

## The Wicked Tenants

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Matthew 21:33-45

**MAIN POINT:** God will judge those who do not follow Jesus.

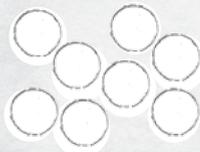
**KEY PASSAGE:** Mark 6:34

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.

### SMALL GROUP OPENING

(15-20 MINUTES)

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### LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY

(10-15 MINUTES)

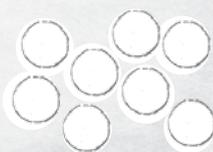
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### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

(20-25 MINUTES)

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## Leader BIBLE STUDY

A couple of days after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the day after He cleansed the temple, Jesus returned to the temple complex and began teaching. The chief priests and elders questioned Jesus. "Who gave You this authority?" they asked. These religious leaders did not want to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. So Jesus told them parables to get them thinking and to teach them about Himself.

The parable of the wicked tenants illustrates the story of Israel's history. As you teach preschoolers, help them connect the story to what happened in Israel's history. First, the landowner is God the Father. He chose to bless the

world through Abraham's family, the people of Israel. The vineyard is Israel.

The tenants are the leaders of Israel. Throughout history, God sent the Old Testament prophets to speak to God's people. But they did not listen to the prophets. Like the tenants of the vineyard, Israel's leaders persecuted the prophets. So God the Father sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus knew that the people were going to kill Him like the tenants killed the landowner's son.

Jesus led the leaders to conclude themselves what would be fair: that the landowner would punish the tenants and find workers who respect Him. God too is just. God will judge those who reject Jesus. He planned to choose a people who respect and trust Him—those who have faith—and form a community of believers from every nation to live under His righteous leadership.

Those who encounter Jesus can either accept and trust Him or walk away and reject Him. No one who meets Jesus will walk away unchanged. Pray that God would change the hearts of the children you teach so that they would come to trust in Jesus, the Son of the loving and just Master, who wants everyone to come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9)



# The BIBLE STORY

## Bible Storytelling Tips

## The Wicked Tenants

*Matthew 21:33-45*

### • **Build with blocks:**

Use blocks to illustrate as you tell the part of the story where Jesus explained that He was like the important stone for building. Build a block tower and show preschoolers what happens when you remove a block from the bottom.

### • **Draw the Bible**

**story:** Use a dry erase board to draw a stick figure to represent each Bible person in the story as you come to them. When you come to the part where a servant was hurt or killed, erase the stick figure. When you draw the son, draw a cross over him before you erase him to help preschoolers identify the son with Jesus.

Jesus was teaching religious leaders in the temple. He told them a story. **“A man planted a vineyard on his land to grow grapes. He built a wall around the vineyard and dug a pit for crushing grapes. He also built a tower. The man chose some workers to take care of the vineyard, and he went away on a trip.**

**“When it was time to collect the grapes, the man sent some servants to the vineyard. But the workers grabbed the servants. They hit one servant, killed another, and threw stones at a third servant.**

**“So the man sent more servants to the vineyard, but the workers hurt them, too.**

**“Finally, the man sent his son. He thought the workers would respect his son, but the workers pushed the son out of the vineyard and killed him.”**

After Jesus told this story, he asked the religious leaders a question. **“What do you think the man should do to those workers?”**

**The religious leaders said, “They should be punished! The man should find workers who respect him.”**

Jesus reminded them of a story in the Book of Psalms about builders who got rid of a stone that was important for building. Jesus said that the religious leaders were like those builders, and Jesus was like the stone. **The religious leaders who rejected Jesus had made a big mistake. Jesus was the most important, and God was going to punish those who rejected Him. God had a plan to use people who accepted Jesus to build His kingdom.**

*Christ Connection: Jesus told this story to teach the religious leaders about Himself. God sent His own Son, Jesus, to earth, but the religious leaders rejected Him. Jesus is the most important One of all. When we turn from sin and follow Jesus, we get to be part of God's kingdom forever.*



**WANT TO  
DISCOVER  
GOD'S WORD?  
GET  
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers to check out this week's devotionals to discover the Pharisees said the vineyard owner should find faithful servants.

Jesus' parable hints that God would raise up followers from all nations, united by the gospel. (Acts 1:8) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out [www.lifeway.com/devotionals](http://www.lifeway.com/devotionals).

# Small Group OPENING

**SESSION TITLE:** The Wicked Tenants

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Matthew 21:33-45

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## Welcome time

- “Kingdom Kid” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

## Activity page

- “What Does Not Belong?” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Guide preschoolers to find and circle the seven things that do not belong in the picture.

**SAY** • There were some silly things in that picture, but there are some not so silly things, too. In today’s Bible story, Jesus told a story about a man who hired workers to take care of his vineyard while he was away. The workers did some very terrible things.

## Play “Follow the Leader”

Choose a preschooler to be the leader. The rest of the group will line up single file behind the leader. The leader will walk around the room performing actions while the rest of the group follows him copying his actions. After a minute or so has passed the leader moves to the back of the line and the next child in line becomes the leader. Play until each



child has a chance to be the leader.

**SAY** • Good job following the leader! In today's Bible story, Jesus was teaching some religious leaders. The religious leaders did not follow Jesus. Jesus told them a story to show them that they had made a big mistake in not following Him.

## Take care of things

Invite preschoolers to pretend that they are taking care of someone's plants, pets, or baby while they are away. Set out potted plants (real or artificial), toy animals, and baby dolls. Provide a spray bottle of water for preschoolers to mist the plants. Provide bowls and leashes for preschoolers to play out feeding and walking the animals. Provide blankets and bottles to play out caring for the babies.

**SAY** • When a person is away, she may find someone to take good care of the things that are important to her until she returns. In today's Bible story, Jesus told a story about a man who owned a vineyard. The man chose some workers to take care of the vineyard, and he went away on a trip. The workers forgot who was really in charge. Listen to the Bible story to find out more.

- potted plants (real or artificial)
- spray bottle of water
- toy animals
- plastic bowls
- leash
- baby dolls
- blankets
- toy bottles

## Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to play out picking grapes as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

# Large Group LEADER

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Option: Share a picture or video of your pet if you have one and tell preschoolers how you make sure your pet is cared for when you are away.

## Introduce the Bible story

**SAY** • Do you have a pet? Who takes care of your pet when you are away on a trip? In today's Bible story, Jesus told a story about a man who owned a vineyard. He chose workers to take care of his vineyard while he was away, but the workers did some terrible things. Listen to find out what the parable meant.

## Watch or tell the Bible story

Place a bookmark at Matthew 21 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

**SAY** • The Bible is God's Word. God's Word is true! We can know what God is like from the Bible. Today's Bible story comes from the Book of Matthew.

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

## Talk about the Bible story

**SAY** • Jesus told this story to teach the religious leaders about Himself. God sent His own Son, Jesus, to earth, but the religious leaders rejected Him. Jesus is the most important One of all. **God will judge those**

- Bible
- bookmark
- "The Wicked Tenants" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

**who do not follow Jesus.** When we turn from sin and follow Jesus, we get to be part of God's kingdom forever.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. Why did the man in the story Jesus told hire workers? (*to take care of his vineyard*)
2. What did the workers do with the servants the man sent to collect grapes? (*hurt them*)
3. What did the workers do with the vineyard owner's son? (*killed him*)
4. What did the religious leaders say when Jesus asked them what the man should do to the workers? (*He should punish them and find new workers.*)

## Learn the big picture question

**SAY** • Our big picture question asks, *Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.* The religious leaders did not understand that Jesus is the most important One of all. Jesus told this story to show them that God planned to use people who accept Him to build His kingdom.

• Big Picture Question Poster

## Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Mark 6:34. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, "Huge, Huge Crowd."

• Key Passage Poster  
• "Huge, Huge Crowd" song

**SAY** • We are sinners and do not understand what God is like on our own. Jesus taught people so we can know what God and His kingdom are like and follow Him.

## Transition to small groups

# Small Group ACTIVITIES

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• blocks

## Build a tower

Invite preschoolers to use blocks to build a tower. When a tower is complete, ask preschoolers what will happen if you remove a block from the bottom of the tower. Remove the block and watch the tower tumble.

**SAY** • Your tower needed that block to stand up. That block is kind of like Jesus. God's plan is built on His Son, Jesus. Jesus is the most important of all. The religious leaders who rejected Jesus made a big mistake. **God will judge those who do not follow Jesus.** God uses people who accept Jesus to build His kingdom.



• smartphone or tablet

## Watch a grape harvest

Before the session, look online to find a video of a grape harvest. Use a mobile device such as a smartphone or a tablet to show preschoolers the video. Be aware of any ads that may pop up that could be inappropriate.

**SAY** • The man who owned the vineyard sent His servants there when it was time to collect the grapes. But the workers hurt the servants. Then the workers killed the man's son. Jesus told this story to teach the religious leaders that God sent Jesus to earth, but the religious leaders rejected Him. **God will judge those**

**who do not follow Jesus.** When we turn from sin and follow Jesus, we get to be part of God's kingdom forever.

## Crush grapes

Set a plastic tablecloth on the floor. Place a large plastic tub on top of the tablecloth. Fill the tub with a layer or two of grapes. Remove preschoolers' shoes and invite them to stand in the tub one at a time and stomp the grapes. When a preschooler steps out of the tub, promptly use a wipe or towel to clean her feet. Help her put her shoes back on. Use a towel to clean any grape juice on the floor that goes past the tablecloth. You may also lead preschoolers to squish the grapes with their hands instead of their feet for a less messy alternative.

**SAY** • When the man who owned the vineyard sent his servants to the vineyard to collect his grapes, the workers hurt them. Then the man sent his son, and the workers killed him! The man's son is like Jesus. God sent His own Son, Jesus, to earth, but the religious leaders rejected and killed Him. Jesus is the most important One of all. **God will judge those who do not follow Jesus.** God uses people who accept Jesus to build His kingdom.

- plastic tub
- plastic tablecloth
- grapes
- wipes for cleanup
- towels for cleanup
- Allergy Alert download

## Talk about the prophets

Print the "Prophets" printable and tape or glue each picture to the sides of a cardboard box. If you have a Giant Inflatable Game Cube, slip each picture into a pocket. Explain to preschoolers that the servants the man sent to the vineyard workers in the story are like the prophets God sent to His people. Invite preschoolers to take turns

- "Prophets" printable
- lightweight box or Giant Inflatable Game Cube
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

tossing the game cube. When the cube lands, look at the picture on the top. Read the prophet's name, and then show preschoolers the matching picture on the giant timeline or big story circle.

**SAY** • God sent prophets to tell His people to turn away from their sin and to start following Him again. The leaders of the people would not listen to the prophets and would often hurt them. Now, God had sent His own Son, Jesus, to earth, but the religious leaders rejected Him and killed Him on a cross. **God will judge those who do not follow Jesus**, but when we turn from sin and follow Jesus, we get to be part of God's kingdom forever.

## Stamp grapes

- paper towel tubes
- scissors
- paper
- purple or green washable paint
- foam plates
- green or brown markers or crayons
- wipes for cleanup

Cut paper towel tubes into 3-inch lengths. Squirt purple or green paint onto a foam plate. Invite a preschooler to dip the end of a tube into the paint and then press it onto her paper to create a circle. Encourage preschoolers to stamp a bunch of grapes. Use a green or brown marker or crayon to add leaves and stems. Write the main point or big picture question and answer on each preschooler's artwork.

**SAY** • *Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.* Jesus told this story to teach the religious leaders about Himself. God sent His own Son, Jesus, to earth, but the religious leaders rejected Him. Jesus is the most important One of all. **God will judge those who do not follow Jesus.** But when we turn from sin and follow Jesus, we get to be part of God's kingdom forever.

## Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Serve sliced grapes for snack. Remind preschoolers that the man in the story Jesus told planted a vineyard on his land to grow grapes. ***Why did Jesus tell stories? Jesus told stories to teach people about God.*** The man was like God. The wicked workers were like the religious leaders, and the son was like Jesus. Jesus knew that the religious leaders would be the ones who would hurt Him.

## Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a building. Point out to children that Jesus reminded the religious leaders of a story about builders who got rid of a stone that was important for building. Jesus was like the stone. Jesus is most important of all. **God will judge those who do not follow Jesus**, but when we turn from sin and follow Jesus, we get to be part of God's kingdom forever.

**SAY** • God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to earth.

Give us hearts to turn from our sin and follow Him.

We want to be part of Your kingdom forever. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers*