**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 3 of 4

# The workers in the vineyard

### MEETING AIM

To explore the kingdom of heaven through the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 20:1-16

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

On first reading, this parable doesn’t appear to be fair at all. Everyone gets the same wage, no matter how long they have worked. However, on greater exploration, we discover a definition of ‘fairness’ that goes beyond our human score-keeping. Salvation is offered to everyone, no matter who they are; eternal life with God is for those who have been following him all their life and for those following for just five minutes.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the young people to your group and share out any refreshments you have prepared. Chat about the young people’s week; celebrate their triumphs and share in their disasters. Ask the young people if anyone has treated them unfairly. What happened? Why did they feel hard done by?

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** sweets

Pick a volunteer to do 50 press-ups for a sweet. As the young person is doing these, choose someone else to do 20 for the same sweet. As both are doing their press-ups, ask another young person to do five for the same sweet. Make sure each participant has an adjudicator to ensure they do their full quota. You could alter this game so that everyone in the group takes part. When everyone has finished, give out the sweets; from those who started last to those who started first. Ask those who took part in the challenge:

* How did it feel doing a lot of press-ups for the same as those who did fewer?
* How did it feel doing fewer press-ups for the same as those who did the most?
* Do you think the challenge was fair?

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** parable video and the means to show it; Bibles; volunteers to play the landowner and the labourers; chair

Before the session, search online for a video retelling of the workers in the vineyard.

Use the video at this point in the session as a way of introducing the parable. Then read Matthew 20:1-16 and compare the video to the text. You might also want to read the retold parable [‘Chloe and the crazy paving’](https://www.premiernexgen.com/premier-ycw-magazine-online-hub/parable-chloe-and-the-crazy-paving/8626.article) from our ‘Ready to use parable’ series.

Choose one volunteer to be the landowner and three to be the labourers. Place the chair in the middle of your space and invite them one by one to sit down. Encourage the other group members to ask the person on the chair questions about the story. These could be about their feelings, motivations or life situations. What conversations might they have had?

Let the young people lead the kind of questions they want to ask, but don’t let it get out of hand! After everyone has been interviewed, ask the group about their initial responses to the story, then ask: “What is the kingdom of heaven?”

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Continue your discussion of the Bible passage by chatting through the following questions:

* Who do you think the labourers and the landowner symbolise?
* Why do you think the landowner paid all the workers the same wage?
* What does this say about the landowner?
* What does this tell you about God and your relationship with him?
* What might this parable mean for your life?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** creative resources (such as art materials, filming equipment or drama props)

Challenge the young people to create something that describes what they think the kingdom of heaven is like, following on from what they have discovered. This could be a straight retelling of the story, a retelling set in their own neighbourhood or something that explores what the kingdom means for them and their own lives.

If the young people would like to, allow some time at the end for them to share what they have created. It might be good to discuss any new ideas that this time of sharing sparks.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Ask the young people to get comfortable and close their eyes. Use the following script to help facilitate an encounter with God’s grace:

As you sit, become aware of God’s presence and care for you. Concentrate on your breathing. *Pause.* Slow it down, and again become aware of God’s presence, sustaining and holding you.

When you are ready, ask the Holy Spirit to go with you and inspire you to remember any moment in your journey with God. *Pause.*

As you look over your experience, let the following question arise: Where did I experience God’s grace in this moment? Allow little things to emerge: a smile, a greeting, a kind word, the sunlight in the room, an emerging conversation. Then stay with whatever moment God seems to give you. Don’t force anything, just be open and let the moment arise that seems to hold the most grace.

Let all else fall away as you spend a few moments just holding that experience. What does this feel like? *Pause.* What are you like? *Pause.* What are the other people like in this experience? *Pause.* Thank God for this, and slowly open your eyes.

This session was inspired by ideas from the NexGenPro archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.