

**One truth shared:** Sometimes we can question God’s fairness in regard to who is saved. In reality, we should change our perspective and recognize that it isn’t “fair” that God saves anyone, including us, because of our sinfulness. This leads us to see God’s generosity and rejoice in it.

*“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”*

**Matthew 20:13-16**

### Is God fair?

“Life’s not fair.”

Maybe your parents have said that to you before. You wanted to go to a movie with your friends, but you had to stay home and watch your younger siblings. You protested and pointed out the unfairness. You were simply hit with “Life’s not fair.”

Humans want things to be fair. We want everyone to get a fair shake. We also want everyone to do their fair share of the work to be done.

We let this desire for fairness spill into how we think about God and eternal life. We want to make sure that God is fair when it comes to whom he allows into his heaven.

Here’s some news for you. God’s not fair.

Jesus used a parable to make this point. A parable is a simple little story that contains profound truths about life and eternity.

He told the story of a man who hired some men to work in his vineyard. They agreed he would pay them one denarius (one day’s wage) for their work. He went out a little later and hired some more men for the day. He did this three more times throughout the day.

Some of the men worked twelve hours. Some worked nine hours. Some worked six hours. Some worked three hours, and some only worked one hour.

However, when the time came for them to be paid, everyone was paid the same amount for their work. You can understand why the men who worked all day long were not very happy with the owner. It wasn’t fair!

But the owner showed that he was being completely fair. He paid them what they had agreed upon. He had every right to be generous and pay the rest of the men the same regardless of how long they worked.

Some people are baptized into God’s family as little babies and live their entire lives as Christians. Other people come to know Jesus as their Savior on their deathbed after living a life chasing after the things of the world. Many people come to believe in Jesus somewhere in between those two things. Yet all of them receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Is it fair that the murderer who comes to faith in prison will receive the same eternal reward as you?

That's really the wrong question to ask. The right question would be "Is it fair that God sent his only Son to die on the cross for my sins even though I did nothing to deserve it?"

It isn't. God's not fair to himself. That's a good thing for us. Rather than question God's fairness, rejoice in his generosity! Rejoice that he gave up his only Son on the cross, so that you could live with him in heaven forever!

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, thank you for sending your Son to die for me even though it wasn't fair to him. Help me to rejoice in your generosity every time a new person believes in you and your grace. Amen.

## Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

### Year A – Proper 20

#### Tell Us a Story

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### Is God fair?

*Starting the Discussion: This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- *Fair or not fair?* The most popular girl in school gets elected class president even though she doesn't have any ideas to help the student body.
- *Fair or not fair?* You get grounded for six months for breaking curfew.
- *Fair or not fair?* You lose five points on a quiz because you forgot to include your name.

*Connecting: This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

First, discuss what "fairness" looks like when using rules and laws. Then, discuss what "fairness" looks like when using the gospel. Which of the two seems to be more fair?

*Digging In: Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Jesus tells a parable that deals with God and fairness. Read Matthew 20:1-16.
- Why do you think Jesus chose to make his point with a story?
- How would you have felt if you were one of the workers who worked the whole day when you saw the people who worked the least get paid a denarius? How would you have felt when you also only got paid a denarius?
- Jeffrey Dahmer is a famous serial killer from the 1980s. While he was in prison, he said that he came to trust in Jesus as his Savior. Let's assume his faith was genuine. How does it make you feel to know that he could be in heaven with you?

- If God was truly fair, how many people would there be in heaven?
- Why is it so comforting to know that entrance into heaven has nothing to do with how long or how much work someone has done as a Christian?

**Conclusion:** *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

- Let’s revisit the question. Do you think fairness is a main teaching of the Bible?
- What should be our attitude when we see God’s generosity in bringing more people to faith in Jesus?