**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 3 of 4

# The workers in the vineyard

### MEETING AIM

To discover that all are important in the kingdom.

### 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 particular situation.

This session’s parable sheds more light on the kingdom of heaven. As well as being precious and valuable (session one) and a place of forgiveness (session two), in this story, we see that it is upside down (the last first and the first last) and also open to all in all its fulness, no matter when you make the decision to follow Jesus. This latter concept might be difficult for younger children to grasp, but they will be able to explore the idea that children (often way down the priority list in churches) are key members of the kingdom.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children and share any refreshments you have. Talk about anything they have done this week which was unusual or that they particularly enjoyed.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** soft toys

Gather all the soft toys you can find. Spend a few moments playing with the different toys. If you have a soft toy from your childhood, then bring it in to show the group. Chat about how old it is and how it came into your possession.

Have fun ranking the toys in different orders: smallest to biggest, cuddliest, most precious. Get some suggestions from the children of different criteria they could use to order the toys. If possible, you could have an extended time of play with the soft toys.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** soft toys from ‘Play’; money (play or real)

Show everyone the Bible and Matthew’s Gospel. Tell the children that Jesus often told his friends stories and that these stories show people what it’s like to be friends with Jesus.

Read Matthew 20:1-7 and use the toys to act out the story. At each stage of ‘hiring’, encourage the children to choose which toys are going to get the job next.

Once all the toys have been ‘hired’, ask the children how much money they would give each one for the work that they have done. Use the money to decide the different amounts, and give that money to each toy.

Read Matthew 20:8-16 and reallocate the money as you do so, so that all the toys have the same amount. Ask the children what they think of what you have done.

Read the whole story again, this time encouraging the children to give the same amount of money to the toys.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* How do you think the toys felt when they were given a job?
* Was the man being fair when he gave everyone the same money?
* Do you like this story? Why? Why not?
* What happens when people aren’t fair? Do you like it if other people are treated better than you? What is it like?
* What might this story tell us about being a friend of Jesus?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** gold or yellow card; hole punch; ribbon; child-safe scissors; felt-tip pens or crayons; glass or large biscuit cutter

Help your children to draw around the glass or biscuit cutter on the card, and cut out a circle. You might want to help with the cutting if children’s fine motor skills are still developing. Punch a hole at the top of the circle and then encourage the children to write or draw something on the circle to say how important someone is. This could be as simple as writing a large number ‘1’ on the circle or as complicated as the child’s imagination! Thread a length of ribbon through the hole and then tie the two ends together to create a medal. (Make sure the ribbon loop is large enough to fit over someone’s head.)

As you work, chat about how everyone is important to God – it doesn’t matter how old they are, or young, how much money or possessions they have, or anything. Decide who you might want to give your medal to – it could be someone in the group or someone else (you can give in person or post the medal to whoever the child wants to give it to).

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** medals from ‘Creative time’; praise music and the means to play it

Hold the medals that you made in ‘Creative time’ in your hands. As you do, ask God to help you recognise that everyone is important to God and is loved by him. It doesn’t matter how long they have been a friend of Jesus, how old or rich they are…

Have a moment of silence (you might only manage a few seconds, but that’s OK; if the children are happy to sit in silence, don’t rush to the next thing, let the group be quiet as long as they wish). Invite the children to look at their medal and talk to God about whatever is on their mind.

Finally, play some lively praise music and enjoy dancing around, knowing that you are all important to God.

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