

**Party Time!**

(based on Luke 14:15–24)

One day, Jesus was invited to a meal with some religious leaders. When the meal was almost finished, Jesus told them a story.

Once there was a man who wanted to give a great feast. He sent out invitations and started to get ready. The man wanted everything to be just right. He hired people to clean his house, fill it with decorations, and cook lots of good food.

When the day of the feast came, everything was ready. The servant went all over town to talk to all the people who had been invited.

“Come to the feast,” the man told them. “Everything is ready, and my master is waiting to welcome you.”

But all the people, who had been invited to the feast, began making excuses. The first one said, “I’ve just bought a field and must inspect it. Please forgive me.”

The next one said, “I’ve just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.”

A third explained that he had just been married and so he couldn’t come.

Not one person that the man had invited came to the feast. Every single one of them had an excuse for not coming.

The servant returned and passed on all the excuses.

The man was upset that no one wanted to come to his feast.

“Go quickly into the streets and back alleys of the town,” the man told his servant. “Invite the poor and everyone who looks as if they need a good meal.”

The servant went out and followed his instructions. He brought in the people who were poor, hurt, or blind, and those who couldn’t walk. But the house still wasn’t full.

The servant went to the man, “Master,” he said. “I did what you commanded, but there’s still room for more people.”

So, the man said, “Go out into the country lanes and look behind the hedges. Tell anyone you find to come to the feast. I want my house to be full.”

The servant went out and found loads more people. They came to the feast and had a perfect time.

The other people who made excuses did not come. They did not get to enjoy the feast. In fact, they missed a good party.



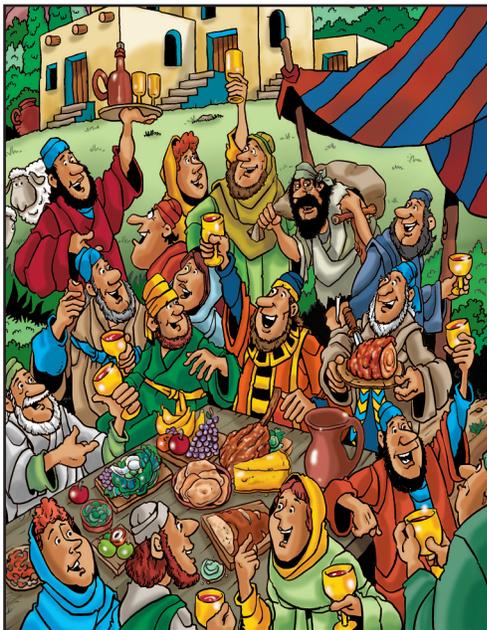
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Have you ever hosted a party? What are the steps to preparing for the big event?
- Talk about times you have invited people to come to a party and you learned that they were unable to come. How did you feel?



Responding to God's Grace

- In today's story, when the host learned that no one was coming, he sent his servant out to find more guests. Ask: How do you think it felt to be a guest invited after others declined?
- Ask your children if they have ever received an invitation to a party but they wanted to wait to see if they had something better to do. How would the host feel to know they were your second choice?
- When you go to church next Sunday, think about how it's like a party. Do you look forward to seeing friends there? Do you wear special clothes? Are snacks served? How is church like God's party?

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Have a tea party with stuffed animals or dolls. Serve water in cups to all "participants." Practice polite table conversation at the party. This is a good opportunity to mention one or two ideas about table behavior, such as making sure everyone has a chance to talk.
- The next time there is an occasion for a celebration with extended family, include your children in preparing. They will enjoy preparing, and having helped will let them enjoy the party even more.
- Make a favorite food together and invite your family and a friend or neighbor to join you.
- Pray:

God, thank you for including us in your kingdom. Let us be grateful every day. Amen.