

The Stories of Jesus- God Time-Week 5 (June 6th-June 12th)

The Parable of the Vineyard Owner

These scriptures are selected to help you gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. They are intentionally designed for you to engage in your time alone with God. You will find them complementary to the teachings on the weekend (gatherings) and to the LIFE Group materials.

Some tips:

Use a Bible that is easy to read. The ESV or The NLT are both good translations.

Use a prayer journal. After you read the passages jot down what “jumped out” at you while reading. Then take a few minutes to write a prayer response to what you have read.

There are only five days of reading provided so if you miss a day you have time to catch up. Do not get legalistic! If you miss a day or even a week...God still loves you!

Monday: Philippians 2:5-6

Tuesday: Matthew 20:25-27

Wednesday: James 4:5-7

Thursday: Romans 9:14-16

Friday: Romans 12:1-2

Diving Deeper

The Stories of Jesus - The Parable of the Vineyard Workers – Matthew 20:1-6

We are living in an age where so many people are searching for answers to questions that even Peter was curious about – what’s in it for me? To fully understand the Parable of the Vineyard Workers, it is important to read Peter’s concern in Matthew

19:27 and then Jesus' response in verses 28-30. Peter looks at Jesus and speaks his mind: Look Jesus, "we have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us." Help me out here Jesus, I need to know that our following you is not in vain. Jesus tells Peter and the disciples that there will be a renewal of all things, and "and everyone who has left his house, or brothers and sisters..... for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

I can only imagine the curiosity on Peter's face as he wonders what Jesus is talking about. It is evident that Jesus could see this concern on the face of the disciples, so He shares the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. The Owner of the vineyard hires workers to work a full day in the vineyard for 1 denarius. As the day goes on, he continues to hire workers to work in the vineyard but says that he "will pay whatever is right." By the end of the day, the Owner had workers who had worked all day, some who had worked a half day, some a fourth of a day, and some only an hour. He asked his foreman at the end of the day to bring the ones who were hired last to him for payment. Even though they had worked only a short period, the Owner paid them a full denarius. This did not set well with those who had worked all day and as each were paid the grumbling started. They were upset because they were receiving the same pay and in their eyes the Owner had made them equal ignoring the fact that they had taken on the greatest burden.

What can we take away from this parable?

1. Everyone will receive a share of the inheritance. In a sense, you could say that when you were saved, Jesus hired you to work in His field and guaranteed you a share of reward. No matter when you entered, whether as a child or later, you will receive a share. Will you be faithful and serve? One day Jesus will answer that question.
2. There is a minimum wage but there is also opportunity to earn more through greater service to Jesus. Those who served last worked with greater enthusiasm knowing that if they worked harder, they might be rewarded greater for their effort. They took greater advantage of their opportunity.
3. Just like the master took into account the work accomplished in the vineyard, one day Jesus will return to take an accounting of what we have done to serve Him. Have we proven to be faithful to Him and will we be deserving of His rewards? Therefore, take advantage of every opportunity that He puts before us. Stay strong, stay committed, care deeply, serve with passion, love generously, extend grace, and always be prepared. That is how we are to live and regardless, of when we come to know Christ, we can rejoice knowing that He will reward us based upon our circumstances and the faith we displayed.

4. The reward is a matter of God's grace, not something God owes us. But He makes it available to us according to our service to Him. In this parable, the landowner took their limited opportunity into account and rewarded them based on what they did with what they had.
5. The reward system according to Jesus takes into account the amount of opportunity each believer has to serve Him and what he does with it. It is a system that is both generous and fair and intended to motivate our good service.

Questions :

1. Consider the life of Billy Graham. He worked hard for many years and had a lot of opportunity to make a major impact for the Kingdom. How might God reward him especially given his position and the impact that was expected of him?
2. Now consider the thief who hung on the cross next to Jesus. Read Luke 23:39-43. The thief barely had time to serve Jesus, he was nailed on the cross. He couldn't go anywhere, and one might assume that he couldn't have received more than the minimum. But examine his life in light of the Parable of the Vineyard Workers and ask did he take full advantage of his opportunity and if so, how do you think God might reward him in relation to Billy Graham?
3. What opportunities have you had to serve and impact the kingdom? Did you take full advantage of the opportunity?