

## GOD & BUSINESS: SESSION FOUR

### PURPOSE

Welcome! We are meeting together to discover and discuss any connections we see between spirituality and vocation. Although our study will flow from a Christian worldview, we welcome perspectives from other faith and non-faith traditions. What we do with our bodies and our lives, our *vocation*, matters deeply. We will explore how our vocation can be a participation in God's work of renewing all things and how vocation is related to the career we are pursuing.

### GATHERING (5 MINUTES)

- Which next step did you try after our last study?
- How did it go?
- What did you learn about yourself, humanity, or God?

### WARM-UP (15 MINUTES)

Let's consider an important question: *Does business fuel inequity?* Jot down a few of your thoughts before we watch the video. (allow 1-2 minutes)

Watch this video (4 minutes): [Does Business Fuel Inequity?](#)



- What do you appreciate about this content?
- What do you disagree with? What makes you wonder?

### SCRIPTURE DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

Today we will read a parable taught by Jesus and recorded by Matthew. The account of Matthew emphasizes that Jesus fulfilled the Hebrew Bible prophecies about the Messiah, who would come to rescue people and bring God's liberation and justice to the world. In this section, Jesus uses a strategic story to teach about God's value for economic justice and equity.

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### MATTHEW 20:1-16 (NLT)

<sup>1:1</sup> [Jesus said:] "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

<sup>3</sup> "At nine o'clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. <sup>5</sup> So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.

<sup>6</sup> "At five o'clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?'

<sup>7</sup> "They replied, 'Because no one hired us.'

"The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.'

<sup>8</sup> "That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. <sup>9</sup> When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage. <sup>10</sup> When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. <sup>11</sup> When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, <sup>12</sup> 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'

<sup>13</sup> "He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? <sup>14</sup> Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. <sup>15</sup> Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?'

<sup>16</sup> "So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last."

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you appreciate about this content?
- What makes you wonder?
- What do you disagree with?
- Jesus presents a story where those who worked the whole day and those who worked just a few hours (but were presumably available to work all day) were paid the same, the amount established to cover the needs of one day. What values do you see carried by this vineyard owner as he hires and pays his workers? Why do you think Jesus was using this story to reveal the values of God's kingdom?
- In the field of business, what could it look like practically to imitate God's value for economic justice in regard to wages? What could get in the way?

## NEXT STEPS (5 MINUTES)

Which next step could you take based on our discussion today?

**Perspective** – Research the cost of living in your area and compare that to the range of salaries earned in your community. ([livingwage.mit.edu](https://livingwage.mit.edu) could be a good place to start) Look for information about whether those earning the least in your community are able to cover basic needs (food, clothing, housing, etc.). Share what you find with a friend.

**Engagement** – Reflect on what you want your spending and use of money to demonstrate about your values. Log your spending practices and make a budget for yourself that you feel reflects those values.

**Investment** – Look into the wage/salary practices of major companies you purchase from. How well are they doing in terms of paying their workers enough to cover basic human needs (food, clothing, housing, etc.)? Consider if anything in your personal budget could be purchased from more equitable sources (direct trade, fair trade, ethical manufacturing, or even simply shopping locally from non-chain businesses).

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## HELP US MAKE THIS BETTER!

[PLEASE PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THIS STUDY](#)