heaven (Matthew 19). Jesus told the man that if he wanted to earn eternal life, he needed to be perfect. The young man went away sad. In response to this, Jesus explained to His disciples that “kingdom economics” differed from what people were used to—that rich men have a difficult time entering the kingdom of heaven. In response to this, Peter wanted to know what the reward would be for the disciples who gave up everything to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27). Jesus said that in the kingdom there would be rewards, but those rewards would look different from what the disciples expected: many of the last would be first and the first, last.

Knowing this context helps us understand what Jesus was trying to say through this parable: If we want to deal with God on the basis of fairness on our terms, we’ll be in for a shock. No one in the parable of the workers in the vineyard was dealt with unfairly. Everyone got at least what he’d been promised. Though God’s grace doesn’t always look like what we expect, we can always be sure it’s His best for us.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

God tells us plainly in Scripture that the tangled mess of our lives allows Him to demonstrate His amazing grace. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, He says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." What things in your life do you consider weaknesses or shortcomings? Do you feel discouraged by a difficult situation or relationship? If so, perhaps it's time to surrender to God's amazing grace. The apostle Paul's response to 2 Corinthians 12:9 was one of empowerment, even in his flawed state: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Maybe it's time to share with a trusted friend your desire to live more fully in God's grace. Maybe God desires to show you, through your faith community and through His Spirit, that His strength is made perfect in your weakness. May God give you the strength you need to see that His grace is more than sufficient for you.

CONNECT//10 minutes



Rural Fields

In this CONNECT time, kids discuss questions related to farms and fields to prepare them for today's part of The Big God Story.

SUPPLIES

- Images of farms and fields (picture book about farms)

RELATE

CONNECT QUESTION: Open your time by asking this question: **Have you ever visited a farm or another place in the country? What was it like?**

Invite everyone to sit with you in a circle. Today's part of The Big God Story takes place in a field. **Fields are usually located in the country, often a beautiful place to visit or live.** Pass around the images around so everyone can look at them (or google farms/fields on google and scroll through the photos together, or read a book about farms). While you look at the photos ask:

- **Which image was your favorite? Why?**
- **Would you rather live in the country or in the city? Why?**
- **If you could live in one of the places pictured in these images, which one would it be? Why?**
- **Have you ever been to a really beautiful place? Where was it? What made it beautiful?**

GATHER//30 minutes



Remember Verse

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the

LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

Game: Remember Verse Tic-Tac-Toe

SUPPLIES

- Paper (9 sheets)
- Sticky notes (2 colors)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Coin

SET UP

Arrange the nine sheets of paper into a three-by-three grid on the floor to create a tic-tac-toe grid. Leave some space (about a foot) between each sheet. Tape the sheets to the floor.

RELATE

Invite your family to play this fun game of tic-tac-toe as they remember their verse. Before you start playing, say the Remember Verse a few times until the kids remember it. Then split your family into two teams. Stick one color of sticky notes on one team's shirts and the other color of sticky notes on the other team's shirts. This way they'll remember who is on each team once they're standing on the tic-tac-toe squares. Then invite everyone on each team to stand in a line on either side of the grid. Flip a coin to see which team goes first. Choose a member of the first team and ask them to recite the verse. If they can recite it, they get to stand on a square. Then choose a member of the second team and ask him to recite the verse. If he can recite it, he gets to stand on another square. Continue until one team wins the game. Play as many times as you'd like. Consider switching up the teams—making sure to change out the team members' colored sticky notes.

Storytelling

Bible Passage: Matthew 20:1–16

Storytelling Technique: Figurine Puppets

God Is Gracious

RELATE

Invite your family to join you in a circle. Invite a volunteer to stand. Explain that you will give this volunteer a piece of candy after he does jumping jacks for one minute. Then invite him to start the jumping jacks. After about 20 seconds, invite another volunteer to stand and also start doing jumping jacks for a piece of candy. After about 20 more seconds, invite another volunteer to stand and also start doing jumping jacks for a piece of candy. Encourage everyone to cheer on the jumpers. About 20 seconds after the third person started jumping, tell all three people to stop. Give each person a piece of candy, thank them for participating, and have them take their seats.

Each of these volunteers did jumping jacks for a set amount of time. The first person did jumping jacks for 60 seconds, the second for 40 seconds, and the third for 20 seconds. Do you think it was fair for me to give all three kids the same amount of candy? Invite responses. **Good thoughts. Today we're going to hear a parable in which people experienced a similar situation. It's the parable of the workers in the field. First, let's ask God to teach us.** Lead kids in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Watch the video telling the story and then go over the discussion questions:

- **What does *grace* mean?**
- **Do you think it was fair that all of the workers got the same amount? Why or why not?** Matthew 20:12
- **In what way did the landowner show grace to the workers?** Matthew 20:13–15
- **Share a time you were treated unfairly. What was that like?**

- How has God shown you grace in your life?

RESPOND//15 minutes



Activity: Finger Prayers

Using fingers on their hands, kids will pray for five different categories such as family, friends, and the world.

RELATE

God is gracious. He loves us and gives us the chance to be in relationship with Him. Since this is such good news, everyone in the world should know about it!

Encourage your family to pray for people around the world to know that God loves them and graciously invites them to be in relationship with Him. Invite everyone to pray that people around the world would put their faith in Jesus. As you all pray, invite everyone to use their hands:

- Thumb: people in the faith community who live far away (in other countries and cultures)
- Pointer finger: people in positions of leadership, such as the mayor, the governor, the president, or world leaders
- Ring finger: people we love, including family and friends
- Little finger: people who are sick, weak, or in pain
- Whole hand: the rest of the people in the world who need God's grace in their lives.

After the children have prayed, thank God for answering our prayers. Thank Him for His gracious gift of relationship with Him.

Game: Fun with Music

In this activity, kids will freeze in place when the music stops.

SUPPLIES

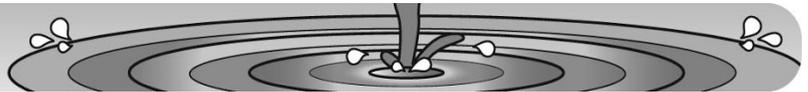
- Fun, upbeat music

RELATE

Today we heard a parable about some people who worked really hard in the field and all got paid the same amount. The amounts the men received were fair, but they were also generous. God is a gracious God.

Reinforce what the kids heard today with a fun freeze dance. Explain to your family that when they hear the music, they should dance. As they dance, they can act out what they heard in the parables today (for instance, they could pretend to pick grapes in the field). When the music stops, they must freeze! If they don't freeze, they must sit down. Keep starting and stopping the music until one person remains.

BLESS//5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Bible

RELATE

Gather the children and read the following blessing from 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17:

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

After you have spoken the blessing over the kids, invite them to join you in an echo prayer. To do so, simply speak one line of prayer and then pause and allow the children to repeat that line. Explain to the kids that when they speak the prayer, they're using their own unique voices to bless the group.

God, You are gracious.

Repeat.

God, You love each of us equally.

Repeat.

God, You created each of us uniquely.

Repeat.

God, You are good. We praise You. Amen.

Repeat.

May you see God's graciousness in your life. May you notice the ways He shows love and kindness to you.