

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

August 28th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. School is starting up soon. What was your favorite grade and why?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 20:1-16
 - What do you notice in this story? What is Jesus teaching? How is his values different then the popular values of that time?
2. Imagine that you were one of the men in the story that had worked all day. How would you react to the landowner paying the other workers the same amount as you?
3. What examples of unfairness in our culture most drive you crazy? When was a time when someone else got a reward that you thought that you deserved?
4. When has been a time in which you have applied these rules of fairness to God...when you were frustrated because God didn't do something that you felt that you had earned?
5. The truth is that if God were truly fair, then we would all be punished. How does that knowledge impact the way that you view your relationship with God?
6. God is a generous God who invites us to share in his heart. How should this change the way that we view other people?

August 28th

We instinctively want a world that is fair. We struggle when we see someone not getting a deserved reward or not getting a deserved punishment. In Matthew 20, Jesus addresses another clash of values his kingdom and the world as he addresses the issue fairness. In doing so, he tells a story that upends many of the assumptions of the day.

I. Questions:

- **Why is the landowner doing the hiring?** In the story, the landowner goes to the marketplace to hire workers. We are told though in verse 8 that there is a foreman. Usually, it would be the foreman who would be doing the work of hiring.
- **Why is the landowner revisiting the market?** A normal landowner knows how many people are needed to complete the job and would hire those he needed at the beginning of the day. But in the story the landowner takes time to travel to the marketplace five different times and hires workers.
- **Why does the master pay everyone the same wage?** People are generally paid based on their amount of work. Yet the land owner pays those who worked all day the same amount that he pays those who only worked one hour.

Values of the world

- **People deserve to be rewarded for the work that they do:** We value basic fairness. If someone does something good then they should be rewarded for it.
- **Receiving God's blessing is a transactional relationship:** When we apply the logic of fairness to God, then we should expect God to give us what we want when we are obeying him. Essentially, God owes answered prayers because of our dutiful obedience.
- **People who haven't earned the reward shouldn't get it:** In the same way, if someone doesn't follow God's rules, then they shouldn't be blessed. Someone who cheats and lies shouldn't have a prosperous life.

Values of the Kingdom

- **God operates on grace instead of merit:** Jesus tells us that the landowner did all this because he was generous. The reason that the landowner took an active interest in hiring and visiting the marketplace was because he was looking for ways that he could show his generosity. He pays them all the same to show generosity to those who had worked the least. This desire to show grace was what drove his actions.
- **We stand before God as undeserving recipients of his grace:** We can often be frustrated that we don't get rewarded because of our

obedience. We forget though that if God were truly fair, then we would be punished. Our sin far outweighs every good thing that we do. As a result, we should be thankful that God isn't fair. Instead he shows us mercy and grace.

Conclusion

The workers are very upset by the land owners action. The land owner responds by giving his reasons and then tells them to "take their money and go (verse 14). They are sent away. We aren't told in the story how they respond. Perhaps they storm off. Or perhaps they get their act together and show some gratitude. The story essentially prompts us to ask how we would respond. Do we get angry when we don't get what we want from God? How do we react when others get the blessings that we want? Or do we become overwhelmed with gratitude for God's undeserved grace in our lives?