

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message
Matthew 20:1-16, Parable of Vineyard Workers
October 29, 2006



Introduction

1. Read Matthew 20:1-16.
2. Why do you think a vineyard is chosen by Jesus as a picture of the kingdom of God? What is there about a vineyard that is similar to our relationship to God?
3. Read Isaiah 5:1-7 for a much earlier use of the vineyard picture (700 BC) to capture Israel's failing relationship with the LORD.
4. When you think of being a Christian, does hard work come to mind right away, or something else? Explain your response.
5. What are the dangers of focusing too much on hard work as the defining characteristic of a Christian?

Getting Inside the Parable

1. Put yourself in the place of each of the following characters in the story at the point where the vineyard workers are paid at the end of the day:
 - the ones who had worked all day, 6 am – 6 pm
 - the ones who had worked on hour, 5-6 pm
 - the vineyard owner handing out a denarius to each one

What does each feel at pay time? What emotions are in play in each case?

2. How does gratitude fare among us Christians these days? Are we very grateful?
3. Why do you think it's important that each worker in the story received the same pay?
4. Look again at verses 9-12. When have you grumbled or complained about what you have or do not have? What's wrong with our grumbling?
5. Now look at vs. 15. What is the truth we need to face when we begin to grumble, compare, or get envious of others?



Digging Deeper

1. Right before this parable, Jesus has talked about children as a prime example of what those in the kingdom need to become (Matthew 19:13-15). Then He tells a rich young man to sell everything he has and give to the poor if he wants to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:16-22). Then Jesus promises His disciples, who have left everything to follow Him, that they will be especially blessed in heaven (19:23-30). Relate each of these three conversations to the parable of the vineyard workers and especially Jesus' words in 20:16.
2. In what sense is God's unfairness the salvation of us all? In other words, how do we depend on God not giving us what we deserve when we consider being saved? See Romans 3:21-26.
3. How does this parable challenge you to a deeper level of discipleship? What does it ask of you?
4. Consider for a moment your work in the vineyard (your service in the church) by addressing these questions:
 - What good motivation do you have for work in the church?
 - What wrong motivation might mess up your work in the church?
 - What has caused you to grumble?
 - What brings fulfillment?
5. Summarize the meaning of this parable by finishing the sentence, "God wants me to..."
6. Close with prayer.