

## Inclusion In Community

### God's Word:

Luke 14:15-24

### Key Verse:

“And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’”

--Luke 14:21

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### Breaking It Down:

This week's passage is a parable. A parable is a short symbolic story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson. The parable in Luke 14:15-24 tells of a man who was planning a big dinner and invited some people to be his guests. But when it came time for the dinner, the invited guests were too busy with their own lives and priorities to come to his supper.

This parable was a message to the Jews of Jesus' day that if they refused to hear His gospel message and respond, He would take it to others who would listen and accept His invitation. Jesus would invite all who would believe His message--whether Jew or Gentile--to have a part in His plan of salvation.



The message Jesus brought then is still applicable today. Each moment, God is inviting us to His banquet. A banquet is a grand dinner reserved for friends and relatives. Usually, strangers were not invited since it was such an expensive and elaborate event. God is inviting all who will to become part of His family. He is inviting us to have a part in His plan for our lives, a plan so much better than our own. His plan brings peace and joy through selflessness, whereas our plans, at best, bring momentary joy and disappointment because they revolve around our selfish way of living. The warning of the parable is still applicable today.

If we don't accept His invitation, He will move on to others who will.

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### **Living It:**

In my early twenties, I managed a ranch and had several ranch hands helping me. One Friday, one of them came to me and asked what was different about my life. I asked him what he meant and he said he had noticed I had a peace in me that he had never seen in another person. He said that several times when problems had arisen, my response was abnormally calm. He wanted to know how I was able to remain calm and what made me different.



With joy, I began sharing the peace and joy that came from accepting God's offer of salvation and the forgiveness of sins that come through His Son. I told him about my teen years when I was full of anger and resentment about my parents' divorce, about being forced to move from the country to a very large city, and about not fitting in at my new school. Yet, when I accepted Christ's invitation to be a part of His family, He took all that pain and anger away and replaced it with a peace and love that I could not believe was possible.

The ranch hand pondered what I said for a moment and then asked what living for Christ meant he could no longer do. He asked if it meant he could no longer get drunk and take drugs, and live wild and be free to do whatever he wanted to do. I told him I had found knowing Christ to be a better high and more fun than any of those things. He then thanked me for my time and told me know that while he agreed that accepting Christ as his Savior was something he *should* do, he wanted to wait a while and enjoy living life his way a little while longer.

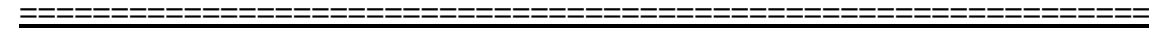
I explained that there is no guarantee of tomorrow or even the next minute, and that we could die on the way home, in our sleep, or anywhere. He said he understood and would think about it later.

I paid him his week's wages and he left for the weekend to party with his friends. That night after partying, he and his girlfriend were both killed in a car wreck.

What about you? Have you thought about accepting Jesus but been too busy with your own life to accept the invitation? Don't be like my ranch hand who waited too long and missed his chance. Answer God's call today before you miss *your* chance.

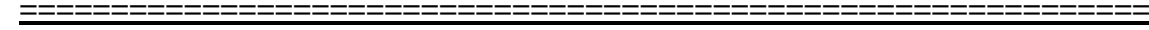
Maybe you already accepted Christ as your Savior, but have gotten caught up in activities at school, or with your boyfriend or girlfriend, or your hobbies and you're too busy to

spend time with God. Isn't it time you returned to the true source of joy and peace in your life?



**Understanding It:**

1. Why did those who were invited to the supper not come?
2. Where did the master go for guests when those who were invited refused to come?
3. What are some ways we might be too selfish in how we are living our lives?
4. What is something in your life that you choose to do rather than accept God's call or spend time with Him?



**Doing It!**

What can you do differently this week to answer God's call on your life? Will you finally accept God's invitation to become a member of His family by accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior? And, if you are already saved, how about making one change in your life this week that shows you are starting to prioritize your relationship with Him?

