

May 19, 2024



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

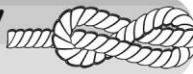
# God Is Gracious

## 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


### LESSON OVERVIEW

**CONNECT//**  
10 minutes



#### Grape Feast

##### SUPPLIES

- Grapes (1–2 lb., red and green) 
- Disposable plates (1 per child)
- Disposable napkins (1 per child)

**GATHER//**  
30 minutes



#### Remember Verse


Game: Remember Verse  
Tic-Tac-Toe

##### SUPPLIES

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

#### Storytelling

##### SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions\*
- Bibles
- Butcher paper (6', black)
- Tape
- Chalk (various colors)
- Candy (3 pieces) 

#### Discussion Questions

**RESPOND//**  
15 minutes



#### Gracious Letters

##### SUPPLIES


- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Colored pencils
- Soft worship music (suggestion: "Remain," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)

#### (Optional) Minute to Win It Games

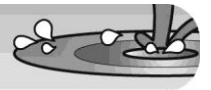
##### SUPPLIES

- Disposable cups (9, can be

used for 2 different games)

- Balloons (3) 
- Straw
- Stopwatch or timer

**BLESS//**  
5 minutes



##### SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards\*
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 12\*
- Bible

#### Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:  
**Customizable copy of Lesson 11 2018–19 Scope and Sequence**  
**TruStory How It Works**  
**Small Group Enhancement**

#### At Home Weekly: Lesson 11

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

# 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.*

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## **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**

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## **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.

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## **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




*Children develop relationships with their leaders and one another through simple activities and conversation starters.*

### Grape Feast

Today’s part of The Big God Story is set in a vineyard. Students get to eat grapes as they discuss getting-to-know-you questions in this CONNECT time.

#### SUPPLIES

- Grapes (1–2 lb., red and green) 
- Disposable plates (1 per child)
- Disposable napkins (1 per child)

#### RELATE

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

Encourage the kids to sit with you in a circle. Invite them to take some grapes. **Today’s part of The Big God Story is set in a vineyard, or a field where grapes grow.** Invite your students to eat the grapes as they discuss getting-to-know-you questions (see below). Kids can break into groups and ask one another the questions, or you, as the leader, can ask the questions of the whole group.

- **What is your favorite season? Why do you like it?**
- **What is one place you enjoy visiting? Why do you like this place?**
- **If you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be?**
- **If you could eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

## GATHER//30 minutes



*Children experience and learn more about God through prayer, storytelling from The Big God Story, an investigation into God’s Word, and creative ways to memorize Scripture.*

### 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 the kids 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 the kids 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 the kids 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 her to recite the verse. If she can recite it, she gets 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: Symbols on a Mural**

**God Is Gracious**

### SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Butcher paper (6', black)
- Tape
- Chalk (various colors)
- Candy (3 pieces) 

### SET UP

Tape the butcher paper to a wall at a low height so that the children can see it at eye level while they're sitting on the floor. Place the chalk nearby.

### RELATE

Invite the students 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 the group to cheer on the jumpers. About 20 seconds after the third person started jumping, tell all three kids to stop. Give each student a piece of candy, thank the kids 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 experience 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.

**Before we begin, what's a parable?** Invite responses. **Right! A parable is story that teaches spiritual truth. Jesus often told parables to reveal important things to His listeners. Last week, the parable Jesus told taught His followers about God's forgiveness. Jesus told the parable we'll hear about today to express the fact that God is gracious—and that His grace is for everyone. What does *grace* mean?** Pause for responses. **Grace means getting something you don't deserve. Okay, let's look at this part of The Big God Story.** Invite students to open their Bibles to Matthew 20:1–16. You can either read the parable straight from Scripture or follow the script below.

As you tell the parable, you and your kids will use the chalk to draw symbols on the butcher paper to accompany the

Scripture. Start at the far left and draw small enough that you can fit all of the symbols on the mural.

Invite kids to follow along as you read Matthew 20:1. **“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard.”** Invite a kid to draw a cluster of grapes at the far left side of the mural.

Encourage kids to follow along as you read v. 2. **“He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.”** Draw two stick figures next to the cluster of grapes. Have a student draw a sunrise next to them to show that it’s very early in the morning.

Invite kids to follow along as you read vv. 3–5. **“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.”** Draw two stick figures next to a clock that says nine o’clock.

Continue with v. 5. **“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing.”** Draw two stick figures next to a clock that says noon and two stick figures next to a clock that says three o’clock.

Read vv. 6–7 as kids follow along. **“About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’”** Ask a kid to draw two stick figures next to a clock that says five o’clock.

Invite children to follow along as you read vv. 8–10. **“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.”** Have a student draw one large coin and then draw arrows from the coin to each of the workers.

Point to the first set of workers and then encourage kids to follow along as you read vv. 11–16. **“When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”** At the end of the mural, write “God is gracious.”

**What do you think about this parable?** Invite responses. **In what ways is this parable similar to the game we played at the beginning of our Storytelling time?** Interact with kids’ responses. **Good thoughts. Each of the workers received the same pay even though they worked different amounts of time—just like each of the volunteers received the same amount of candy even though they did jumping jacks for different amounts of time. We learned earlier that Jesus told this parable to teach His listeners about how God is gracious. How do you think this parable shows God’s grace?** Interact with answers.

**What does *grace* mean again?** Invite responses. **Right. It means getting something that you don’t deserve. The landowner in the parable represents God the Father. He gave a fair wage to the first men—what he had promised them—and a generous wage to the other men. You see, the landowner didn’t have to hire the men; he could’ve let them stand there all day without work. But because he was gracious and generous, he gave the men work.**

**Similarly, God didn’t have to send Jesus to save us from our sins. He did so because He is gracious, He loves us, and He wants to be in relationship with us.** Invite kids to look up Ephesians 2:8–9 in their Bibles and follow along. **The Bible says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”**

**What amazing news! God is so gracious that He gave us the chance to be in relationship with Him even though we don’t deserve it. We can be thankful for the fact that He loves us equally but treats us uniquely. We can rejoice in each unique way God shows grace to every member of His family.** Share a story from your life about a time God was gracious to you.

#### Discussion Questions

- **What does the word *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 what it was like during a time you were treated unfairly.
- How has God shown you grace in your life?

## RESPOND//15 minutes



*Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond to God through creative activities and games.*

## Gracious Letters

Kids are invited to ponder God’s grace and then respond by writing letters to God or others.

### SUPPLIES

- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Colored pencils
- Soft worship music (suggestion: “Remain,” TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)

### RELATE

**Jesus’ parable about the workers in the vineyard gave us a picture of God’s graciousness. Grace means getting something you don’t deserve. We don’t deserve God’s love; we did nothing to earn it. Even so, as those who have put our faith in Him, we get the amazing benefit and joy of being in relationship with a God who loves us so much.**

**Let’s listen to some verses that describe God’s great love for us and His grace toward us.** Read the following passage over the kids: **“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”** Ephesians 2:4–6.

**Let’s sit for a moment and ponder the words we just heard.** Invite the kids to think about the verses they heard, talk with God, and praise Him for His grace.

**God’s gracious gift of relationship with Him is so amazing! God loves everyone and wants all people to put their faith in Jesus. As those who know this good news and have experienced God’s grace, we get to tell others about it! God also calls us to show His grace to others. Sometimes He may call us to give something to someone—something that person doesn’t deserve.**


**How would you like to respond to God today? Let’s spend some time writing letters. Maybe you want to write a letter to God, thanking Him for His graciousness in an area of your life. Or maybe you’d like to write a letter to a friend, telling her about God’s graciousness. You could choose to actually give this letter to your friend or just keep it to yourself as a prayer. Maybe God is calling you to be gracious to someone else and to give him something he doesn’t deserve. You could write about that as well.**

Play music quietly and invite the students to write and draw with the colored pencils. Give them space to connect with God about His graciousness and to listen for what He is saying to them.

## (Optional) Minute to Win It Games

In this time, the students will place fun games that last only a minute!

### SUPPLIES

- Disposable cups (9, can be used for 2 different games)
- Balloons (3) 
- Straw
- Stopwatch or timer

### SET UP

Inflate the balloons.

### RELATE

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

Reinforce what the kids have heard as they play these fun games that last just a minute. Before they play, remind

them of how the workers only worked for a certain amount of time—so they can only play these games for a certain amount of time!

Have a child try to build a pyramid of cups and then take them all back down again in one minute.

Have a child keep three balloons off the ground for one minute.

Have a child use a straw to blow an upside-down disposable cup across a table in less than one minute.

Give each kid the chance to play the game while the group watches and cheers him on. Or split the kids into teams. Each team can choose one player to attempt the game. See which team's members can finish the challenge! After the games, discuss: Do you think it would be fair if one of you got more than one minute to play the game? Why or why not?

## **BLESS//** 5 minutes



*Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.*

### **SUPPLIES**

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 12 (see Resources)
- Bible

### **RELATE**

Gather the students 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.**

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.