

Luke 14:12-24 | The Great Banquet Parable

InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

The study today will include two things that appear often in the book of Luke – dinner parties and parables.

Dinner parties in ancient Greco-Roman culture were part of a complex social system that drew boundaries around insiders and outsiders and determined who had the most social power. Where a person was permitted to sit was a sign of their social status. Invitations were carefully considered because both host and guest wanted to climb the social hierarchy by being near people who were socially higher than them (or at least at their level). Also, Greco-Roman ethics of reciprocity meant that gifts must be repaid, so accepting an invitation meant you had to offer a similar invitation in the future.

Parables are short stories or illustrations made up to teach deep truths. The point of parables is to provoke a response in the listener, and Jesus taught using parables to invite people to pursue the kingdom of God. He wanted to make people uncomfortable so they would seek him for more understanding. (Note: Be careful not to assume a parable is an allegory, where each character represents something, unless the author shows it is an allegory. For example, in the great banquet parable, the host does not represent God, though people often try to interpret this parable in that way.)

SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?

- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Luke 14:7-24 NIV –

⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁶ Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

¹⁸ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

²⁰ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

²¹ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

²² “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

²³ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)

Let’s discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. In verses 7-11, Jesus teaches about humility at dinner parties *while* being with people he just witnessed *not* being humble at a dinner party. Imagine what it might have been like to be one of those other guests. What are you thinking and feeling?

2. Jesus then tells the host who to invite to his parties, and a guest responds with a nice saying about feasting in the kingdom of God. Jesus seems to want a different response, so he teaches a parable about a great banquet (vv. 16-24). The host had already made the invites (to get a headcount so he could prepare), and now he is going to the guests to tell them the banquet is ready. They present excuses so others are invited instead. What is Jesus communicating with this parable?
3. How do you think Jesus wanted his listeners to respond to his parable? (Remember, teaching in parables was to provoke response, not just deliver information.)
4. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Jesus disrupts a dinner party with lessons about humility and invitation. Jesus envisions a community banqueting together where everyone is invited, even outsiders who supposedly have nothing to offer in return. This vision for the kingdom of God cuts against the social hierarchy of the surrounding culture, but Jesus insists on being community in a different way. Yet even while he corrects the guests around him, Jesus teaches in parables because he wants them to change their ways and join his kingdom.

Followers of Jesus are a community that invites and includes.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. When have you felt especially included or excluded by Christians? Share a story.
- B. How can your small group community extend more invitations so that more can be included? Make a plan for the upcoming study or a separate event together.
- C. Pray for those in your neighborhoods who have no place to belong. Ask God to guide you and give you ideas for how to welcome and include them.

CLOSE (2 minutes)

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

Tips for leading the group discussion:

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*