

# Parable of the Vineyard

## Lesson At-A-Glance

Scripture Reference  
**Matthew 21:33-46**

Church Season  
**Pentecost**


Lesson Focus  
**People see themselves in Jesus' parables.**

Bible Memory Verse  
**The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes. Matthew 21:42b**



Tear here for easy use!

### Gather (10 minutes)

|  | Spark Resources   | Supplies                      |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>Arrival Activity</b><br>Kids return to somewhere they've been before. | Activity Pages, Spark Bibles<br> | Pencils, mural paper, markers |
| <b>Opening Conversation</b><br>Kids talk about recurring images.         | Leaflets  | None                          |
| <b>Opening Prayer</b><br>Kids pray for their own "story."                | None  | None                          |

### Open the Bible (20 minutes)

|  | Spark Resources                    | Supplies |
|--|------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Parable of the Vineyard Story</b><br>Kids pick a person in today's story who represents them. | Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers | None     |
| <b>Shockingly Sad</b><br>Kids text tough questions to characters from today's story.             | Leaflets, Spark Bibles             | Pencils  |
| <b>Kingdom Tales</b><br>Kids create their own parable comparisons to describe God's kingdom.     | Leaflets                           | Pencils  |
| <b>Stone-Cold Rejected</b><br>Kids turn today's memory verse into an interactive song.           | Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers | None     |

# Lesson At-A-Glance

## Activate Faith (10 minutes)

|  | Spark Resources        | Supplies |
|--|------------------------|----------|
| <b>Arch-Enemies?</b><br>Kids use their bodies to learn about the physics of arch-building. | Leaflets               | None     |
| <b>Crowded House</b><br>Kids search for details in a crowd.                                | Leaflets               | Pencils  |
| <b>A Productive Harvest</b><br>Kids connect farm imagery to their own lives.               | Spark Bibles, Leaflets | Pencils  |

Tear here for easy use!

## Send (5 minutes)

|   | Spark Resources   | Supplies |
|---|---|----------|
| <b>Closing Conversation</b><br>Kids talk about the difference between trust and taking advantage. | Leaflets  | None     |
| <b>Closing Prayer</b><br>Kids lean on one another as they pray.                                   | Family Pages<br> | None     |



Visit [www.sparksundayschool.org](http://www.sparksundayschool.org) for more Spark content! Watch a short Lesson Prep Video that will prepare you and give you confidence to explore this Bible story with the kids you are leading. You will also find four downloadable resources for this lesson: an Activity Page, a Family Page, and two additional in-class activities.

# Gather (10 minutes)

## Arrival Activity

If some kids arrive earlier than others and you need a lesson-based activity, make copies of the downloadable Activity Page and set them out for kids to try.

Just before kids arrive, write down the titles of the lessons you've used over the past month or so (if you're not sure of a title for each lesson, come up with a few words that describe what the lesson was about).

Just for review, here are the titles and biblical references for each story from the past three weeks of lectionary-based lessons (you may or may not have covered these stories):

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Joseph Helps His Family | Genesis 45:1-15, 50:15-21 |
| The Vineyard Workers    | Matthew 20:1-16           |
| The Chief Priests       | Matthew 21:23-32          |

Ask each kid to look at the list, and think about the PLACES they've heard about in these Bible stories. For example, in the lesson of The Chief Priests, the story takes place in a temple. If not everyone has arrived yet, you can ask kids to think about these story details as you wait for other kids to show up, but ask them not to share their ideas with anyone else.

Once everyone has a place in mind, have them come up with three hints about their "place" and share them with the group one at a time, to see who can guess "where" they are.

## Opening Conversation

**Who was able to try a Faith on the Go! activity this past week? Tell us what you did.** Allow some time for sharing.

**Who can tell me the Bible Memory Verse from last week?** If kids remember the BMV, invite them to recite it as a group. Guide kids to help them remember parts they don't.

Invite kids to look at the first page of the leaflets. Encourage comments on the images, the Lesson Focus, and the Life Question. Challenge kids to think of some people they trust.

Then, ask kids to share with the group a time when someone had to explain something to them over and over, until they got it. **Why did you have trouble understanding this idea? What did that person do to help you get it?**

**Today's story comes from the book of Matthew, in the 21st chapter, and it takes place in a vineyard. But Jesus told us a story about a vineyard in the chapter right before this one.**

### Spark Resources

Activity Pages



Spark Bibles

### Supplies

Pencils

Mural paper

Markers

### Spark Resources

Leaflets

### Supplies

None

Tear here for easy use!

- **When you see a place, word, or idea show up in a story again and again, what does that mean?** (*It means the person telling the story thinks it's important—maybe they think this idea is something people can understand.*)
- **Why do you think Jesus is talking about vineyards again?** (*He knew his hearers knew what vineyards were like.*)
- **What other things keep coming up again and again in the story of Jesus?**  
Encourage discussion.

## Opening Prayer

**It could help if we think about our lives as stories, and consider the things that we can learn from our own parables. Let's pray a prayer in which we think of our life stories and the characters, settings, and plots we encounter every day.**

Pray each of the following starter prayers, and go around a circle, leaving time for kids to fill in the blanks.

**God, thank you for characters in our stories like . . .**

**God, help us to learn and love in the settings in our stories such as . . .**

**God, help to resolve the conflicts in our lives. For example . . .**

**We trust in you, the author of salvation.**

**Amen.**

Spark Resources  
None

Supplies  
None

## Open the Bible (20 minutes)

### Parable of the Vineyard Story

Help kids find Matthew 21:33-46 on pages 1085-1086 in the Spark Bible. Ask kids to listen carefully as they follow along and pick one character from the story that they can relate to. Read the story to the kids.

- **Whom did you pick as someone you relate to? Why?**
- **What makes this person like you? How is he or she unlike you?**

Read through the story again, but this time, ask kids to mime out the actions of their chosen characters. It's okay if there are a bunch of kids who want to be the vineyard owner. Some characters are more naturally relatable to kids.

- **If you could go back and pick again, would you still pick this character? Why or why not?**
- **Is it possible to relate to more than one character in this story? How?**
- **Do you think Jesus meant for every character in this story to represent only one person? In other words, could the vineyard owner's son be both Jesus AND/OR us? How can we tell who's who?**

Spark Resources  
Spark Bibles  
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies  
None

**I think that we like to pick one person to be in the stories Jesus tells, but I also think that Jesus' stories (and our stories) can be much more complex than this. To be honest, some days I feel like the son of the vineyard owner, and some days I feel like the tenants who beat him up. Know what I mean? Understanding what it's like to be more than one character in this story will help us with our next activity.**

## Shockingly Sad

Ask kids to find Shockingly Sad on the third page of the leaflet. Have a volunteer read the directions out loud, then help kids get to work on this short activity.

If there are some kids who are excited about the questions they came up with, have them share them with the group, and see if anyone can come up with possible answers to these tough questions.

Some kids might need ideas for this activity, and the questions below can easily be translated from discussion questions into suggestions for kids.

- **Why do you think the landowner kept sending people to his vineyard after he saw what happened? Why would he send his son?**
- **Why didn't the landowner send the police or other authorities to his vineyard? Wouldn't they have been able to help?**
- **Why did the tenants think that by killing the vineyard owner's son, they would "get his inheritance"? How would that make the vineyard owner write them into his will?**
- **How did the son feel when the owner sent him to the vineyard? Afraid? Confused?**

**One thing that a parables does is surprise us with unexpected behaviors. Shepherds leave 99 sheep for 1, Samaritans help people outside of their tradition, and so on.**

- **In today's story, which behaviors can you relate to?**
- **Which behaviors seem outrageous to you?**
- **If Jesus picked only one character from today's story to represent you, whom would he pick?** Encourage overly creative responses, like "The vineyard!" and follow up with more questions.

### Spark Resources

Leaflets  
Spark Bibles

### Supplies

Pencils

## Kingdom Tales

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Have kids move on to Kingdom Tales on the third page of the leaflet. This activity asks kids to make more comparisons—this time, taking up Jesus' tendency to compare God's kingdom to things that people understand and are surprised by. The kids have heard Jesus do this a lot.

Encourage kids to share the comparisons they've made.

### Spark Resources

Leaflets

### Supplies

Pencils

## Stone-Cold Rejected

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Help kids find Matthew 21:42b on page 1085 in the Spark Bible. Ask a volunteer to read the second part of verse 42.

- **Why do you think Jesus' quote is spaced like that in our Bibles?** (*It's a quote. It's a song or a poem.*)
- **Who do you think the cornerstone is that Jesus is talking about?** (*Jesus*)

Ask kids to come up with a melody or rhythm for these words. If you want to get kids moving and take it one step further, ask kids to come up with motions for each of the four lines in the verse. Once you've finished, be sure to tell kids that they can put I Memorized It stickers in the margins of their Spark Bibles.

### Spark Resources

Spark Bibles  
Spark Bible Stickers

### Supplies

None

Tear here for easy use!

## Activate Faith (10 minutes)

### Arch-Enemies?

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**When you think of a cornerstone, what do you think of?** (*Many kids will think of a large brick found in the corner of a building.*)

**A lot of people think that the type of cornerstone Jesus was talking about was one that would be found at the top of a large archway. Take a look at the picture on the front of your leaflets to see what I mean.**

- **How is that stone different from the others?** (*It's a different shape, it's larger.*)
- **Why is that stone important?** (*It holds the arch up. All the other stones put their weight on it.*)

### Spark Resources

Leaflets

### Supplies

None

To illustrate this idea, help kids try out Arch-Enemies on the last page of the leaflet. Split kids up into smaller groups, if necessary.

- **So exactly how is Jesus like the cornerstone in an archway?** (*He holds everything together, he's a little different, he carries the weight of all of us other stones.*)
- **Knowing what you know about Jesus, how does he do when he's under a lot of pressure?** (*He's strong!*)
- **When we're under pressure from both sides, how can we keep it all together?**

Ask a volunteer to read Did You Know? on the second page of the leaflet. Find out if anyone in the group has ever seen Kolob Arch (or any other natural arch).

## Crowded House

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Have kids complete Crowded House on the second page of the leaflet.

**At the end of today's story, Jesus is (sort of) prevented from being arrested because of the power of the crowd. But a crowd can be a force for good or for chaos, depending on who is in charge of it.**

**Would someone please jump ahead to Matthew 27 and read verses 20-23?**

- **Didn't the crowd in today's story protect Jesus? What happened?**
- **What do you think the difference is between falling on Jesus and leaning on Jesus?**
- **Can we depend on the opinion of a crowd? What should we depend on?**

Spark Resources  
Leaflets

Supplies  
Pencils

## A Productive Harvest

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**With all of this talk about cornerstones, story imagery, and who's who, it's good for us to go back to where this all started—in a vineyard.**

Revisit the vineyard imagery, and reinforce the lesson of a productive harvest by completing A Productive Harvest on the second page of the leaflet. Challenge the kids to name the farm machinery and identify what the machines do.

Answer Key

Harvesting combine - lower right

Tractor - lower left

Milking machine - upper right

Sugar beet planter - upper left

Have the group look up the verses in Look it Up! on the third page of the leaflet, and use the questions there to talk about where our first fruits/best stuff goes (to God) and where the extra stuff goes (to other people who need it).

- **Does this change anything about today's story?**
- **When Jesus says we're supposed to produce "fruits of the kingdom," what does that mean? What does God's kingdom look like?**

## Send (5 minutes)

### Closing Conversation

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**Maybe the tenants in today's story killed the vineyard owner's son because they were greedy. But maybe they were afraid of what would happen to them if they got caught for all the other bad choices they had made. And in today's story, Jesus scares the Pharisees.**

- **Again, what's the difference between "leaning" on Jesus (depending on him) and "falling" on Jesus (abusing his goodness)? Can we ever trust Jesus TOO much?**
- **How can we trust the vineyard owner's son, even if we've made mistakes? Is it ever too late to give our produce to God?**
- **How do you see yourself in today's parable? Have your ideas changed?**

Invite kids to find Faith on the Go! on the last page of the leaflet. Encourage them to complete the assignment and report back next week.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Spark Bibles

Supplies

Pencils

*Tear here for easy use!*

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Supplies

None



## Closing Prayer

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Have your group stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, tightly. Then, have everyone turn to the right and take one more step toward the middle of the circle. At this point, everyone should be pretty closely bunched. Explain to your group that you'll be doing a "trust sit," in which you'll count down from 5, and then everyone will sit on the lap of another.

It might take a few tries to get everyone sitting on the lap of another, but once they have it, tell them to stay in that position for a short time while you pray this prayer:

**Jesus,  
Help us to trust in you. Hold our little community together, and teach us to depend on each other, as well. In our stories, and the stories of our friends, we see you.  
Amen.**

Be sure to send a leaflet and a Family Page home with each kid.

### Spark Resources

Family Pages



### Supplies

None

*Tear here for easy use!*