

STORIES

part 1

Writer: Dan Mattson
Project Supervisor: Annie Snyder

Created by Ministry to Youth
ministrytoyouth.com

Lesson 01



Lesson 1: Parable of the Great Banquet



Bible Verses: Luke 14:16-24



Bottom Line: Jesus invites us to be a part of his coming kingdom

SUPPLIES

01

GAME SUPPLIES:

- Long piece of tape on the ground, in the middle of your room
- Game card with list of items on it (from game instructions)

02

SMALL GROUP SUPPLIES:

- Index cards (one per person)
- Pens/pencils (one per person)

Series Prep

Make slides for main points and Scripture references and upload them into PowerPoint (or ProPresenter) before service and have them ready.

Optional: Use decor to make your stage look like a party that you are about to host. Or a table with chairs with plates and cups around it.

Notes

All Scripture references are NLT unless otherwise indicated.

OPENING GAME

This or That (Party Edition)

GAME SETUP:

Make a list of 10-12 pairs of things your student might enjoy at a party of their peers.

Think of things that they would be interested in that would make them want to attend the party (cool DJ, pizza, a pool, that cute guy/girl, etc.).

Place a long piece of tape on the ground in the middle of your ministry space.

Build your slides and upload them to your PowerPoint/ProPresenter show before you meet with your students.

Find a leader (or yourself) to lead the game with lots of enthusiasm and excitement.

List of pairs for game:

- Nacho bar or Build Your Own Pizza Bar
- Live DJ or Live Magician
- Silent disco or Light-up dance floor
- Your best friend or that class crush
- A pool or a gaming lounge
- Table games or cards/board games
- Your friends' parents or your parents
- All your friends went or none of your friends
- A chocolate fountain or an ice-cream machine
- Evening party or a late-night party
- At a house or an activity place (i.e. bowling alley, mini-golf, arcade)
- Your choice

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

When it's time for the game, have your game host direct the kids to stand on the line, in a line.

Explain to them the rules and how they will be choosing a side for which thing they would most likely attend a party that it's at.

Say:

- Hey everyone! Everyone loves parties, right?! Well, in this game of This-or-That: Party Edition, you will be picking which kind of party you would most likely go to, if it had say ... a nacho bar or a build your own pizza bar.

- *[Watch kids talk and pick a side.]* That's it!

- Now you've got it. So here we go! Pick a side for it if that thing was at a party with your friends or classmates, you would most likely go to.

- Okay, you get it?

- Okay, here we go!

- Which party would you most likely go to if it had ... a Live DJ or a Live Magician?

- Alright, let's try the next one. *[Do this for all options or ones you have chosen for this game.]*

TEACH

Thanks for playing guys, that was so much fun!

It was awesome seeing the kinds of things you would prefer at a party.

Now I know what to have at my parties so you will all show up!

[Grab your party prop and place it next to you. You'll need it in a bit.]

Today we begin a new series called "Stories."

This series is all about the parables of Jesus.

When Jesus taught, He often taught in stories that had an underlying meaning and truth to them.

These were called parables.

The word "parable" in Greek means to "cast beside." It's a comparison of two things for the purpose of teaching.

When Jesus spoke in this way, it was difficult to see where Jesus was going with the story until the end where Jesus explained its meaning and its purpose for its hearers.

Jesus told these stories – these parables – to religious officials to show them how their way of living was not how God desired and to reveal truths about the kingdom of God.

Jesus told these stories to crowds of people who needed a reminder on how to be humble and faithful and how to care for others regardless of status.

Jesus also told these stories to His disciples, to train them on how to do ministry with people and those they encountered daily.

What I love about these stories is that they are all unique, require a bit of thinking, and display an important truth that is applicable to anyone – even today!

So, as we begin this series on Jesus' parables together, I want to step into these stories, knowing that there is something that we can take from each one of these parables and apply directly to our own lives.

And for this first part of this series, we will be looking at some parables that Jesus taught that break down some of the old ways and systems that his audience would have been used to in this time.

Stories that break the way society or religious customs have carried so much weight in the community for many years.

Jesus used some of these parables to cut through the injustice of the world He saw, to guide those who heard it toward a better understanding of life as God desires.

So I hope you are excited, because today we jump into one that you might all be able to relate to.

So, let's pray and jump right in.

[Open in prayer.]

Have you ever been invited to a party and didn't show up?

Or maybe you were hosting a party and some people you hoped would be there were not able to come.

That's a tough feeling.

[If you've got a good example, tell a story of a time when you had a party and the people you invited didn't show up.]

As we begin this new series on the parables of Jesus, we are going to be starting with a parable about a party that ... well, it didn't get a whole lot of attendance.

At first.

So let's take a look.

Open up your Bibles to **Luke chapter 14.**

Jesus is at a dinner party with some church leaders and Pharisees, and He tells this story to them.

It's called the Parable of the Great Banquet.

Here we go.

Let's read **Luke 14:16-24**. It's a bigger chunk of Scripture, so let's go through it together.

16 Jesus replied with this story: "A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations.

17 When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.'

18 But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.'

19 Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 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, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.'

22 After the servant had done this, he reported, 'There is still room for more.'

23 So his 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.

24 For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'"

Wow, this ended differently than it started huh?

In this parable we see a party meant for special friends became a party open to all.

The banquet was originally made for a party of esteemed colleagues, friends, and associates ... and all of them canceled!

That's rude.

But how many of you have been there before?

Waiting, wondering if those you invited are going to come.

To then, still waiting, hoping anyone would show up and be a part of what you had put together.

It's in this shift we see a perspective change.

Originally, the intent of the party was for close friends.

But it ended up being for those that were not close friends ... and for people who were considered less than special.

It went from those that the man knew to those he didn't.

It went from high status to low status.

From the popular to the unpopular.

And when we take a look at this banquet story and see who Jesus is talking to – religious officials of prestige and great pride – we see that Jesus is going after an idea that they needed to understand.

And one that they were clearly missing by focusing on themselves and their own rules and codes of conduct.

The religious leaders would not have hosted a party and invited just anyone. In fact, they kept religion in general as a pretty exclusive club. No one outside of the Jews was really permitted in, and certainly not if they were too obviously sinful.

But Jesus wanted them to understand a different way of thinking about things.

Jesus wanted them to understand the idea that **God's kingdom is like this banquet.**

God's kingdom is not just available to those like the religious leaders Jesus was talking to, but also to those that are lowly, poor, and in need.

That's not necessarily what the religious officials would have been anticipating when they thought about what God's people and kingdom would look like.

What's interesting about this parable is that it breaks down a lot of what Jesus would accomplish in His ministry, right?

Jesus, in His ministry, would go and heal the crippled, the sick, and the lame.

He would do miracles, cast out demons, and help those in need.

He would show the poor and the outcast that God SEES them and He wants to know them more personally.

And yes, Jesus hung out with the Pharisees and the guys He is directing this parable toward.

However, He used this story to remind them that they were misplacing the invitation to the party because of their own expectations and selfish ideals.

Let's go back to the parable for a minute.

When the man realizes that no one from his VIP list is coming, what does he do next?

He invites everyone else.

And that's what Jesus does.

He opens the invitation to more than just the Jews.

He opens it to the Gentiles ... to the lowly ... the outcast ... and the lame.

God's kingdom is open to all who want to take part in it.

And unfortunately, those that are too focused on themselves will not see it. They will miss that big party.

Here's the point I want you to really hear today: Jesus invites us all to be a part of God's Kingdom.

There is a big party that we get to be a part of with God.

And because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we get to be a part of God's kingdom, no matter what kind of status we have.

God has opened up His kingdom to anyone who wants to come and be a part of it!

And by knowing Jesus, believing in Him, and believing in what He has done for us on the cross, we get to enter into God's kingdom as one of His own.

So don't be like the religious officials Jesus was talking to. Don't be like the man's friends from the parable who were so focused on themselves and their status, their wealth, and their "I'm too busy for that" mentality.

Instead, be like the man in the parable who, after he shifts his perspective, invites everyone to take part in his banquet.

Jesus calls us to know Him, to know God through Him, and to be a part of His Kingdom and invite others to it.

Regardless of whether they fit our expectation of what a Christian "should" look like.

Because anyone can enter God's kingdom!

Let's pray.

[Close in prayer.]

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Talk about a time when you were hosting a party and no one came, or most of your list of friends didn't show. How did that make you feel? How did you respond?

- Have you ever been invited to a party and never showed up because you had more important things going on? What was your excuse and why?

- How would you explain the overall lesson of this parable?

- Do you think there are people today that are too preoccupied with their own stuff that they miss out on what God is up to?

If so, tell us who around you might be those people like the ones in the parable that had excuses? Could that also be you? How so?

- How are teenagers today guilty of not really inviting people into Christianity because they aren't really the "right" kind of people? How do you see this happening in your world?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Hand each student a card and pen and ask them to think of three to five people that they would love to send an invitation to – an invitation to be a part of God's Kingdom. Then take a moment to pray for them with your group. Brainstorm ways to invite them to group next week.

[Leader, be careful that this doesn't turn into a gossip session where students are sharing names of those they consider most sinful from their peer group. If sharing names would be a bad idea for your group, don't let them share specifics. Just have them make cards to remind themselves to pray, pray generally as a group, and make a plan for how to hold your students accountable during the week to pray for these people and invite them into friendship with them.]