

WEEK 1

The Parable of the Labourers

Preparation:

Read Matthew 20:1-16, using the Bible study notes to help you.



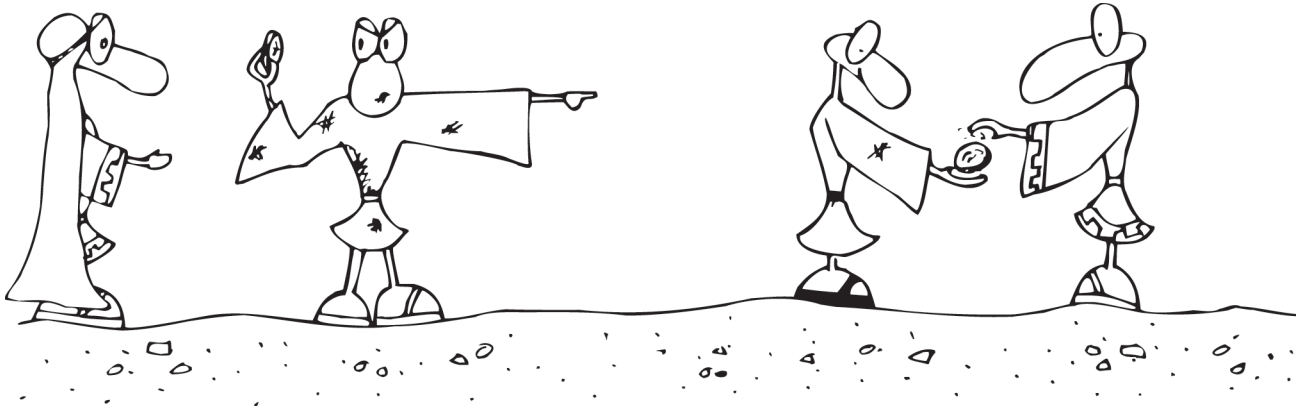
Lesson Aim:

To understand that God gives eternal life to all his servants, regardless of merit or length of service.

This parable follows on naturally from the teaching in the previous section (19:16-30). The rich young man sought eternal life - but on his terms - whereas Peter and the other disciples had left everything to become followers of Jesus. Jesus' amazing promise to them was a firm reassurance that everyone who gives his life to God will become a member of the kingdom of heaven (19:28-29). Peter's question in 19:27 was not an appeal to God's mercy, but an appeal based on the disciples' self-sacrifice. Throughout the gospels Jesus stresses the need for humility amongst believers, which comes as we begin to see ourselves from God's perspective. We come to God with nothing but our need (as with the workers in the vineyard who were without work and thus the basic essentials for life).

20:1 Growing vines was one of the most important occupations. Apart from their use in the making of wine, grapes constituted an important item in the peoples' diet. To those who heard Jesus the vine symbolised prosperity and peace. It also symbolised the chosen people (Israel). No fewer than 5 of Jesus' parables related to vines and their culture.

- 20:2 A denarius (silver coin - GNB) was the recognised rate of pay for one day's work.
- 20:3 The Jewish 12 hour day started at 6am. The third hour would have been 9am, the sixth 12 noon, the ninth 3pm and the eleventh 5pm.
- 20:4 The rate of pay is not specified, just that it will be fair.
- 20:6-7 Remember there was no social security in Israel! Those who had no work had no money to buy food, etc. and the basic essentials of life. Their position was desperate.
- 20:9 The pay was unexpectedly generous, so it is not surprising that those who were first employed expected more than they got (v.10).
- 20:13-15 No-one was underpaid, but some were treated with unexpected generosity. Human values are not God's values. In the kingdom of God men receive what they need (the denarius was a day's wage for a labourer). Our prime need is for salvation, and each one who comes to Jesus in repentance and faith receives eternal life, regardless of their stage of life at conversion.
- 20:16 See also 19:30.



Cut out pictures from magazines of the various drinks children enjoy. Ask the children what they have to drink, e.g. water, milk, carbonated drinks, etc. Pin up the appropriate pictures on a board. Ask what the people of Jesus' day drank (wine, water, occasionally milk). Point out how important wine was. The water was scarce and sometimes undrinkable so wine was a necessity, not a luxury. Ask the children where wine comes from. Show pictures of grapes, grape vines and a vineyard cut from magazines. Tell the children that Jesus told some parables (stories) about a vineyard. Make sure the children understand what a parable is (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning). In today's true story from the Bible we will hear a story Jesus told about some people who worked in a vineyard. Ask the children to listen carefully so that they can tell you what times the people started work, how much they were paid, and who was unhappy about it. Tell the story.

Lesson Plan 

5 coins and place in an envelope for each child.

The children colour the picture. Fold up the sheet so that only the top man is showing (the man employed at 5pm). Tell the children that it is payment time. Ask them to take out of the envelope the right payment for the man hired at 5pm. Glue this onto the picture by gluing the tab over the workman's clock. Gradually unfold the page, repeating the above with each man.

5-7s

Each child requires page 9 photocopied on card and one paper plate 23 cms in diameter. Prior to the lesson write the memory verse on the back of each plate. The children cut out the picture and glue to the centre of the plate. Write the numbers 1-12 around the edge to make a clock face (12 goes above the centre sun). Cut out the clock hands and attach to the centre of the plate with a split pin paper fastener. The younger children will require help with the cutting out.

7-9s

Photocopy page 10 for each child. Complete the memory verse puzzle. Ask each child to choose a different man to trace through the maze. All the men get to the treasure chest. Discuss with the children the fact that each Christian has a different type of journey, even though there is only one way to Heaven (through the Lord Jesus).

At the end of the story go over the answers to the questions and teach the memory verse. Make sure the older children know what a parable is.

A picture of a vineyard is helpful to set the scene. You need also figures of the vineyard owner and men hired at different times of the day (see activity pages 8 and 9, clock faces for the different times of the day (or a clock with hands you can move) and 1 coin for each worker.

Visual aids 

Put up the figures as you go through the story. Start paying out money to those employed last. Ask the children how much money the next employed should get (they will probably say more coins than the last employed!). Keep the picture of the vineyard for next week.

3-5s

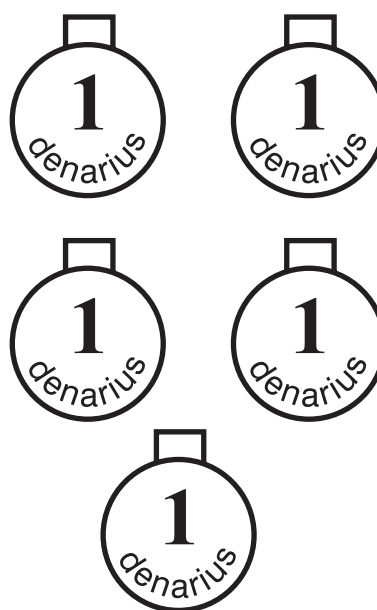
Photocopy page 8 and the set of coins on page 7 for each child.

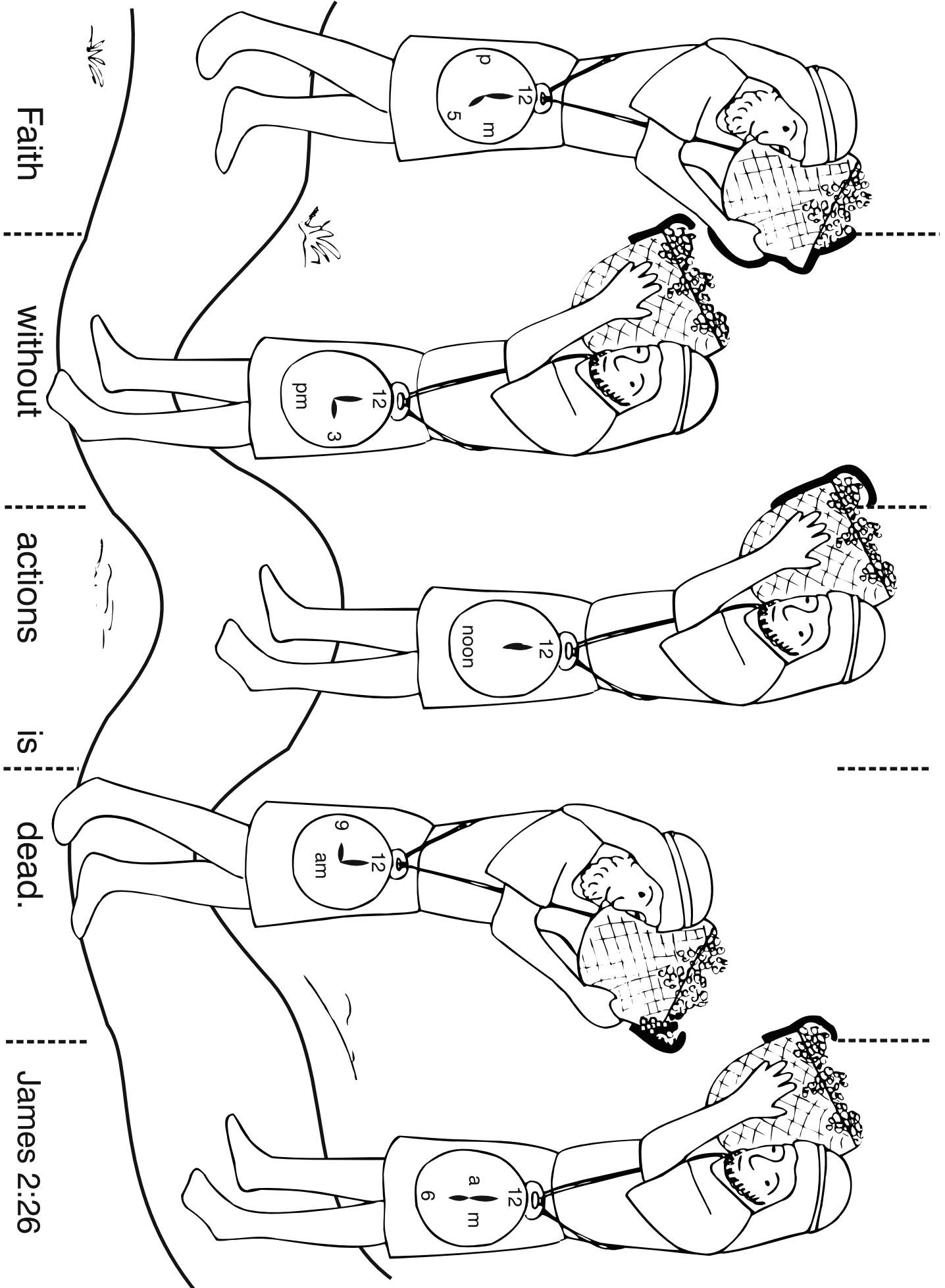
Prior to the lesson, cut along the thick black lines around the baskets of grapes on page 8. Concertina fold the page along the dotted lines so that the whole of the figure and his basket of grapes is visible when the page is folded (see diagram). Cut out the

Activities 



Activity for 3-5s





Faith

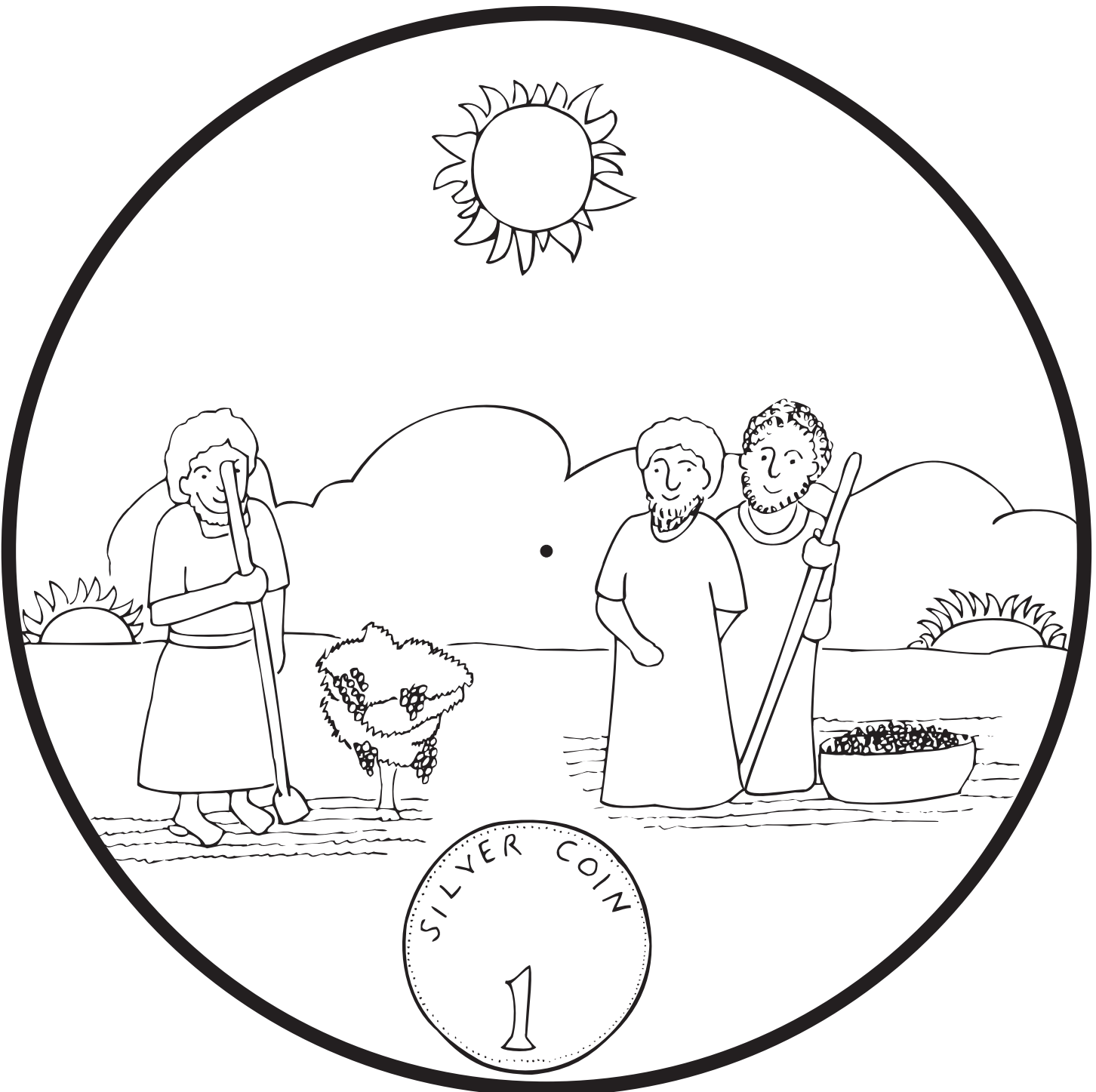
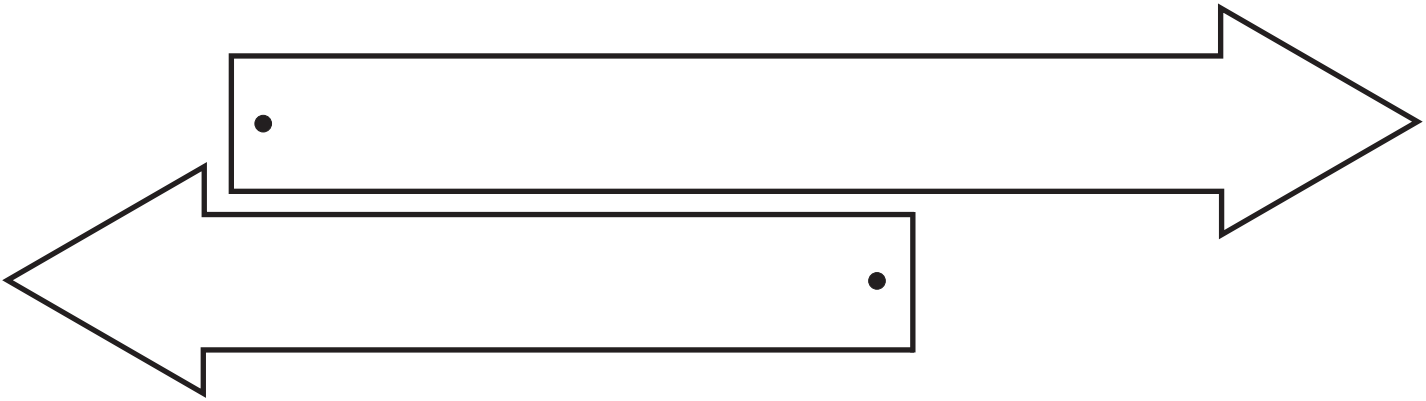
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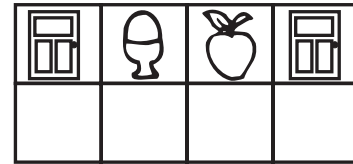
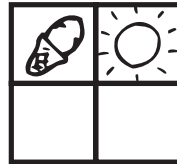
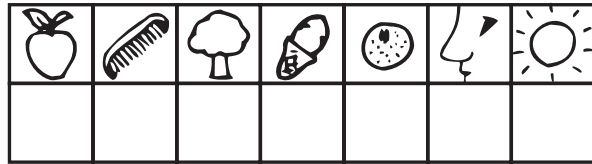
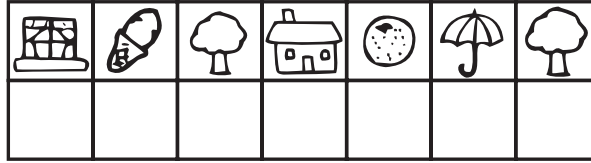
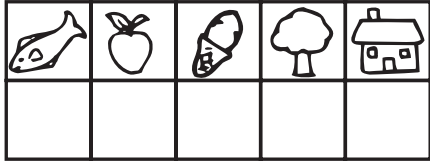
James 2:26



The Parable of the Labourers

Activity for 7-9s

Write the first letter of each object in the box below to discover the memory verse.



James 2:26

Which man receives the reward?

