



## STORY 75

# Grumbles and Grace

## MATTHEW 20

### BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Matthew 20.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



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### THE BIG PICTURE

*Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}*

The ballerina danced with *grace*. The sports star *graced* us with his presence. The teacher gave the class a *grace* period to finish the assignment. We use the word *grace* a lot and for a lot of things. The Bible uses the word a lot too, but it expresses a different idea than the examples above. Grace is God's kindness toward those who don't deserve his kindness. God's grace, then, is a generous gift. It is like getting an unexpected present for Christmas after you have been naughty from January to December!

So, let's think of some examples of grace throughout the Biggest Story. When God called a nobody named Abraham to come to the promised land and receive God's blessing, that's grace. When God forgave King David's awful sins, that's grace. When Jesus called the tax collector Matthew to follow him, that's grace.



When the father in Jesus’s parable of the prodigal son welcomed his son home, forgave all his sins, and threw a big party to celebrate his son’s return, that’s grace. That’s amazing grace! In today’s lesson we learn more about God’s amazing grace. It’s another parable, one usually called the parable of the laborers (or workers) in the vineyard. By God’s grace, let’s listen!

## TELL THE STORY

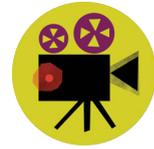
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

## TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

**Big Truth**  
God is free to bless anyone he chooses in the ways he knows are best.

When it comes to seeing the world the way God wants us to, we need to put on grace glasses. This means we stop paying attention to everything in life that doesn’t seem fair and start seeing all the good things God gives us every day.

Jesus told the parable of the laborers in the vineyard to teach this point. One morning a man who owned a vineyard needed help harvesting grapes. So he hired some workers. They agreed to work the whole day in order to provide a day’s worth of food and shelter for their family (about a hundred dollars). Then a few hours later, the boss walked into town and saw some people who had nothing to do. Without work, their families would suffer. “Do you want some work? I’ll pay you whatever is right.” Off they went to the vineyard and started to work. The boss hired more workers later in the day—at noon, three, and five. It is strange that he would hire people so late in the day. Maybe his heart was more focused on helping them than on the help they could give him. When all the work was done, those who were hired last were paid first. They got a hundred dollars—enough to provide for their families! Those hired first thought to themselves, “If they got a hundred dollars for working just one hour, we should get a thousand.” But no, they received a hundred too. “Wait a minute,” they

grumbled. “We worked all day, and they only worked an hour. It’s not fair that they should get the same as us.” Maybe not, but the boss seemed more focused on making sure everyone got the money they needed to care for their families. So the boss replied, “It is fair. You agreed to work for a hundred dollars. If I decide to give the same to the other workers, why does my generosity upset you?”

Jesus ended the parable saying, “So the last will be first, and the first last” (Matt. 20:16). The point is this: if we put on the grace glasses, we will be glad when people who really don’t deserve grace get it (which includes all of us). The people who think they’ve earned God’s blessing will begrudge when others receive it, but those who know they don’t deserve God’s blessing will rejoice the most.

### GOSPEL CONNECTION

*Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.*  
{5 minutes}

Do you know what Jesus said right after he told this parable? He said, “Let us now journey to Jerusalem, for when we get there I will be delivered over to the Jewish religious leaders and they will condemn me to death. Then they will deliver me over to the Romans and they will mock me and whip me and crucify me. But, on the third day, I will rise from the dead” (see Matt. 20:18–19). By going to the cross for us, God gave us more than a hundred dollars. He gave us the most precious gift of eternal life through Jesus’s death and resurrection. God gave us grace upon grace. How could we possibly grumble? Instead, we put on grace glasses and rejoice anytime God chooses to bless anyone. Instead of comparing and trying to make sure it’s all even, we are free to trust God. He’s given us the greatest gift of all, so we can trust that he will be good however he blesses—even in itty-bitty things like who gets the best Christmas presents or which sibling got the biggest helping of dessert.

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### DISCUSS THE STORY

*Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}*

- QUESTION:** Do people normally want to be first in line or last? In the story that Jesus told about the workers, who got paid first—those who started last and did the least or those who started first and did the most? What point was Jesus making?

**TAKEAWAY:** In God’s kingdom the last will be first and the first last.

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Engage

**Memory Verse**  
So the last will  
be first, and  
the first last.

**MATTHEW 20:16**

2. **QUESTION:** Do you think you would have been upset like the first workers that you didn't get paid more for doing more work? Why? How does Jesus say those workers should have responded? Why?

**TAKEAWAY:** When you're tempted to compare your life to others, remember that God has given you everything he promised.

3. **QUESTION:** Who created you? Whom do you belong to? When you create something, does it get to tell you what you're allowed to do with it? Why not? Since we belong to God, who gets to decide what he can do with us?

**TAKEAWAY:** God has the right to bless anyone he chooses as he sees fit.

4. **QUESTION:** Did Jesus die on the cross for you because you were so obedient? Does God listen to your prayers because you're so good? Why doesn't it make sense to respond to God's grace by complaining when other people get more than you? How should we respond to God's amazing gift of salvation?

**TAKEAWAY:** When we remember we don't deserve God's blessing and salvation, we stop complaining and start rejoicing.

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## ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from [TheBiggestStory.com](http://TheBiggestStory.com), or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

### Option 1: Grumble and Grace Tag

*Supply List: none*

Have children spread out in the room. Choose one child to be "Grumble Blob" and one to be "Grace Blob." Start a game of tag. The Blobs are "It." When a Blob tags someone, the tagged child links arms with the Blob. Continue play until everyone is part of one of the Blobs. Remind children that both grumbling and showing grace can be contagious. Let's be people of grace!

## Option 2: Move on Back!

*Supply List: masking tape, dice (one per team)*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Use the masking tape to mark a finish line.*

Divide children into teams of six, and give each team a die. Have teams line up single file at a starting line. On “Go” the first person on each team rolls the die. The whole team must move forward the number of steps shown on the die. The die is then passed to the next person in line, and the team again moves forward the number of steps rolled. If the number one is rolled, the team must return to the starting line and begin again. The first team to cross the finish line wins. Remind children that it can be easy to complain when something in life seems unfair (like when they rolled a one!), but God wants us to be thankful for all he has given us.

3rd–5th

## Option 1: Payday Relay

*Supply List: dice (one per team), play money, envelopes (one per team)*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Place dice across the room from the starting line.*

Divide children into teams, give each team an envelope, and line each team up across from a die. Have the first person on each team bear walk to his team’s die and roll it. The number he rolls is his day’s wages. He then gathers wages from the leader (e.g., a 4 earns \$4), runs to add the money to his team’s envelope, and tags the next person to go. After 5 minutes, teams count their money. Surprise them by saying that the team with the least amount of money wins, because in God’s economy the first shall be last.

## Option 2: You’re So Grape!

*Supply List: packing tape (one roll per team), green or purple balloons, large bag*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons and place in a large bag.*

Divide children into groups of four. Give each team packing tape. Have teams choose one team member to be the “grape.” Before starting the relay, give teams time to wrap their grape in packing tape, sticky side facing out. On “Go” the

first person from each team runs to get a balloon from the bag, brings it back to stick on her team's grape, and tags the next person. After three minutes, the team with the most balloons stuck to their grape wins. Tell children the grapes remind us of the parable Jesus told about workers in a vineyard.

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## CRAFTS

*Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}*

K–2nd

### Option 1: Cluster of Grace

*Supply List: paper, purple and green construction paper, glue sticks, crayons*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of an outline of a cluster of grapes with Matthew 20:15 printed underneath (one per child). Cut 1" x 4" purple and green strips of paper. Make a sample craft.*

Place copies, strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Have children take a grape paper and color any leaves or stems. Next, children roll the strips of paper into cylinders and glue at the seam. Have them glue these “grapes” to their paper until the cluster is filled. Remind children that in the parable of the vineyard workers, we learn about God’s great generosity.

### Option 2: Be Grateful

*Supply List: purple and green paint, paper plates, empty toilet paper rolls (one per child), paintbrushes*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Put purple and green paint on paper plates (one color per plate). Make copies of Matthew 20:15 printed at the bottom of a paper (one per child). Make a sample craft.*

Give each child an empty toilet paper roll and a verse paper. Place paint and paintbrushes on tables. Have children dip the end of the toilet paper roll in the paint and press onto their verse paper to make a circle. Have children form a cluster of grapes by continuing to make circles that touch one another, then

paint a stem and leaves using the paintbrush and green paint. Remind children that in the parable of the vineyard workers, we learn about God’s great generosity.

3rd–5th

### Option 1: Spread Grace

*Supply List: construction paper, paper plates, washable paint (green, black, and white), paper towels*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Place green, black, and white washable paint on paper plates (one plate per child). Make a sample craft.*

Give each child a piece of construction paper, a plate with paint, and a paper towel. Have children dip a finger in the black paint and make a large dot that will be the center of a dandelion. Children should then dip a finger in the green paint to make a stem coming down from the black dot. Next, they dip a finger in the white paint and make lines coming out from the black dot like a firework, then make dots to the right of the dandelion to look like seeds blowing. Have them use paint on their fingers to write “Spread Grace” under the flower. Encourage children to wipe their fingers on the paper towel between new colors.

### Option 2: “First Shall Be Last” Trophy

*Supply List: paper, tape, glue, scissors, a variety of supplies (toilet paper rolls, cardstock, cardboard, pom-poms, aluminum foil, etc.)*

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Print papers that say “First shall be last” (one per child). Make a sample craft.*

Place copies and remaining supplies on tables. Have children use the provided supplies to design a trophy that displays the “First shall be last” paper. Remind children that Jesus used a parable to teach us that the first shall be last.



Visit [TheBiggestStory.com](https://TheBiggestStory.com) for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.