

The Wicked Tenants

Bible Passage: Matthew 21:33-45

Main Point: God will judge those who reject Jesus.

Key Passage: Mark 6:34

Big Picture Question: Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.

WATCH THIS WEEKS IDC KIDS ONLINE VIDEO

Say • Jesus told a parable about a landowner who rented his vineyard to some tenants. Now we know Jesus wasn't just telling a story about some unruly renters. ***Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.*** Let's take a closer look at what this parable teaches us about God and His kingdom.

Jesus told this story to some religious leaders in the temple. They wondered how Jesus had the authority to teach the things He taught. They didn't want to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus used parables to teach them about Himself.

This parable is a story that teaches us about the people of Israel. The landowner is like God the Father. He chose to bless the world through Abraham's family, the Israelites. The vineyard is Israel, and the tenants are the leaders of Israel.

God sent prophets to speak to the Israelites, but they did not listen. They mistreated the prophets. Then God sent His Son. Maybe the people would respect Him. But the people rejected Him too.

Say • Jesus taught the religious leaders that God will judge those who reject Jesus, and He is fair to do so. Jesus is the cornerstone—the most important One of all. Only He can save us from our sin, and rejecting Him is a big mistake.

Jesus knew the religious leaders would kill Him like the tenants in the story killed the landowner's son. But by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus would be the Savior of the world.

Key passage

Read together Mark 6:34.

Say • When Jesus came to earth, He taught the people many things. Did you know that many people believe that Jesus was a good teacher, but they do not believe He is the Messiah? Jesus is more than a good teacher; He is the Messiah! He *is* the Son of God sent to earth to be the Savior of the world!

Guide kids to sit around a table. Give each kid a pencil. Provide a piece of paper to one kid. Instruct him to say the first word of Mark 6:34 aloud and write the word on the paper. He should then pass the paper to the kid on his right.

The next kid will read the written word, say the second word, and then write the second word next to the first. Then she will pass the paper to the player on her right.

Each subsequent player should read the words already written before adding the next word. Continue passing the paper around the table until kids complete the key passage.

Say • When Jesus came to earth to teach, many people were excited to see Him. They came to Jesus to learn about God and His kingdom, and Jesus had compassion on them. But not everyone was glad to see Jesus. In today's Bible story, we learned that **God will judge those who reject Jesus.**

Pray

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

Leader • God, thank You for Your Word. You are good, and You love us. Long ago, You sent prophets to tell us about Your plan to save sinners. And then, You sent Your Son. Forgive us for resisting Jesus. He is not a threat nor an enemy; He is our Friend. Change our hearts to welcome Him with joy. We need You and love You. Amen.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Bible story review & Bible skills

Invite a volunteer to sit in a chair at the front of the room. Point out that the volunteer is competing against the rest of the kids. Explain that you will ask a review question. Kids who think they know the answer should raise their hands. The volunteer should choose someone with a hand raised to answer. Then the volunteer should state whether or not she thinks the player's answer is correct.

If the volunteer thinks the player is correct and he is, the volunteer earns one point. If he is not correct, the rest of the kids earn a point.

If the volunteer thinks the player is incorrect and he is, the volunteer earns one point. If the player's answer is correct, the rest of the kids earn a point. Announce the answer and award points appropriately.

In what section of the Bible can we find this parable? (*the Gospels, the New Testament*)

To whom did Jesus tell this parable? (*the religious leaders in the temple, Matt. 21:23*)

Name one of the three things the landowner created in the vineyard. (*a wall, a pit, a tower; Matt. 21:33*)

What fruit was grown in the vineyard? (*grapes, Matt. 21:34*)

How did the tenants treat the landowner's servants? (*They attacked them, Matt. 21:35-36*)

How did the landowner think the tenants would treat his son? (*He thought they would respect his son, Matt. 21:37*)

What did the tenants do to the landowner's son? (*They killed him, Matt. 21:39*)

What did the religious leaders think should happen to the tenants? (*They thought they deserved to die, Matt. 21:41*)

Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.

Say •Great job, everyone. Jesus told this story about the vineyard and the tenants to teach the religious leaders about Himself.

The vineyard is like God's kingdom, and the tenants are like the leaders of Israel.

Like the landowner had sent his servants, God sent His prophets. But the people rejected the prophets. So God sent His Son. Do you think the people respected Him? No. The religious leaders rejected Jesus. **God will reject those who reject Jesus.**

Activity choice

Option 1: Tower game

Use the rectangular wooden blocks to create a tower. Position three blocks side-by-side horizontally to form the first story. Then add three perpendicular blocks side-by-side to create the second story. Alternate the direction of the blocks for each story until the tower is 18 stories tall. Invite kids to play a construction game. Explain the rules:

On a player's turn, he will remove any block from the tower below the top story. The player must then add the block to the top of the tower.

Players may only touch the tower with one hand at a time. A player's turn ends when 10 seconds have passed or the next player touches the tower, whichever happens first.

The game ends when the tower falls.

Say •How did you decide which blocks to move? What made you decide if a block could not be moved? In today's Bible story, Jesus talked about Himself as the cornerstone. In a building, the cornerstone is the most important stone. We'll find out more soon.

Option 2: Rejected

Form two teams of kids. Give each team a piece of paper and a pencil. Assign one player in each group to write.

Call for kids to shout out something they really like. Write one of the responses on the board. Then give groups 30 seconds to list why someone might reject that item. Example: chocolate ice cream (1. doesn't like chocolate; 2. is lactose intolerant; 3. sensitive to cold; 4. prefers vanilla)

Call for groups to share their responses. Award one point for each unique answer. Play several rounds, allowing kids to name different places, activities, or things.

Say •Today we are going to hear a story Jesus about people who reject Him. If Jesus is God's Son, why would anyone reject Him? Let's find out.

Option 3: Cornerstone demonstration

Provide rectangular blocks or shoe boxes and guide kids to arrange them to form two walls that meet at a corner.

Point out the box at the bottom of the corner. Explain that it is called the cornerstone. Remove the box and point out how the wall falls. Step on the box to crumple it, and then challenge kids to rebuild the walls. Show how the wall tilts without a strong cornerstone.

Say • Jesus talked about Himself as the cornerstone. Like the cornerstone of a building, Jesus is the most important One of all. To reject Him would be a big mistake! **God will reject those who reject Jesus.**

Option 4: Pray for Christians in Indonesia

Display a map of the world. Point out the location of Indonesia in Southeast Asia. Provide index cards for kids to take notes as you share facts about the country. Suggest kids draw an outline of Indonesia on one side of the card.

Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population.

Indonesia is made up of thousands of islands.

Some Muslims in Indonesia have declared war against Christians living there.

Less than 9 percent of the population is Christian.

Pray for new believers who are pressured to give up their faith.

Say • Men and women risk their lives to tell others about Jesus. We know that **God will reject those who reject Jesus.** And if people reject Jesus, they will reject His followers. Let's pray for missionaries who face persecution for their faith around the world. Pray that those fighting against believers would come to know and love Jesus too.

Journal and prayer

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write a response to these questions: Do you feel any hesitation to trust in Jesus? Why or why not? What do you know to be true about Jesus that makes you want to trust or reject Him?

Say • Jesus has authority as the Son of God. He deserves respect and worship. **God will reject those who reject Jesus,** and He will accept those who trust in Jesus.

Lead kids in prayer. Pray that kids would not only trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior but that they would tell others about Him. Pray that kids would honor and love Jesus, the one and only Son of God.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Parable People" on the activity page. Direct kids to match each group or person from Israel's history to the people in the parable of the wicked tenants. (*Answers: vineyard, people of Israel; son, Jesus; tenants, Israel's leaders*)