

GREAT BANQUET

LUKE 14:16-24



say "Yes"
To GOD

Teacher's Devotional

Imagine that a football fan has been invited to a Superbowl party—a party AT the Superbowl, thrown especially for family and friends of the players! Airfare is paid and the tickets are waiting. Do you think that the fan would likely stay home because the fan got a paper cut or needs to give the dog a bath? This might seem like an extreme example—but when it comes to the Kingdom of God, some people's behavior might make you think a paper cut DOES outweigh a Superbowl party invitation!

In a parable Jesus told to a Pharisee, He used a fabulous banquet as a symbol of the heavenly kingdom. Though a number of people accepted the initial invitation, they suddenly gave excuses about why they couldn't attend when it was time to go. A business deal (buying a field), possessions (oxen) and a personal relationship (marriage) were all deemed more important than the invitation to this lavish party. So the host gave the guests' places to others—including the blind, lame and poor. Jesus' well-educated Jewish listeners probably recognized that the story's "undesirables" might have been Gentiles and that the generous host represented God. To think that non-Jewish people—and undesirable ones at that—could be invited into God's kingdom would have shocked Pharisees who prided themselves on their ability to follow Jewish law to try to earn God's favor.

Today, business deals, material possessions and personal relationships still prevent people from putting God first. But through His boundless love, God continues to invite each of us to join the great banquet and to be part of His heavenly kingdom. There's nothing more important than saying "yes!" to His generous invitation. It's better than an exclusive Superbowl party, any day—and it's forever!



GOD'S WORD

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."
Revelation 3:20

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"Jesus says, 'Listen! When you hear about my love for you, be my friend.'"

GOD'S WORD & ME

Be ready to say "yes" to God's invitation so that you can enjoy life with Him now and forever.

PLANNING PAGE

Choose which centers you will provide and the order in which children will participate in them (see pp. 14-18 for schedule tips and pp. 24-25 for guidelines in combining older and younger children). Also plan who will lead each center (for staffing tips see pp. 19-21). Use the reproducible planning sheet (p. 238) to record your plans.

BIBLE STORY CENTER

BIBLE STORY

Great Banquet • Luke 14:16-24

ADVENTURE BOX (YOUNGER CHILD)

Use props (fancy-looking invitation card, a fancy plate, cup and utensils) to demonstrate story action

ADVENTURE BOX (OLDER CHILD)

Use props (fancy-looking invitation card, a fancy plate, cup and utensils) to demonstrate story action

ART CENTER

YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Make and decorate cards as reminders of Jesus' offer of friendship

MATERIALS

Bible, card stock, paper in a variety of colors, scissors or paper cutter, glue sticks, crayons, marker

OLDER CHILD OPTION

Make and decorate yard signs about Jesus and His love and talk about ways Jesus shows His love

MATERIALS

Bible, paper, markers, card stock, bamboo skewers, masking tape

GAME CENTER

YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Play a game walking around and jumping into circles made from hula hoops or yarn and then talk about how Jesus wants to be their friend

MATERIALS

Bible, several long lengths of yarn

OLDER CHILD OPTION

Play a game hopping from rock to rock in a "rainforest pond" and then describing situations in which knowing Jesus can help them

MATERIALS

Bible, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, Lesson 10 Pattern Page (p. 182), masking tape

COLORING/PUZZLE CENTER

YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Review the Bible story while completing coloring page

MATERIALS

Lesson 10 Coloring Page (p. 183) for each child, crayons

OLDER CHILD OPTION

Review Revelation 3:20 while completing puzzle page

MATERIALS

Lesson 10 Puzzle Page (p. 184) for each child, pencils

WORSHIP CENTER

FOR THE YOUNGER AND OLDER CHILD

Participate in large-group activities to review Bible verse and to worship God together

MATERIALS

Bibles, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, song charts (pp. 246-247), inflated balloons (one for each team, plus several extras)

BONUS THEME IDEAS

Bonus Theme Ideas can be used at any time during this session: as an additional activity center, to extend the session for a longer time, or for added theme excitement.

RAINFOREST MIX

Collect several measuring cups, bowls, large spoons, disposable cups and at least three of these rainforest foods: banana chips, cashew nuts, dried pineapple chunks, coconut flakes, chocolate chips. Children take turns measuring 1 cup of each ingredient into bowls and stirring to mix. Each child dips cup into bowl to fill halfway and enjoys this rainforest trail mix. (Optional: Provide each food in a separate bowl. Child chooses foods and uses plastic spoon to place several spoonfuls in his or her cup.)

Post a note alerting parents to the use of food. Also, check registration forms for possible food allergies.



RAINFOREST TUG OF WAR

Place a strip of masking tape in an open area of the room. Divide group into two teams. Invite two volunteers from each team to participate in Double Trouble Tug-of-War. Two volunteers stand and hold opposite ends of a jump rope. Player who pulls the opposing player over the masking-tape line wins the round. Teams participate in several rounds of increasing challenge, with different players participating in each round. (Round 1: Stand backwards and pull the rope; Round 2: Hold rope with one hand; Round 3: Hold rope with one hand and stand on one foot; etc.) Keep a tally of points, doubling the number of points you give to the winning team, or just enjoy the game for the fun!

WONDERFUL WATERFALLS

Prepare a place (outdoor sand area, large plastic containers, or sand-and-water table) where children can create with sand, small rocks and stones and water. Provide a variety of sand tools and plastic tubes or pipes. **In the rainforest, there are lots of rivers and waterfalls.** Children build rivers and pools using the sand, rocks and stones. Encourage children to see if they can build a waterfall at one end of a river or by a pool. Provide water in pitchers for children to pour into rivers or to create waterfalls. Children may also pour water through plastic tubes and pipes.

BIBLE STORY CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • LUKE 14:16-24

INTRODUCTION

Welcome your rainforest explorers by saying **I went to the rainforest and I saw a (monkey)**. Lead children to take turns naming other animals and repeating the list with every turn. Then show Adventure Box. **What do you think is in our Adventure Box today? Let's find out!** Untie box. Remove items from box and use them to demonstrate story action as you tell the story.



ADVENTURE BOX

In a cardboard or wooden box labeled "Adventure," place a Bible, a fancy-looking invitation card, a fancy plate, cup and utensils. Tie rope or brown yarn around the box or crate.

TELL THE STORY

Jesus was eating dinner with a group of people. As they ate, Jesus told a story to help these people understand something very important about God's family.

(Set out dishes and utensils as you speak as if setting a fancy table.)

"A man planned to have a big party at his house. There would be lots of good food and music. When everything was ready, the man sent his servant to tell the guests that it was time to come. *(Show invitation and invite children to pass it.)*

"But when the guests heard the news that it was time to come to the party, they didn't get ready to go! Instead, the guests made excuses about why they could not come to the party!

"One guest said he was too busy looking at the oxen (like cows) that he had just bought. Another guest said he needed to go look at some land he had just bought. And another man said he had just gotten married. He was too busy with his new wife.

"The man giving the party heard all these excuses, but he still wanted to have the party! So the man told his servant to bring all of the poor, the blind, the crippled and the lame people to his house for the feast.

"The servant ran through the streets. He asked everyone he saw who was poor, blind, crippled or lame to come to the party. And they all came! Some people carried others who couldn't walk. Other people led those who couldn't see. Finally the whole banquet hall was filled up. They ate delicious food and heard lovely music. Everybody had a wonderful time—except those people who made excuses and did not come to the party!"

GOD'S WORD & ME

Jesus told this story to remind us that no one should make an excuse when God invites us to be a part of His family. God loves all people. He doesn't want anyone to miss a chance to know Him. In the Bible, Jesus says, "Listen! When you hear about my love for you be my friend." Jesus wants us to be part of His family. We want to always be ready to say "yes" to Him. Pray, Dear Jesus, thank You for loving us. Thank You for wanting us to be part of Your family. We love You. Amen.



BIBLE STORY CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • LUKE 14:16-24

INTRODUCTION

Let's play "Best Party Ever"! Here's how to play: I could say, "I had the best party ever and we ate banana splits." The word that completes the next sentence has to begin with the last letter of the previous word. So, the next person's idea has to begin with S. That person could say, "I had the best party ever and we played soccer." Children play until everyone has added an idea for the best party ever. **Those are all great party ideas. Today we're going to hear a story Jesus told about an amazing party!**

What do you think is in our Adventure Box today? Let's find out!

Untie box. Remove items from box and use them to demonstrate story action as you tell the story.



ADVENTURE BOX

In a cardboard or wooden box labeled "Adventure," place a Bible, a fancy-looking invitation card, a fancy plate, cup and utensils. Tie rope or brown yarn around the box or crate.

TELL THE STORY

One day Jesus was having dinner with a religious leader called a Pharisee. A Pharisee is someone who tried very hard to obey every part of the religious laws in Jesus' time. This man and his friends were watching Jesus carefully, looking to see if He did anything wrong. They wanted Jesus to do something wrong, so they could criticize him. During the meal, Jesus told them this parable.

Once there was a wealthy man who had a wonderful idea! "I'll plan and prepare a great banquet," he decided, "and invite my friends to come. I'll serve them a dinner they'll NEVER forget!" In Bible times, a banquet might last for many days. People sometimes traveled long distances to attend. In many cases, the invited guests stayed overnight at their host's home, ate his food and were entertained by musicians and dancers. Invitations would be sent out early. Later, those who had said they could come would be reminded or sent for when the banquet was actually ready.

So first, the man sent invitations to his friends to come to the party. "Come to my party, dear friends! We'll enjoy a great banquet together!" And his friends replied, "Of course, we'll be there!"

Finally the big day arrived! He sent his servant to each invited guest to tell them: "Now everything is ready. Come to the banquet!"

The man's servant came to the home of one of the invited guests and said, "Come now to the banquet! Our master is waiting for you to be there as you promised."

But the first invited guest said, "I've just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Sorry, but I can't come after all." The servant continued on to the next invited guest. He said, "Come now to the banquet! Our master is waiting for you to be there as you promised." "If only it were at a different time," the invited guest shrugged. "I've just bought some prize oxen. (Oxen are like cows.) I must examine them, weigh them and be sure that they are just what I wanted. Tell your master it is now simply impossible for me to come."

Finally, the servant went to the house of *another* man who had been invited. He said, "Come now to the banquet! Our master is waiting for you to be there as you promised." The man replied, "Oh, sorry, I can't come after all. I've just gotten married! I'm much too busy to attend."

The host waited at home and finally he heard the sound of footsteps in the courtyard. But it was his servant, returning with the sad news.

The man was UPSET when he heard about his guests' refusals! He had planned so many wonderful surprises for them. Yet, they had made excuses and broken their promises to attend. But instead of cancelling the party, the man gave his servant a new command.

"Quickly," he commanded, "go into the city! Tell everyone you see to come to my banquet! Invite the poor families who are hungry! Bring back the disabled ones and the blind beggars!"

So the servant ran through the city streets and down the back alleys. “Come now to the banquet! Our master is waiting for you!” And they did! The poor carried those who couldn’t walk. Lame people led the blind people. All of them entered the beautiful banquet hall. When they were seated, the servant reported to the master.

“Sir, what you commanded has been done—but there’s still room left in the hall.”

“Go out again,” insisted the master. “This time go out to the highways. Find those who are tired of traveling, those who are resting beside the roads. Find the homeless ones who sleep under the bridges. I want my house to be FILLED with guests!”

Once again, the servant set out. Soon he returned with MORE guests. At last the banquet hall was FULL! And what a sight! These guests had never eaten such delicious food. Never had they heard such lovely music or seen such fascinating entertainment. There was laughter and songs and the hall echoed with happy voices. The master was satisfied with his party! He said, “I tell you, not one of those men who was invited will get a taste of my banquet.”

Jesus’ story clearly warned against making excuses to God when He invites us to become part of His family.

GOD’S WORD & ME

Sometimes kids might think that God’s invitation to join His family is just for grownups, or they make an excuse, saying, “I’ll think about that later.” But God wants us to be people who listen now and obey Him now—especially when it comes to joining His family!

- **What do you think of the excuses of the people who were invited to the banquet?** (They were bad excuses! They showed the people invited really didn’t care about their friend.)
- Invite a child to read Revelation 3:20 aloud. **What do you think Jesus means by eating together?** (Having a relationship, a friendship.)
- **What happens if we don’t open the door to Jesus?** (We miss out on God’s salvation.) **Just as the generous man who planned the party showed love and invited everyone to come who wanted to, God loves everyone and wants them to accept His invitation to become part of His family! Don’t miss out on life with Him now and forever!** Pray with children, asking God’s Spirit to help them know how much God loves them and offers them salvation through Jesus. Invite children interested in talking about joining God’s family to meet with you after class (see page 12 for “Leading a Child to Christ”).



GAME CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • LUKE 14:16-24

COLLECT

Bible, several long lengths of yarn.

PREPARE

On the floor, use yarn to form several circles 6 feet (1.8 m) in diameter. Use one circle for each group of up to six children.

DO

1. Children sit around yarn circles. One player in each circle is chosen as "It" and begins to walk around the outside of the circle. "It" taps someone on the back, and that child stands and begins to walk around the circle, following the first child. (Optional: Demonstrate the game action yourself in a practice round.) Then the second child taps a third child and that child begins to walk around following the first and second children. Play continues until all children in the circle are walking around the circle. Call out "Come to the circle!" All children jump into the circle.
2. Children sit in circle again. Play game again with a new child acting as "It." Repeat as time permits.

TALK ABOUT

- In this game, we tapped people to show that we wanted them to come be with us. Then it was fun to jump into the circle together to be with all our friends. Who are some of your friends?
- Jesus wants to be your friend, too. In the Bible, Jesus says, "Listen! When you hear about My love for you, be my friend." Jesus loves each of you so much! And Jesus is the best friend we can ever have!
- Jesus can help us every place that we go. Where are some of the places you go? (Church. Preschool. Babysitter. Park.) Jesus helps us by giving us people to take care of us.
- Let's pray and thank Jesus for loving us and for wanting to be our best friend. Pray briefly, Dear Jesus, thank You for loving (name children in your group). Thank You for helping us and being our friend. Amen.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Make the circles larger, playing outdoors if possible. Instead of walking around the circle, children run. When all children have jumped inside the circle, lead them in repeating Revelation 3:20.

GOD'S WORD

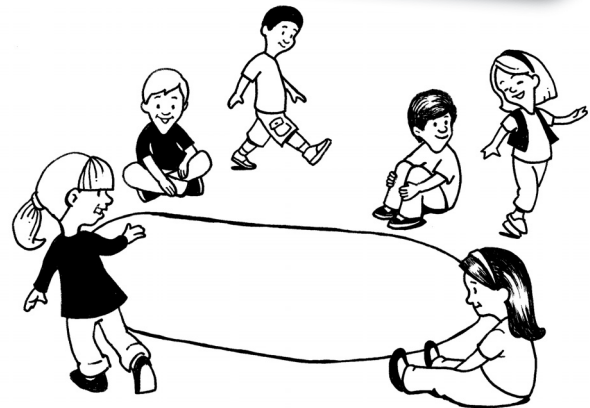
"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."
Revelation 3:20

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"Jesus says, 'Listen! When you hear about my love for you, be my friend.'"

GOD'S WORD & ME

Be ready to say "yes" to God's invitation so that you can enjoy life with Him now and forever.



GAME CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • LUKE 14:16-24

COLLECT

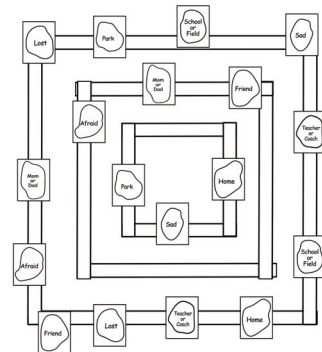
Bible, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, Lesson 10 Pattern Page (p. 182), masking tape.

PREPARE

Photocopy Lesson 10 Pattern Page and cut apart to form “rocks” in a rainforest pond. Make at least one rock for each child. Use masking tape to create three large concentric squares on the floor. Adjust size of squares according to the number of children you estimate will be playing this game. Lightly tape one edge of each rock to masking tape squares as shown in sketch.

DO

1. Divide group into three equal teams. Team one stands on rocks in outer square. Team two stands on rocks in center square and so on. (It's OK if there is not a player standing on each rock.)
2. **In this game, see if you can hop around in this rainforest pond.** As you play “Following Jesus,” children hop clockwise around squares from rock to rock. After 10 to 15 seconds, stop the music and have children sit down.
3. Choose a child from each square to pick up the nearest rock. Children read words on their rocks. Any child uses the words on the rocks to tell a situation in which a child his or her age might be: “A kid goes with his friend to the park and they get lost.” (Tip: Be prepared to tell a situation before asking children to give their ideas.) Talk with children about how it helps to know that Jesus is with them in the described situation. Children tape rocks to floor again. Repeat game as time permits, each time choosing different children to pick up rocks.



GOD'S WORD

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”
Revelation 3:20

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

“Jesus says, ‘Listen! When you hear about my love for you, be my friend.’”

GOD'S WORD & ME

Be ready to say “yes” to God's invitation so that you can enjoy life with Him now and forever.

TALK ABOUT

- **In our game today we're talking about the difference it can make in our lives when we remember that Jesus is with us. What do you know about Jesus? What words would you use to describe Him?**
- **Listen to what Jesus said in the Bible.** Read or have a child read Revelation 3:20. **This verse means that Jesus is inviting us to accept His love and become part of God's family. Then we can depend on Jesus' help everywhere we go.**
- **When have you been in a situation like this? What happened? Why would it be important to remember Jesus' love and help in that situation?** (Remind us to pray and ask Jesus what to do. Helps us remember Jesus' promises to us.)

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Be ready to read words on cards with children, and talk with them about age-appropriate situations in which children can ask Jesus, their Friend, for help.

ART CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • LUKE 12:13-21

COLLECT

Bible, card stock, paper in a variety of colors, scissors or paper cutter, glue sticks, crayons, marker.

PREPARE

Fold each sheet of card stock in half to make a card. Cut paper in strips of various lengths and at least 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) wide. Make a sample card.

DO

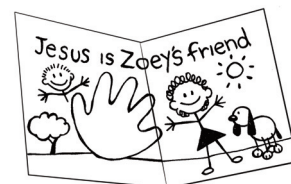
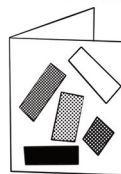
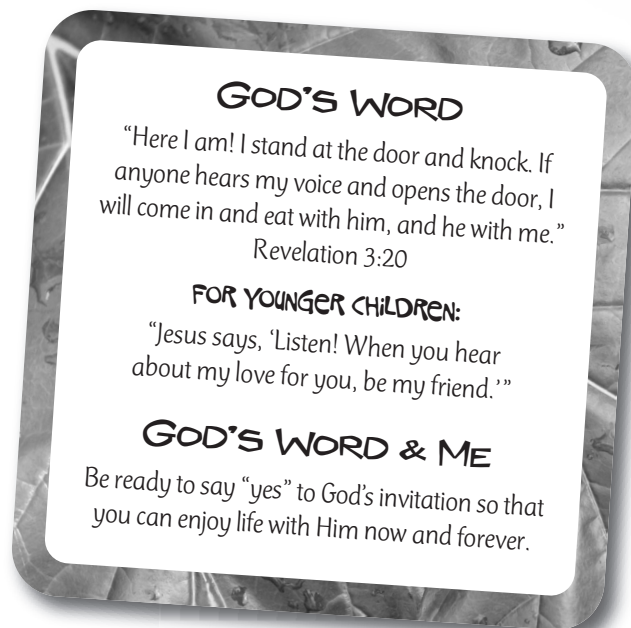
1. Show your sample card and read the words inside to children. Give each child a prepared card.
2. Children choose strips and glue them onto front of card in a pattern of their own choosing.
3. Print "Jesus is (Zoey's) friend" on the inside of the card, saying the words aloud as you print them. Child decorates the inside of the card and takes it home as a reminder of Jesus' love for him or her. Suggest children draw themselves, happy faces, trace their hands, etc.

TALK ABOUT

- **Today you get to make a card that you can take home as a reminder that Jesus loves you and is your friend. In the Bible, Jesus says, "Listen! When you hear about My love for you, be My friend." Jesus loves each of you so much! And Jesus is the best friend we can ever have!**
- **Because Jesus loves us and is our friend, He helps us have the things that we need. What are some foods you like to eat? What are some animals you like to see?**
- **No matter where we go, or how young or old we are, Jesus can be our friend and help us. Where would you like to go? What would you like to do when you are older? Jesus will always love you!** Pray briefly, thanking Jesus for His love and for being our friend.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Cut strips the width of the cards, but cut them at various angles (wide at one end of the strip and narrow at the other end of the strip). Children fit them together on the front of their cards before gluing them into place. Have children write a prayer to Jesus on the inside of their cards before drawing designs of their own choosing.



ART CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • LUKE 14:16-24

COLLECT

Bible, paper, markers, card stock, bamboo skewers, masking tape; optional—clear Con-Tact® paper, scissors.

PREPARE

Make a sample yard sign as instructed below.

DO

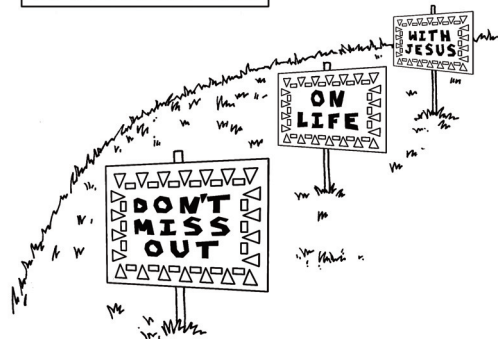
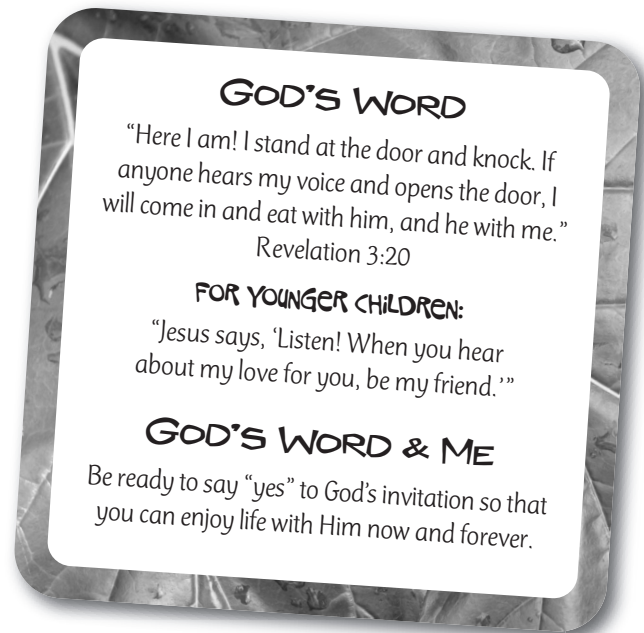
1. Read Revelation 3:20 to children and then ask them to suggest sentences that either describe Jesus or encourage people to accept His love (Jesus wants to be your friend. Jesus is my friend now and forever. Don't miss out on life with Jesus! Say "yes" to Jesus). Print sentences on paper for all to see. Help children determine how to divide each sentence into three parts.
2. Give each child three sheets of card stock. Child makes yard signs by choosing a sentence and writing it on card stock in large letters, one part of the sentence on each sheet of card stock. Child may also add decorations to their signs. (Optional: Cut Con-Tact paper to fit signs and cover signs for durability.)
3. Child tapes each completed sign to a bamboo skewer. Ask each child to tell where they will display their signs, or children may stick them in the ground or lawn of your church facility.

TALK ABOUT

- **What are some of the important things you think kids your age need to know about Jesus?** (Jesus is God's Son. Jesus always loves us. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for sin.) **What important things do you learn about Jesus from His words in Revelation 3:20?** (Jesus wants to be our friend. He wants us to be part of God's family.) Have a child read verse aloud from Bible.
- **Sometimes kids think they can wait until they are grownups to pay attention to Jesus' words. But why do you think it's important to say "yes" to Jesus' love and offer of salvation now?** (To experience Jesus' love and help right away. To rely on Jesus for making good choices.)
- **What are some of the reasons people can depend on Jesus to be a friend who helps them now and forever?** (Jesus' love lasts forever. Jesus keeps His promises. Jesus cares about each person.) Pray, thanking Jesus for His love and friendship.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Print "Jesus loves you" on signs. Some children may be able to copy your letters and write their own signs. Child decorates his or her sign and attaches to skewer and displays as directed above.



WORSHIP CENTER

Luke 14:16-24

COLLECT

Bibles, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, song charts (pp. 246-247), inflated balloons (one for each team, plus several extras).

TEAM GAME

Help children form teams of up to 10 players each. Teams line up at one end of an open area of the room. Give first player on each team an inflated balloon. At your signal, child places balloon between knees and walks to other side of the room, removes balloon and holds it while running back to team. Continue until each child has had a turn.

BIBLE VERSE GAME

Repeat Revelation 3:20 aloud with children. **Jesus talks about knocking on a door and opening a door. What Jesus means is that He wants to be a part of our lives. He wants to be our friend. When we open the door, it means we accept Jesus' love and offer of salvation.**

Children walk around the room while you play "Song Name to Come" on CD. After 10 to 15 seconds, stop the music. Each child finds a partner. (Be ready to be a partner with a child if needed.) Lead one person in each pair to say the first part of the verse prefaced by "Jesus said." After saying the words "door and knock," children who were speaking knock on the floor. Then lead the other person in each pair to say the rest of the verse, again prefacing it by saying "Jesus said." Repeat several times as time permits.

SONG

You, or another leader, lead children in singing "God Gave" adding motions and/or clapping if desired.

PRAYER

Jesus wants everyone to accept His love and be part of His family. Invite children to tell names of people for whom they would like pray. Lead children in prayer, including the names children mentioned.

SONG

You, or another leader, lead children in singing "Following Jesus," adding motions and/or clapping if desired.

GOD'S WORD

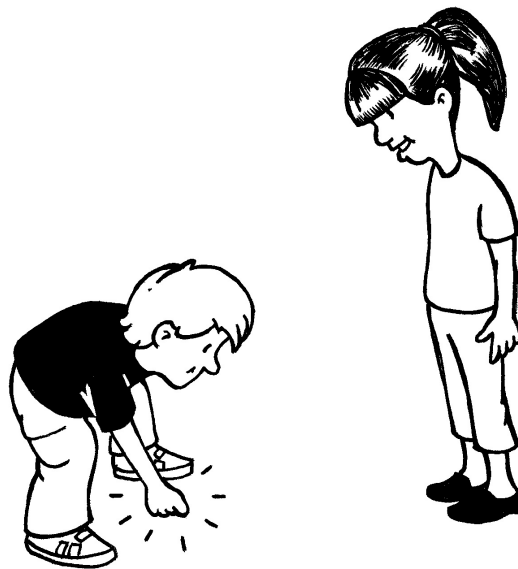
"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."
Revelation 3:20

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"Jesus says, 'Listen! When you hear about my love for you, be my friend.'"

GOD'S WORD & ME

Be ready to say "yes" to God's invitation so that you can enjoy life with Him now and forever.



Friend

Teacher
or
Coach

Lost

Mom
or
Dad

Park

School
or
Field

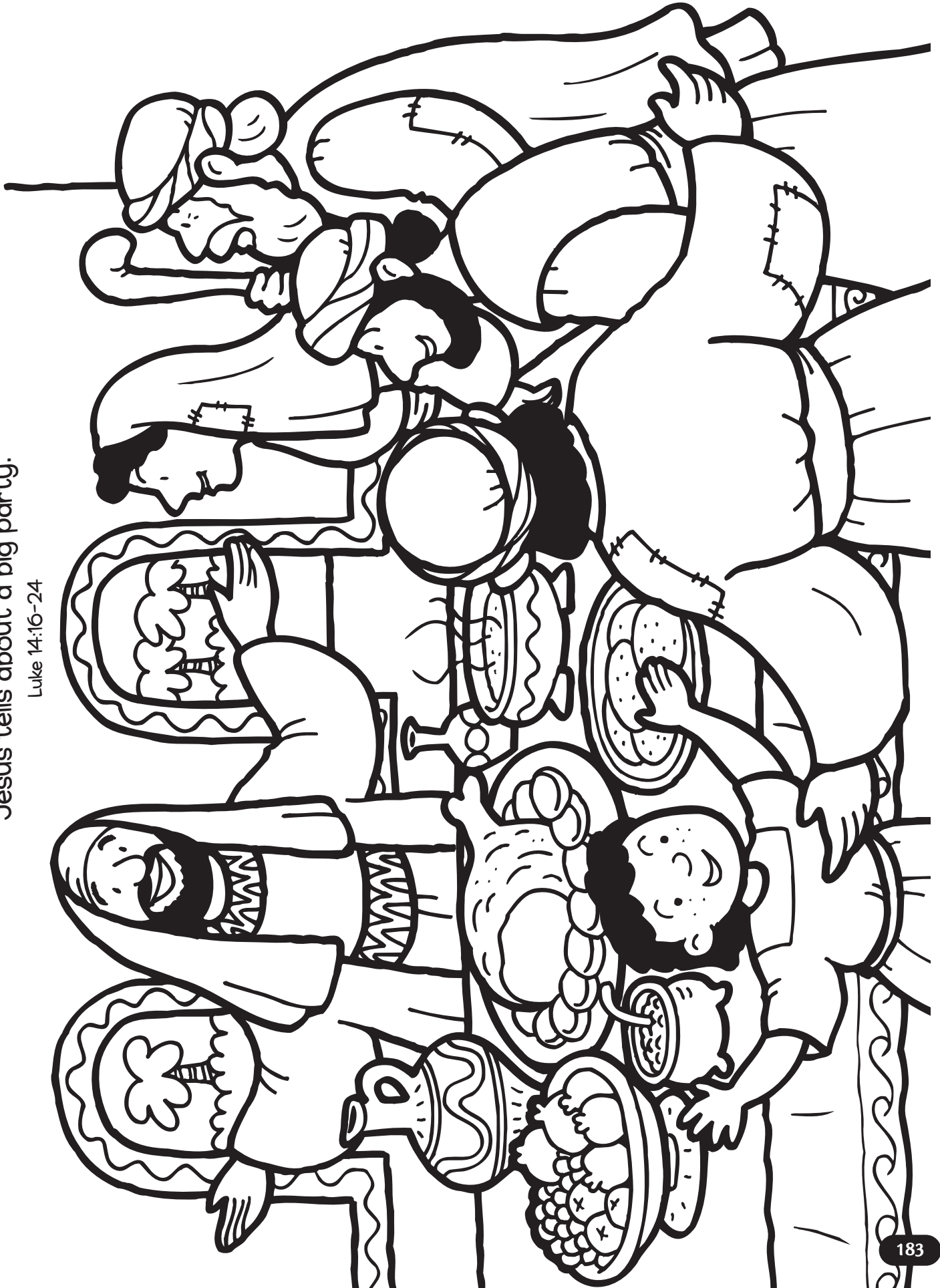
Sad

Home

Afraid

Jesus tells about a big party.

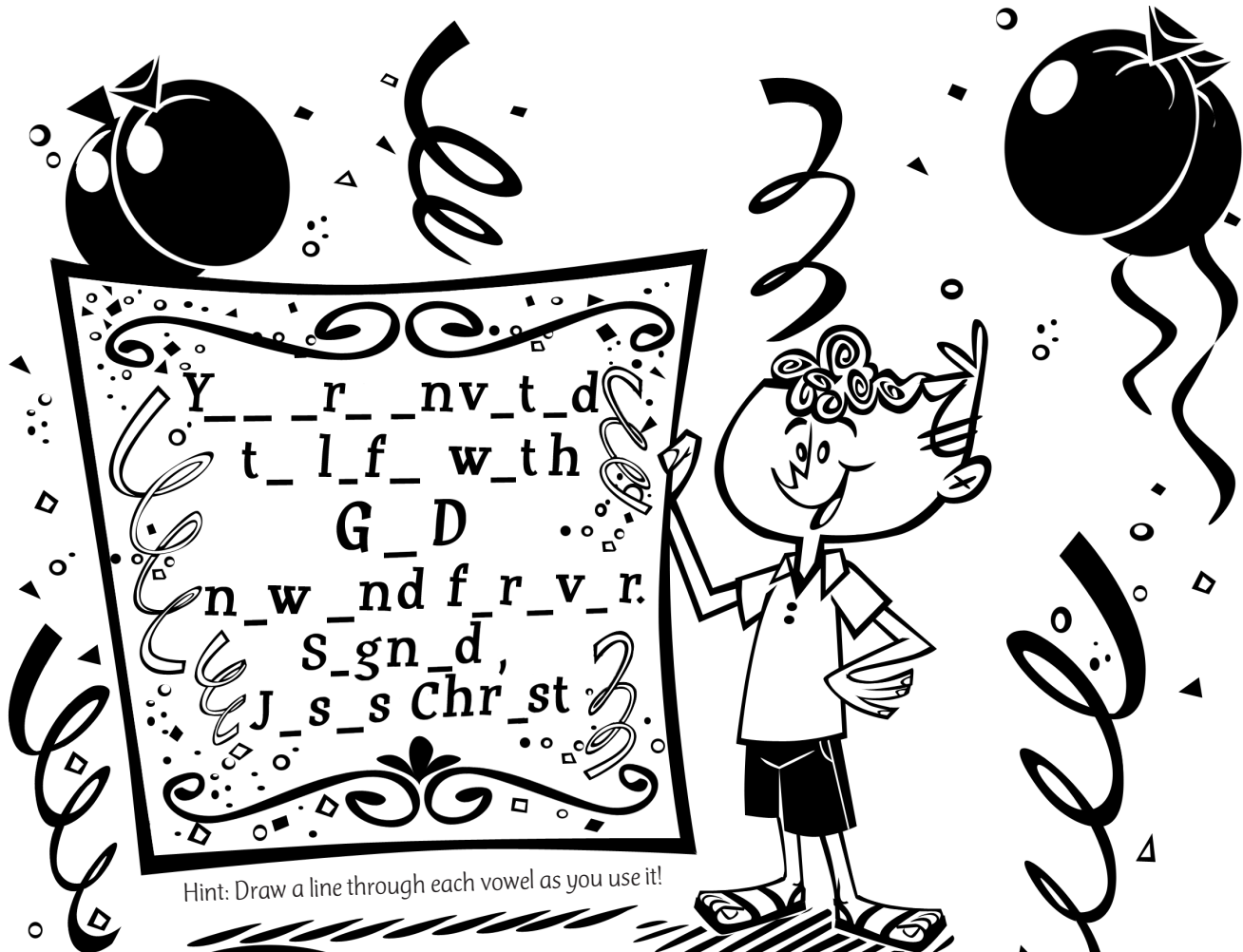
Luke 14:16-24



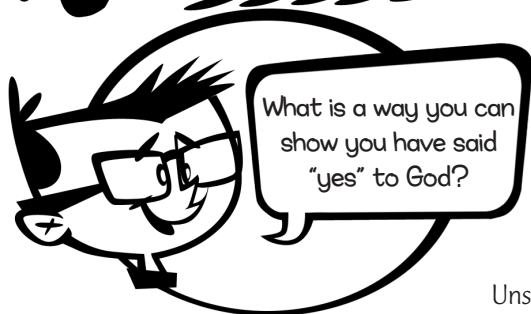
Jesus loves you and wants to be your friend. Who are some other people Jesus loves?

a PUZZLING INVITATION!

Some of the letters fell off this invitation! They're all vowels. Help Henry figure out what it says.



Hint: Draw a line through each vowel as you use it!



e u i e e o i e
i i e a o i e a i o
o o i e e o u

Unscramble the words on the balloons below to help Henry answer!

