



SESSION 2 of 4

The workers

MEETING AIM

To give the children the opportunity to explore the 'unfairness' of God's kingdom, and therefore his mercy and grace.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 20:1-16.

BACKGROUND

God's kingdom is upside down, and this story teaches that truth beautifully. We have been given so much that is undeserved and unfair. As you prepare for this session, use the time to reflect on all that God's grace means to you. What is God saying to you that might bring new revelation to the children in your group? How can you help children wrestle with the seeming unfairness of what happens in this story, and therefore what it means in their journey with Jesus?

5 CIRCLE TIME

You will need: a plastic plate

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the group about their week. Celebrate their triumphs and sit with them in their disappointments.

You could try this game to get the children talking. Give them each a number. Spin a plastic plate on its edge in the middle of the circle and shout out a question (for example: "What did you eat for breakfast?" or "What was your favourite thing this week?") and a number. The person with that number must catch the plate and answer the question. Then they spin the plate and shout a question and number for someone else in the group.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: strawberry laces plus an extra pack

Line everyone up and give each child a strawberry lace, which they should dangle from their mouths. On the count of three they must eat their lace as quickly as they can without using their hands. The first one to finish is the winner. Everyone else keeps going until there is a 'loser'. Give the winner a big clap, but give the loser a bag of strawberry laces to take home!

15 BIBLE STORY

You will need: washing-up bowls filled with soapy water; sponges; tea towels; 'dirty' plates and cups; small packets of sweets (or small packets of dried or fresh fruit)

Divide the children into three groups. Explain that you have some jobs for them to do. Give the first group some washing-up bowls with hot soapy water, sponges and some dirty plates and cups. Explain that you will pay each of them a pack of sweets (or fruit) for their work. The other groups can watch them as they wash and dry the plates and cups.

After a couple of minutes give the second group the same job. Keep these two groups going until there isn't much left to wash up, then ask the third group to join in.

When everything is washed and dried, give each child the same 'pay' and wait for the complaints of: "It's not fair!" (If the children are too polite to complain, ask them if they feel this is a fair wage for all.)

Explain that this is exactly what happened in a story Jesus told about a boss and some workers. They complained too! Read the Bible story from Matthew 20:1-16 to the group. Ask the children to act out the story and enjoy being the people who were hired first. How might they have complained?

10 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to contribute (if you have lots of children, split into smaller groups to give everyone a chance to speak):

- How did you feel when you realised the payment for the washing up wasn't fair?
- How do you think the workers in the vineyard felt when they all got the same pay?
- If you were in the crowd listening to Jesus' story, what would you have thought?
- Why do you think Jesus said this is what his kingdom is like?
- Does this mean his kingdom isn't fair? In what ways?
- What does this story tell us about God and how he treats us?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a coat hanger; string; containers such as small buckets; paper; permanent marker pens; smooth stones
Hang the coat hanger somewhere in your space with a container either side, as shown in this picture.

Give each child a piece of paper and a smooth stone. Ask the children to write on the paper what they feel they might do to earn God's favour (make it clear that we can't earn it – he gives it freely – but sometimes we still try to earn in). Place the paper into one of the containers. Then ask the children to write on a stone some of the things God gives us freely without us working for it or earning anything. Deposit these in the other container.

Ask the group to consider what is fair. If the children have any questions, provide space for them to ask those now. Let them tell you their own answers to those questions without leaping in straight away with your thoughts.

5 PRAYER

You will need: stones from 'Creative response'

Take the stones you used in 'Creative response' out of the bucket and use them to make a pile of stones (sometimes called an 'Ebenezer', which comes from the altar built by Samuel in 1 Samuel 7) to remind everyone and thank God together for all he gives us, even when it doesn't seem fair.

As the children pile up their stones, encourage them to think about their response to the story and what they want to say to God. Have a time of quiet to allow the children space to do this, then finish with a prayer thanking God that all the good things he gives are available to everyone, regardless of when they start following him.

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For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.