

Faith Adventures Youth Resource

Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

Embedded in Faith Adventures: Children Together, this youth resource is intergenerational in nature and designed to foster God-connection in church, home and beyond.

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: www.bit.ly/How-To-FAYR

Title: Matthew 20: 1-16 – The workers in the vineyard

Theme: It's not fair

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

The book of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament; it was written around 60 AD by Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples. Matthew was a tax collector before following Jesus and in his book, he often shows the links between Jesus and the Old Testament prophecies. In this story, Jesus tells a parable (a story about everyday things to make us think about God). In this parable we are challenged to think about what is fair and how we treat others.

This reading can receive some varied opinions. At first read, we can all relate to the unfairness of someone getting the same reward for half the pay. However, the fact everyone agreed to the terms does need to be taken into account and the reason for the story in the first place – that we all get equal opportunity for eternal life. It is good then to remember that when Jesus was crucified, he spoke to a prisoner and told them that they too would be in paradise with him. No matter when we come to faith we are all part of God's kingdom.

It's good to explore the difference between equity and equality. Rather than everyone getting the same, it is often better for everyone to get what they need. A small box to see over a wall is not as

helpful to a short person as it is for a tall person. But a tall box for a short person and a short box for a tall person gives them equal opportunities to see over the wall.

Together – prayer and games

Let's start our time with God and each other well

Use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Be with us as we learn more about you through stories and people in the Bible.

Help us to walk in your way and follow your path.

Be with us as we make decisions that affect our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Amen

Alternatively, you may join with the widget prayer found in the Faith Adventures: Children together or else the Lord's prayer found at the end of this session.

Active game - Number chance

- raffle tickets
- four prizes

Ensure everyone starts with two or three raffle tickets, put the corresponding number into a bowl. Start calling the numbers and give a prize to the first four people, then as other winning numbers are called those winners can take the prize they want off of someone else. The winners of the gifts are actually the last four numbers.

Quiet game - The chocolate game

You will need:

- large bar of chocolate
- plate
- knife and fork
- scarf
- gloves
- hat
- dice

Participants sit in a circle. Place the wrapped chocolate, plate, knife, fork, and items of clothing in the middle.

Players take turns rolling the dice. When someone rolls a six, they rush to the middle, put on the hat, scarf and gloves and then use the knife and fork to try and cut up and eat pieces of chocolate.

Whilst the player is trying to eat, the rest of the group continue to take turns rolling the dice. When someone else rolls a six, they swap places with the chocolate eater, putting on the clothes before eating pieces of chocolate.

Play continues for a few minutes.

Begin to introduce new rules which make the game unfair. You could use more than one rule or rotate them between rounds.

Increase the number of dice rolled.

Add in a blindfold that must be worn when eating the chocolate.

Use one hand only when cutting the chocolate.

Do not need to wear any of the clothing items when eating chocolate.

Reflect on the questions below after the game:

- How did it feel when the new rules were introduced?

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to Easy English version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2020%3A%201-16&version=EASY>

You may wish to research different versions of this reading on www.biblegateway.com
Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

Jesus tells a story about some workers in a field

20 Jesus said, 'I will tell you a story to show what the kingdom of heaven is like. There was an important man who had a field where he grew grapes. He went out early in the morning. He wanted to find some people who would work in his field. ² The master agreed with the workers that he would pay them one silver coin for a day's work.^[a] Then he sent them to work in the field.

³ The master went out again about three hours later. He saw some other men standing in the market place. They had no work to do. ⁴ So the master said to these men, "You also go and work in my field. I will pay you the right amount of money." ⁵ So the workers went to the master's field and started to work.

The master went out again at noon, and he went again three hours after that. Both times he sent men to his field to work. ⁶ Two hours later, at five o'clock, he went out again. He found more men who were standing there. And they had no work to do. The master asked them, "Why are you standing here all day and you are not working?"

⁷ The men said to the master, "Nobody has asked us to work for him."

So the master said to them, "You also go now and work in my field."

⁸ Then the evening came. The master of the field spoke to the man who had authority over the workers. He said to him, "Tell the workers to come here. Pay them their money. Begin with the workers who started to work at the end of the day. Finish with the workers who started first."

⁹ The workers who had come to work at five o'clock in the evening received one silver coin each. ¹⁰ The workers who had come to work first thought that they would receive more than the other workers. But each of them also received one silver coin. ¹¹ When they received their money, they were not happy. They told the master that he had not been fair to them. ¹² They said to him, "Some of these other workers came last and only worked for one hour. But you have paid them the same money as you paid us. And we have worked all day in the hot sun."

¹³ Then the master said to one of the workers, "My friend, I am being fair to you. You agreed to work for one day and to receive one silver coin. ¹⁴ Take your money and go home. I choose to give this last man the same amount of money as I gave to you. ¹⁵ It is my money. I can choose what to do with it. I want to be kind to people and give them more than we agreed. Does that make you upset?"

¹⁶ Jesus then said, 'So, one day, those people who are not important now will become the most important. Those people who are very important now will become the least important.'

Watch: Parables of Jesus by Bible project

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/how-to-read-the-bible-the-parables-of-jesus/>

An opportunity for reflection

- I wonder if this video helps to explain today's parable?
- I wonder what a parable for today might be about?

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

This is a new way to explore the Bible passage and the theme for this week.

Alternatively, you may wish to use the explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

Explore

A new story to share together – 'Not Fair!' (This is a new story to explore the theme. It tells the same story from the point of view of a young person who waits all day in the marketplace to be chosen to work in a vineyard.)

I don't look old enough to work but I am and my family need me to. Most days start the same. I get up very early, while the air is still cool and damp, think about having a wash but decide I haven't got time and pinch a spoon of slightly chewy porridge whilst it still bubbles in the pot before rushing out of the door. Workers are already starting to gather in the marketplace. The confident and the hopeful, the old and the young, the strong and the weak. When the bosses arrive, they head straight for their favourites (people who've worked for them before) and agree a price. Some days they'll take a chance on someone new; other days they play it safe. By mid-morning the usual suspects are left. By midday the heat of the sun tries to tempt me to have a little snooze, but I fight the urge – I wouldn't want to look lazy. By mid-afternoon I'm trying not to think about how hungry I am and how I might try and get up early enough to eat a little bit more porridge tomorrow when..... There he is again! Choosing more workers! No one's going to quibble about money at this point, the

day's nearly over. Anything is better than nothing. I try to look lively and energetic but I'm not sure I pull it off. By late afternoon I'm ready to give up. Another day wasted! Another day of missed school! Another day of not helping to fix our roof! I'm ready to give up and head home with nothing but my bad news when.... Again? He's back. He gathers us up – the leftovers – asking us why we're still hanging about. Telling us there's work if we want it. I'm so grateful, I forget how tired I am but at the end of the day there's trouble about the pay. 'Not fair!?' I have to bite my tongue, so I don't say something I regret. I'll tell you what's not fair: hardworking men not being chosen because they're from a different town; having to work when you want to be playing with your friends or people staring at my foot and assuming it means I can't pick grapes. Can't he do what he likes with his own money? Some people are never happy!

Research organisations to make things fairer in the world (JPIT/ WaterAid/ Christian Aid/ Fairtrade/ Commitment for Life) What are they trying to achieve? How could you join with this?

To explore the story further

Flipping Cards

You will need:

- cards/or an old pack of playing cards
- pens/stickers

Use the information you have found about such organisations and write them on pieces of card, on one side write a fact about them in terms of fairness, on the other side, unfairness – for instance WaterAid: equal access to water/ walk miles for water. Now place them on the edge of the table and flip them. Where does it land? Have a conversation around the table about the statement it has fallen on. How can we challenge unfairness? In our story this week, we are thinking about fairness and how Jesus flipped everything upside-down.



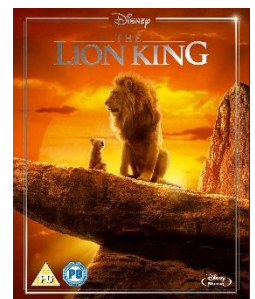
Modern parables

This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.

The Lion King (2019) - Life's Not Fair Scene.

https://youtu.be/W_VAn0DJaU0?si=9SBIMPscYUKOI12E (Watch up to 1min 40sec)

- Scar says, "Life's not fair." What do you think he means by that?
- Do you think Scar is right? Is life ever truly fair?
- Can you see any links between this clip and the attitudes of the workers in the parable?
- How do you think we should respond when things are unfair?



Group discussion

- I wonder where you see unfairness in the world today? What can you do challenge it?
- Where do you see unfairness?

Personal reflection

- I wonder what this story tells us about God's fairness?
- I wonder if you've ever been in a situation which you felt was unfair?
- I wonder what this parable tells us about how we treat others?
- I wonder what makes something fair?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together

Prayer Respond to the theme by writing or saying a short prayer. Alternatively use the creative prayer from Faith Adventures: Children Together for this session or use the prayer activity below. Alternatively light a candle and play some music while you listen and talk to God together.

Leader: Sometimes life feels unfair, and we struggle to understand.

All: We trust you, God.

Leader: But you love each one of us deeply and equally.

All: We trust you, God.

Leader: Help us to show kindness and fairness to others.

All: We trust you, God.

Leader: When challenges come, remind us that You are with us always.

All: We trust you, God.

Leader: Thank You for Your endless grace which is given as a gift for all of us.

All: We trust you, God. AMEN.

Responding together

This is an opportunity for a social justice challenge, some research, craftivism, or a craft or STEM activity. You may have a specific activity chosen but free choice is also an option. Here are some suggestions for this week's theme. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

This part of the session is written up in the explore section.

Write on some sticky notes 'Valued and Loved' or you could draw a heart or smiley face. Spend some time quietly thinking who you want to tell they are valued and loved by God. You could say this prayer as you prepare your notes. Thank you, Jesus, for the joy of knowing that you love us, for the joy of friendship, and the joy of knowing we are valued. May we



spread that joy and share the message of your love with others. Amen Place your notes in places that will surprise others - here are a few ideas: • Inside the fridge or cupboard • On a pillow • In a lunch box or school bag • In a pocket • On a mirror Each day surprise someone with your message of God's love.

Challenge

Discipleship doesn't stop when you walk out of the church door – it is a part of everyday life. Take a challenge with you and try to make it part of your week.

You may think of your own suggestion of what you as an individual or a group might do in the coming week in response to what you have explored today? If not here are some suggestions:

- Use one of the “conversation starter” questions or the question below to talk with someone of a different generation or from a different setting and share your questions, thoughts, insights together. **How can we try to live life fairly?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT, Resources (jpit.uk) *Commitment for Life* cforl.co.uk
- Watch this short video of the work of Fairtrade. Fairtrade seeks to ensure fair wages for work. Are you able to try to buy fairtrade this week? <https://youtu.be/g8LC3PJ-7r4?si=voUniJi7IOw8m6R0>

Thank you for exploring the **workers in the vineyard** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on www.bit.ly/FACT_FB





The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever . Amen

