

Learn by Doing

Choice

Workers in the Vineyard

Children will act out the parable of the workers in the vineyard as the teacher reads it. Groups of workers are called to work in the vineyard at different times throughout the “day.” Their “work” is squeezing grapes to make grape juice. Finish by sharing a grape juice drink and getting a “wage” or reward token.



1. Explain that you will be acting out the parable, and doing a fun job in the vineyard. Point out the places you have chosen to be the “vineyard” and the “marketplace.” Assign a student to be the landowner. All other students will be workers. The teacher will read the story as the children act out the parable.
2. Show the children the vineyard “work”. Squeeze the bag of grapes with your hands until all the grapes are thoroughly squashed. Do not open the bag!
3. Have the children act out the story as it is read. If you have a small group, have the workers go back to the marketplace after their turn to act out another set of workers.
4. When the story is finished, give the landowner and steward a chance to squeeze bags of grapes too. Pour the juice from each bag through a strainer into a pitcher. Give each child a little of the grape juice to drink. Tell them they are enjoying the fruits of their labors! (**Note:** crushing the grapes does not make much juice. You may want to supplement your yield with extra juice.)
5. Finish the activity by giving each child a token. If you printed the *Vineyard Tokens* on sticker paper, put a sticker on each child. Read the statement aloud. Remind the children that the landowner is really the Lord. He wants us all to work in His vineyard—that is, do what He asks us to, so that someday we can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Materials Needed

Stiff paper or full page sticker (adhesive label) paper for printing, open space for acting, grapes, small plastic bags with strong seals (1 for each child plus a few extra), strainer, pitcher, small cups, basket
Optional: t-shirts, grape juice

Prepare in Advance

Pull stems off grapes, cut in half and put 7-12 grapes worth in each bag. Squeeze out most of the air and seal the bags. Print *Vineyard Tokens* (p. 3) on stiff or sticker paper and cut apart.

New Church Concept Hours of Work

“Laboring in the vineyard” is acquiring spiritual life by the knowledges of truth and good from the Word applied to the uses of life. Instead of times of day, the angels perceive the states of life of people who die in old age, adulthood, youth or childhood, and who have equally acquired for themselves spiritual life. See *Apocalypse Explained* 194

Workers in the Vineyard Script

Adapted from Matthew 20:1-16

Roles: Narrator (teacher), landowner, steward, workers

Props: Basket with plastic bags of grapes, strainer, pitcher, small cups. *Optional:* simple costumes such as large t-shirts turned inside out, extra grape juice

Set-Up: Choose one end of the room to be the marketplace and the other end to be the vineyard. Place the basket with the grapes in plastic bags in the vineyard space.

Narrator (teacher) reads the story aloud, pausing to direct the action. The landowner and steward start in the vineyard. Everyone else waits in the marketplace.

Story to Read	Actions
This is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. Early in the morning, a landowner went to the marketplace to hire workers for his vineyard.	The landowner walks from the vineyard to the marketplace.
He agreed to pay the workers a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. And they went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner takes a few workers to the vineyard. The workers go to the vineyard, take bags of grapes from the basket and squish them.
And the landowner went out about the third hour and saw others, and said, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." So they went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner returns to the marketplace and chooses a few more workers to go to the vineyard to squish grapes.
Again the landowner went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And the people went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner takes more workers to the vineyard to squish grapes.
And about the eleventh hour the landowner went out and found others, and said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive." So they went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner takes more workers to the vineyard to squish grapes.
When evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said, "Call the laborers and give them their wages."	The landowner motions to the workers to come to him.
And when the workers who were hired at the eleventh hour came, they each received a denarius. And so did all the rest of the workers. The workers who had been hired first thought they would get more, but they also received a denarius.	The workers place their bags of squished grapes back into the basket. The steward pretends to give each worker a coin.
And they complained to the landowner, saying, "These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have worked all day!"	The first set of workers complain.
But the landowner answered and said, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?"	The landowner speaks to the workers.
So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen. This is a parable of the kingdom of heaven.	After the play is finished, pour the contents of the baggies through a strainer into a pitcher and share the juice.

