



SESSION 2 of 4

The workers

MEETING AIM

To reflect on God's simultaneous justice and grace.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 20:1-16.

BACKGROUND

Another parable about the kingdom, this story demonstrates God's extraordinary generosity. God's grace is wonderful to everyone who experiences it, but we may find it easier to identify with the workers who've spent all day slaving in the sun than the ones who turned up for the last hour, and feel this is all a little unfair. Jesus' disciples were his original audience, and they may have felt the same way. In this way, the parable throws up some awkward questions. How do we respond when God's idea of justice is different from our own? What do we do when he's kind to people we don't think deserve it? Should we perhaps be a bit kinder ourselves?

10 GATHERING TOGETHER

Take time to catch up with your young people and see how they're doing. Serve drinks and snacks while you're at it, but keep the best refreshments back. After a few minutes, give the best refreshments to the person who arrived last. (If they arrive in the middle of this activity, so much the better.) There should be some kind of protest from the rest of the group. If there isn't, ask them how they feel.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: small, hard sweets; several bowls; chopsticks

Pour the contents of two large packets of sweets into two bowls (Skittles, Smarties or M&Ms are ideal). Ask for two volunteers. Set them to work separating the sweets into individual colours using chopsticks. Each colour should be grouped in a different bowl. Promise them a reward for their work.

Tell the rest of the group that in the story we're looking at today Jesus says twice that "the last will be first and the first will be last" (Matthew 19:30; 20:16).

Ask the young people what they think that means. After a couple of minutes, ask for two more volunteers to help the first pair in their task. Finish the discussion with the rest of the group, then have two more volunteers join the sweet sorting for the final minute.

Following this final minute, give a handful of sweets to the last two volunteers to join. Give the same quantity to the second pair of volunteers, then to the first two. Ask all the volunteers whether they think this arrangement was fair. Why or why not?

15 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: Bibles

Ask a few of your young people to help you with a dramatised reading. Ask one volunteer to read for the landowner and others to read for each group of workers. You could have one actor or several read the lines given to each group of workers. Encourage everyone to pay close attention to the story because you're going to ask them how they feel about it afterwards.

Read Matthew 20:1-16. When the reading is finished, ask everyone how they feel about what happened. If it helps, they could use social media-style reactions for 'like' (thumbs up), 'love' (form a heart with your hands), 'sad' (sad face), 'angry' (look angry), 'lol' (laugh) or 'wow' (look amazed). Let the actors join in with this. Ask a few of your group members why they feel this way.

Some of your group members may be upset by the story because they think the landowner was unfair. If so, ask them why they think that. Didn't he give everyone what he had promised to give them?

10 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions as a starting point for discussion, following on from the Matthew reading:

- Why do some of the workers grumble?
- Who do you think Jesus wanted to hear this story? (It looks as though the disciples were his audience, see Matthew 19:23.)
- Why do you think it was important for the disciples to hear this?
- What kind of person is the landowner?
- In Jesus' parables, authority figures often represent God. What do you think Jesus was trying to say through this parable about what God is like?
- Has God ever been kind to someone you didn't think deserved it? If so, can you tell us about that?
- How do we tend to respond when this kind of thing happens?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: cups; straws; fruit juices; fizzy drinks

Explain that the parable of the workers can make for uncomfortable reading because it doesn't fit in with our own ideas of fairness. Like the landowner, God loves to be kind to people, whether they deserve it or not. He wants us to behave like that as well. This next activity will give us a little practice at being kind to other people.

Divide the young people into groups of two or three. Let everyone create a mocktail for their partner (or someone in their group of three) using the ingredients provided. Encourage everyone to be creative and create something really tasty. Try to make sure everyone gets a mocktail.

Afterwards, comment that being kind to someone we already like is pretty easy. Being kind to someone we don't think deserves it is harder. But that's exactly what Jesus wants us to do. How could you bless someone like that this week?

10 PRAYER

You will need: brown and green paper; pens; Blu Tack

Ahead of the session, create a simple tree (or vine) shape out of brown paper and stick it to a wall in your meeting room. Make a pile of leaf shapes out of green card.

To finish the session, ask the young people to reflect on other people they know who might need to experience God's kindness. If these are people they don't like very much, even better. Ask them to write down the name of each person who comes to mind on a leaf and stick it to the tree. As they do this they can pray quietly, asking God to show them his kindness.

Round off with a short spoken prayer, thanking God for being kind to us and asking for his help in showing his kindness to other people.

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