

In Jesus' parable of the great feast, the invited guests make excuses and reject the invitation and its giver.

*What do those excuses include?*

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture, none of those would be valid excuses. But this parable is meant to reveal God's invitation to the nation of Israel to be his chosen people. An invitation they had rejected, but God had expanded.

The invitation to the Kingdom of God still interrupts our pursuit of personal success (land and oxen) or relationships (wife). God invites us to align our hearts with His Heart, over our own agendas. And his invitation has been extended to absolutely anyone.

*What does it mean for the Kingdom of God to be Good News for those on the bottom of the social pile? How can those of us who have already accepted the invitation of God, become the hosts of those still on outside?*

## WRAP-UP

There is a great wedding feast planned in heaven; the marriage supper of the lamb (Rev 19:7-9). God has sent out the invitations and absolutely everyone is invited! It is nothing like the feast at the Pharisee's house, where people try to impress by taking the best seats, and mercy and healing are replaced with legalistic observance of the rules. At that feast, guests were seeking the praise of men rather than God. But blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb in the Kingdom of God where there is goodness, peace and joy for all.

## Memory Verse

*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*

*-Philippians 2:3 NLT*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Ask God to help you bring others to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb by bringing someone into your life, giving you the ability to recognize them and the grace to invite them to the party.*

## “Invitation to All”

*Farm to Table #5*

## INTRODUCTION

In Jesus' time, the seventh day of each week, as well as several designated festivals, were Sabbaths. These were holy days set aside for God, a day when no regular work was done. At one Sabbath dinner Jesus was tested to see if he would break the law about working on the Sabbath when he was confronted by a man who needed healing. As we watch this story unfold, we find how Jesus looks beyond the obvious question of what can be done on the Sabbath and delves into the motives of our hearts.

## Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

How many days do you work each week?

## STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

### 1. Break the Law or Show Mercy

*Luke 14:1-4 ESV - 1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. 2 And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.*

It's not clear why this sick and therefore unclean man was at the dinner. But it is interesting that verse 3 says Jesus answered<sup>1</sup> the Pharisees. So, they probably brought this man to test Jesus and see if he would do the work of healing on the sabbath. Jesus posed a question that should have been easy for experts in the law to answer, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"

<sup>1</sup>apokrinomai- signifies either "to give an answer to a question" (its more frequent use) or "to begin to speak," but always where something has preceded, either statement or act to which the remarks refer,

*Why do you think they remained silent rather than answering?*

According to the laws observed by the Pharisees it was in fact not allowed to do the work of healing on a sabbath.

*Hosea 6:6 NLT - 6 I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.*

*How did applying those standards miss the heart and character of God expressed in Hosea 6:6? Can you think of examples where we might similarly believe that we are following what is “required” of us but miss what God desires of us?*

## **2. Praise from Men or from God**

*Luke 14:7-11 NLT - 7 When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were trying to sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table, he gave them this advice: 8 "When you are invited to a wedding feast, don't sit in the seat of honor. What if someone who is more distinguished than you has also been invited? 9 The host will come and say, 'Give this person your seat.' Then you will be embarrassed, and you will have to take whatever seat is left at the foot of the table! 10 "Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, 'Friend, we have a better place for you!' Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests. 11 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

Jesus noticed the guests jockeying for the best seats. Jesus always notices what our actions reveal about our hearts. Although they were not at a wedding, Jesus used the example of how to select your seat at a wedding.

*What place did Jesus tell them to take at the wedding feast? In verse 11 what is the principle he is trying to impart?*

There are at least two reasons we might choose to take the lowest seat; to avoid embarrassment of being demoted (pride), or because we actually consider others better than ourselves (humility).

*If Jesus had suggested that these guests consider others better than themselves and therefore should give others the good seats, how do you think they would have responded? Do you think practicing humility can change a prideful attitude into the attitude of Christ (Phil 2:5)?*

*Philippians 2:3-8 NLT - 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

*How does Jesus' advice for the host also relate to Philippians 2:3-4?*

*Luke 14:12-14 NLT - 12 Then he turned to his host. "When you put on a luncheon or a banquet," he said, "don't invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. 13 Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you."*

*What are the two sources of reward the host might be seeking? Which do you think would be more difficult, to take the lowest seat at the table, or invite the outcasts to your banquet? What would a banquet look like where both of these suggestions were followed?*

## **3. Who is invited**

*Luke 14:15-24 NLT - 15 Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, "What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!" 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 now have a wife, 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.'"*

At the time of this banquet the Jews were under Roman rule, and they didn't like that. In verse 15 a guest proclaims it will be a blessing to eat in the Kingdom of God. The Jews were longing for a political revolution that would put them in power. So, when Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, that's where their minds went; political revolution.

*How does Romans 14:17, written to those residing in Rome itself, address what the Kingdom of God truly involves?*

*Romans 14:17 NLT - 17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*