



The Parable of the Feast That the Invited Guests Refused to Attend

Pathway Point: 🎯 God wants us in heaven with him.

Summary of Parable: A man plans a great banquet. He sends invitations to his prospective guests along with the promise that he will send a messenger when all is ready. After the feast is prepared, the host sends a servant to give notice to those invited that all is ready. All invited guests send back lame excuses for not attending. The banquet host then sends the servant to the highways and hedges to bring in the lame, maimed, and blind to celebrate with him instead of those who refused to attend. (Luke 14:12-24)



The experiences in this book have been designed for multi-age groups. Select from the experiences, or adapt them as needed for your kids.

Travel Itinerary

From an early age, kids discover the fun of being invited...to a party, a sleepover, or just to hang out at a friend's house. They also discover too soon the pain of being left out. What a joy to realize that God invites *all* of us into a relationship with him that will last forever!

Use today's lesson to remind kids of God's incredible love for them—a love so great that he's preparing an incredible place in heaven for each and every one.

DEPARTURE PRAYER

(up to 5 minutes)

Gather kids and say: **I'm so glad you're here today! We have an exciting Bible story to explore today, and you're going to help set the stage for a big celebration. Ask: • What things do you do when you're getting ready to have a party or celebration at home?**

Say: **The parable we're exploring is about a party called a banquet—a big, fancy feast. Let's decorate our room for a party!**

Set out the supplies and let kids decorate your room for a party. Kids can inflate balloons and hang them up, twist streamers together and hang them in doorways, and put a tablecloth on the table. When the room is ready, gather kids around the table.

Say: **There's something missing.** Hold up the paper plates. **There's a place for each of you at our table. Today we'll be talking about heaven—an incredible place that God is preparing for us!** 🎯 God

Items to Pack:

party decorations such as balloons, streamers, and tablecloths; paper plates, napkins

wants us in heaven with him. Let's start our time together by thanking God for making a special place for each one of us in heaven.

Hand each child a plate. As kids take turns setting their plate at the table, have them pray a short prayer of thanks. Close by praying: **God, it's incredible to think that you love us enough to make a place for each and every one of us in heaven with you. Open our eyes so that we can better understand your loving plans. In Jesus' name, amen.**



(10 minutes)

You're Invited...

Kids will make invitations to a "dream" party, and then explore what it feels like when people can't come.

Gather kids away from the party table.

Ask: • **What are some occasions for having a party?**

• **Who do you usually invite to a party?**

Say: **It's really fun to plan a party—and to get a party invitation.**

Hold up the "You're Invited" invitations. **Take a minute and fill in the blanks and decorate these party invitations. You can plan any kind of party you want. Dream big! As you plan, think about how much fun you and your friends and family will have at your party.**

Set out pens and markers and give each child an invitation. Play upbeat music for about five minutes while kids create their invitations. Then form a circle and say: **Pass your invitation to the left while the music plays. When I stop the music, look over the invitation you have and then find the person who invited you to his or her party. Then I want you to make up a weird or ridiculous reason for *not* coming to the party. Ready?** Play upbeat music for a few seconds, and then turn it off. After kids have exchanged excuses, gather kids together again and ask for a few of the strange excuses they heard.

Ask: • **How would you feel if *no one* came to your party?**

Say: **In today's parable, Jesus used the example of someone who planned a party that no one came to. We'll discover that 🌟 God wants us in heaven with him.**

Gather the invitations to use in the next part of the lesson.



CHOKING HAZARD— Children under 8 yrs. can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Adult supervision required. Keep uninflated balloons from children. Discard broken balloons at once. Balloons may contain latex.

Items to Pack:

a photocopy of the "You're Invited" invitations from page 102 for each child, pens or pencils, markers, CD of upbeat music, CD player

Items to Pack:

"You're Invited" invitations from the previous activity.

STORY EXCURSION

(20 minutes)

The Parable of the Great Feast

Guide kids in acting out this parable in a meaningful way, exploring how people say "no" to God.

Open your Bible to Luke 14:12, and show kids the passage. Say: **One Sabbath day, Jesus went to have dinner at an important Pharisee's house. While he was there, Jesus noticed how everyone wanted the best place at the table. So Jesus told the host that it's better to invite people who can't pay you back—people who aren't worried about impressing you. Jesus said that in heaven, "God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you." So that got everyone thinking about heaven. In fact, one guy called out, "It's going to be great to feast with God in heaven!" And that was when Jesus told this story.**

Hold the invitations and have kids scatter around the room. Stand near the party table kids prepared earlier.

Say: **A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations.** Walk around the room and hand a few kids invitations. Then walk back to the table. **When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.'** Walk to one child and tear up his or her invitation. **That person didn't want to come.** Walk to another child. **Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.'** Tear up that person's invitation. **Guess he didn't want to come, either.** Walk to another child. **Another said, 'I now have a wife, so I can't come.'** Tear up that person's invitation.

Continue to move to everyone you gave an invitation to, taking their invitations and tearing them. **Everyone that the man had invited to the feast had some excuse for not coming.** Take all the torn invitations and put them in a pile.

Continue: **The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, (hand a child an invitation) the crippled (hand a few more children invitations), the blind (continue handing out invitations), and the lame.'** **After the servant had done this, he**

FUN FACT

In Bible times, people usually sent *two* invitations to a feast: one as a "save the date" announcement, then another one when the banquet was ready. The host expected attendance from those who accepted the first invitation.

reported, 'There is still room for more.' So this master said, 'Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. Hand out all of the invitations, • then direct kids who have invitations to come and gather around the table. For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'

Ask: **Why did the man in the story invite the poor, crippled, and lame to his feast?**

• **If the man in the story represents God, and the banquet is heaven, why do you think Jesus told this story?**

Say: 🎯 **God wants us in heaven with him. Like the man in the story, God has planned and created something *incredible* for those who follow and love him! Heaven is so amazing that God wants everyone to be there. The doors are wide open! Let's bring our friends who said "no" so they can join our celebration.**

Have a few kids gathered near the table go and bring back the kids whose invitations you tore up.



(10 minutes)

I'll Be There!

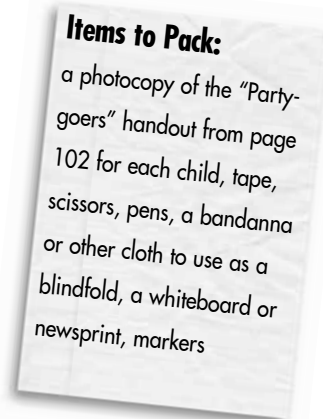
Kids will have fun with a party game that also gets them thinking about how people today make excuses to God.

Before kids arrive, cut apart the paper figures on the "Partygoers" handout so each child has a figure.

Say: **In the parable, a man prepared a feast.** Draw a large table on a whiteboard, or piece of newsprint. **He invited many of his friends.** Hand each child one of the figures. **But the people made up excuses for not coming. Suddenly, other things were more important. Remember, Jesus told this story to remind the Jewish leaders that 🎯 God wants us in heaven with him. So think about this quietly.**

Ask: • **What things can seem more important than spending time with God?**

Pause while kids think. Direct kids to turn the paper figure over and complete this sentence on the back of the paper, "I'd like to spend time with God, but..." Explain that no one will look at what they write.



Say: 🎯 **God wants us in heaven with him, but all of our excuses take us away from God.** Hand each child a piece of tape and let kids attach the tape to the top of their paper figures.

Play a game that's similar to "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." Take turns blind-folding children, spinning them around, and then having them try to attach their figures to the picture of the table. When everyone has had a turn, point to the picture with the partygoers and ask: • **How does this remind you of the parable Jesus told?**

• **How do you think God feels when he sees so many people make excuses to not spend time with him?**

Say: 🎯 **God wants us in heaven with him. And God wants to spend time with us right now, too! Let's live lives that show God, "I'll be there! Count me in!"**



(10 minutes)

Imagine That

Let kids take time to imagine and express what *they* think heaven will be like.

Items to Pack:

paper, markers, CD of
worship music, CD player,
tape

Say: **Heaven is going to be an incredible celebration—and God wants you there! The Bible gives us clues about what heaven will be like—streets of gold, full of joy and light, jewels, trees, and people who love God. No sadness, tears, or pain. I don't know about you, but there's no way I want to miss *that!***

Have kids take their "Partygoer" from the previous activity and tape it to a sheet of paper. Then have kids draw a scene of heaven around their person. Kids can imagine what heaven might be like, or check out Bible passages like Revelation 21:3-4, 10-12; 22:1-2, 5. Or, children might just draw themselves at a feast like the one Jesus described in the parable.

Play reflective worship music while kids design their pictures. Talk about what *you* think heaven will be like, and remind kids that 🎯 **God wants us in heaven with him.** When kids finish, they can add their pictures to their Travel Journals.

**HOME
AGAIN
PRAYER**

(10 minutes)

Enjoy a party with kids and celebrate the heavenly banquet God is preparing for his followers.

Motion to the party table the kids set up in the Departure Prayer.

Ask: **What's missing from this table?**

Bring out whatever treat you prepared for kids, and set it on the table.

Say: **We started our journey today by preparing for a party—just as God is preparing something incredible in heaven for us. You had to wait a while for this celebration—just as we all have to wait to see what God has in store for us in heaven. But now it's time to celebrate! As I close our time in prayer, you'll hear a place where you can say your name. We'll go around the circle and you can each say your name during that part of the prayer.**

Join hands around the table and pray.

Pray: **God, we can only imagine the incredible things you've prepared for us in heaven. Thank you most of all that you love us enough to want each of us there with you. Thank you for preparing heaven for everyone here...** Begin by saying your name, • then let each child take a turn saying his or her name. When everyone has said a name, close by saying: **Help us to always put you first as we anticipate coming to your party in heaven. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Enjoy a party with your class!



Some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have. Also, read food labels carefully, as hidden ingredients can cause allergy-related problems.

You're Invited

To a party for _____!
Your Name

We'll eat lots of _____,
Food

play games like _____,
Game

and listen to music from _____!
Name of a band or a movie

Oh, and _____ will even be around!
Name of a famous person

I can't wait to see you there!

Partygoers

