

LESSON 11

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

OBJECTIVES

1. To learn about the invitation God has given us to join Him in His heavenly kingdom.
2. To understand the importance of accepting God's invitation.
3. To understand that if we are not careful, we may decline His invitation and disappoint God.

MEMORY VERSE

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

(Revelation 3:20)

PRAYER

1. We thank God for providing us this Sabbath day so that we can worship and learn more about His words.
2. Lord, we thank You for guiding us through this past week and ask You to continue to guide us through the coming week.
3. Please help us to understand the importance of the invitation You have extended to us, and how we can accept it.
4. Please also help us to focus on this lesson and apply its teachings to our lives.



Overview

1. The Parable of the Great Supper

- Jews and Gentiles
- The Heavenly Kingdom
- Acceptance and Rejection

2. Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs—Salvation is given by grace

3. Life Application

- "You're Invited!"
- "Excuses, Excuses, Excuses"

4. Activity—Invitation Cards



Background Knowledge for Teachers

The Banquet of the Heavenly Kingdom

During Jesus' time, the idea that Gentiles might be able to inherit the promised heavenly kingdom would have shocked and appalled many Jews. Their entire belief is based on the idea that they are a chosen people due to their direct lineage from Abraham. In the parable, though, those who were invited gave excuses and refused the invitation, making a mockery of the host, and implying the banquet's lack of importance in their lives. Jesus warned those who listened that, although they may have been invited, refusing meant that they would not even be able to have a taste of the banquet, and others would take their place—even Gentiles, who were not initially invited. The Jews' refusal to believe in Him was but one example of one who declined the invitation.

The Sabbath Banquet

Although we reach for the ultimate "banquet"—the heavenly kingdom—and strive towards it, there is an additional banquet that we are invited to every week: Sabbath day. The simple act of attending church is a banquet for our spirit—we are given spiritual food and water so that our faith may grow. The repetition of this invitation, however, often leads us to take it lightly, and we may begin to prioritize other things in our lives. Work, family, or other responsibilities are all different excuses we may give. But whatever excuses we may think of, they are never good enough reasons to refuse to spend time with God. At the end of the day, whether we prioritize God or our daily lives is tested in whether we refuse or accept this invitation.



Reaching Out to Your Students

It is easy for your students to find excuses not to attend Sabbath service at church. There are school assignments that require their attention, sports matches, tournaments, events and birthday parties to attend, cartoons to watch, and the list goes on. Although your students are probably compelled to attend by the encouragement of their parents, when they grow older and no longer have such parental influences, will they continue to attend Sabbath services?

Today's lesson will help your students understand the importance of accepting and taking up the invitation that God has given to all of His children. Discuss with your students the reasons we attend church, and the reasons we often make excuses not to attend. Be sure to remind them that although it is completely normal to want to skip church sometimes, especially when our faith is weak, it doesn't mean that we should allow ourselves do it. In fact, the days we make excuses to avoid church are days we need to be especially careful that we do not sin. Help your students come up with ways to strengthen their faith when it comes to these feelings.



Opener

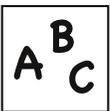
5 Minutes

Have you ever invited your friends to a party, but they said that they couldn't come? Do you remember what your friends said when they couldn't come?

[Ask students to share some excuses they have heard or even used. Then, give some examples of excuses that might be commonly given. "I have to finish my homework." "Your house is too far." "I don't have time that day." Ask students how they feel when people give them excuses and decline their invitations.]

Suppose that you invited me to your house and I said I couldn't come because I lost a button from my pants. Sounds like a silly excuse, doesn't it? What are some funny excuses you've heard or even used before in different situations?

In our Bible story, we'll hear the excuses people used that might sound a little silly.



Vocabulary

lame: a person who is unable to move or has extreme difficulty moving on their own, especially walking
crippled: person or animal that is partially disabled or unable to use one or more of their legs or arms



Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

30-35 Minutes

FOR TEACHERS

For the first Bible Discovery worksheet, students will be illustrating the story using panels and captioning the panels. Eight panels have been given, but you may add or remove as many as you'd like, depending on how long you think it will take your students to read the story and to illustrate it. Encourage them to keep their pictures simple.

Last week, we learned about being prepared for the Lord's Second Coming, just like the five wise virgins who brought extra oil for their lamps. This week, we're going to continue learning about Jesus' salvation through a different parable in the Bible.

Let's turn to Luke 14:15-24 and read it together.

What do you think of the people who made all of the excuses? Don't you think the excuses were a little bit silly? What about the man who held the feast? He must have been pretty hurt when they gave all of their excuses.

Have you ever been invited to a birthday party, or perhaps a wedding? If you were close friends with the person who invited you, then you would naturally really, really want to go, right? On the other hand, if it's someone you don't like, then you would really not want to go and would think of excuses to avoid it.

It's the same case in this story. The man who invited all those people was clearly rejected by them—they prioritized other things over him, and decided that the banquet was an unimportant event that they didn't want to or need to attend.

FOR TEACHERS

Hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #1 and help the students summarize the story in eight or less panels.

Below are suggestions for captions that the students may want to use for their pictures. Encourage them to think of their own if they'd like. Let them be as creative as they can! Just remember that the purpose is to help them remember and understand the parable. For example, drawing a picture of food may help them remember that it was a banquet, or drawing their idea of heaven may remind them that the banquet represents God's kingdom.

Sample Captions

1. There was a man who hosted a great banquet and invited many people.
2. When the day of the banquet arrived, he sent his servants out to fetch them.
3. But when the servants told them about the banquet, they all gave excuses not to come!
4. The master was very angry when he heard about this, so he said, "Go invite the poor, lame, and the blind from the streets instead!"
5. The servants did as he said, but there was still space at the banquet.
6. So, the master told his servants to go out even further and find more people to fill the house!
7. He told the servants, "None of those I invited will taste my banquet!"
8. God has invited us to His banquet. But are we making excuses not to come?

Jews and Gentiles

There are several teachings that we can draw from this parable. First, let's learn what it meant for the Jews during Jesus' time.

Try to recall what you know about the Israelites in Old Testament times. Do you remember the story about the Israelites and the golden calf that they made and worshipped? From when they were first rescued from Egypt, the Israelites disobeyed God many times, and often rebelled or rejected Him. They even asked for a king when they should have realized that the only ruler they needed was God Himself!

Later, in New Testament times, the Jews followed the Mosaic laws very closely, and even had appointed "teachers of the law" who dedicated their lives to examining God's laws. But unfortunately, they became so focused on the *words* of the law that they didn't understand the *spirit* of the law—to love God, and to love men. It was because of this that they could not understand why Jesus was the Messiah. They expected someone else—someone who was more like a king, who would lead them as a worldly nation and rescue them from oppression

under Roman rule. But what they didn't realize was that Jesus would lead them into a *spiritual* kingdom, not a physical one. This is why they rejected Jesus.

In the parable, there were people who were initially invited by the host. However, these people ended up making excuses and refused to attend. The Jews, too, were initially God's chosen nation. They were supposed to be His special people who would gain a special status in the heavenly kingdom. But they rejected God and refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

In the parable, what did the host order his servants to do when they reported the excuses the invited gave? [Allow students to answer.] That's correct, he ordered them to go out and invite anyone they could find: the lame, the crippled, those on the street, and even those outside the city. Everyone was invited **except** those who were initially given the invitation! In much the same way, we who are non-Jewish peoples—or Gentiles—were given an invitation into God's kingdom because those originally invited rejected Him. We need to value this invitation and work hard to be ready for the time to come, when His servants run out to tell us, "The banquet is ready!"

The Heavenly Kingdom

Although we've learned that we have received an invitation to God's kingdom, what exactly does this mean? Well, in the last lesson, we learned about this too: we have all been invited to receive salvation and live with God for eternity. The banquet in the parable refers to this wonderful gift. It's hard to imagine this kind of gift, though, so let's learn a little more about what the heavenly kingdom will be like.

FOR TEACHERS

Hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #2 and help the students refer to the Bible to complete it.

Answers

1. paradise
2. joy, Holy Spirit
3. dwell with them
4. tear, death, pain
5. gold
6. curse
7. paradise

Heaven must be pretty amazing according to these verses! Can you even imagine living forever, much less living joyfully every single day? Knowing this, do you think you would decline God's invitation?

Acceptance and Rejection

In the parable, the people who were first invited rejected the invitation by giving excuses. But today, how do we reject God? We would not say, "No, I don't want to go to

heaven.” But even if we don’t decline verbally, we still decline through our actions.

Have you ever tried to come up with excuses to avoid coming to Sabbath service? Or to avoid attending SSC even if you have the time to? How about to avoid coming

to RE classes, or to avoid church duties, such as cleaning or hymn singing? When we come up with excuses to avoid God, it means that we are prioritizing other things over Him. When we do this, we are doing exactly what the people in the parable were doing: we are declining His invitation.



Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs

2-5 Minutes

Salvation is given by the grace of God through faith.

Salvation is something we are all invited to partake in, but we may, even unknowingly, callously decline God’s loving invitation if we are not careful. We must remember to always take God’s invitation seriously, and not let ourselves get caught up in the worries and cares of the physical world around us. We must strive to always remember: there is a better home waiting for us. We need to be ready for when God is prepared to bring us there.



Check for Understanding

5 Minutes

1. What excuses did the first group of guests give for declining the banquet?

- I have just bought a field and must inspect it.
- I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to test them out.
- I now have a wife, so I can't come.

2. Who were invited later? The poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

3. Who do these people represent? The Gentiles—us!

4. What does the banquet represent? The heavenly kingdom.

5. Who does the host represent? God.



Life Application

10 Minutes

1. You're Invited!

- Objectives:**
1. To understand the importance and necessity of accepting and taking up the invitation God has given to all of His children.
 2. To understand that we are created and loved by God.

[Hand out Life Application Worksheet #1, and go over the invitation and introduction with the students. Let them know that they have been invited by God to spend eternity with Him in His kingdom, and that this is not an invitation they should decline.]

There are many ways we can accept God’s invitation, and the least of these is spending time with God on Sabbath day. What are some other ways we can show God our acceptance of His invitation? Are there any habits in your daily life that you can change or cultivate? What about your relationship with your parents or your siblings? Perhaps there are additional things you can do to help out in church. Think of some things you think you can do, and then fill out the RSVP letter.

2. Excuses, Excuses, Excuses

Objective: To understand why we shouldn't make excuses for not accepting God's invitation to become part of His family.

[Hand out Life Application Worksheet #2. Refer to the Teacher Version for instructions and answers.]



Activity

Invitation Cards

10-15 Minutes

Objective: To give students an opportunity to hand out invitations for Sabbath service to their friends.

It's important to always remember our friends and family members around us that have not yet believed in God or have not been baptized yet. We should always be looking for opportunities to invite them to attend our services and Bible studies. Giving them a handmade card is a thoughtful way of inviting them to church, and of giving them something to keep and remind themselves of when they have the time.

Materials

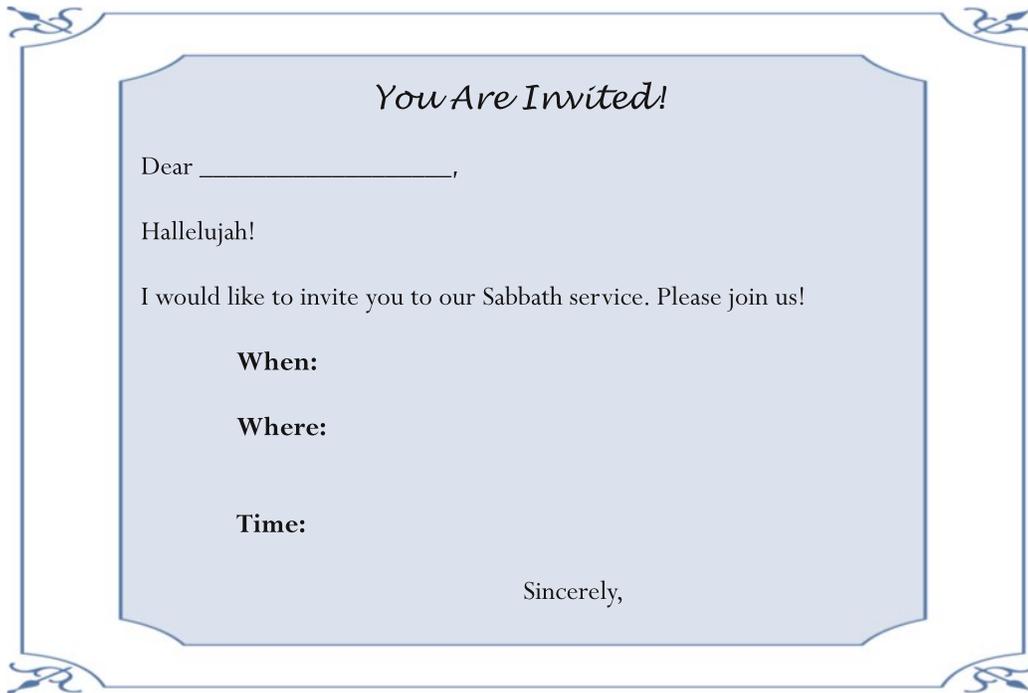
- Invitation (see template), one copy per student
- Envelope templates or pre-made envelope, one per student
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Pens, pencils, ultra-fine markers
- Glue

Instructions

1. Distribute one invitation and one envelope template per student.
2. Cut out the envelope templates. Fold along the dotted lines and glue to make the envelope.
3. On the invitation card, fill out the name of the person you want to invite.
4. Then, fill out the day of the week, the location, and the worship hours for Sabbath service.
5. Sign and print your name at the bottom.
6. Decorate the envelope and invitation card.

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. banquet
2. excuses
3. field
4. oxen
5. wife
6. The poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame
7. The heavenly kingdom
8. God
9. By attending Sabbath service and preparing ourselves by praying for the fullness of the Holy Spirit
10. By making up excuses to avoid God



You Are Invited!

Dear _____,

Hallelujah!

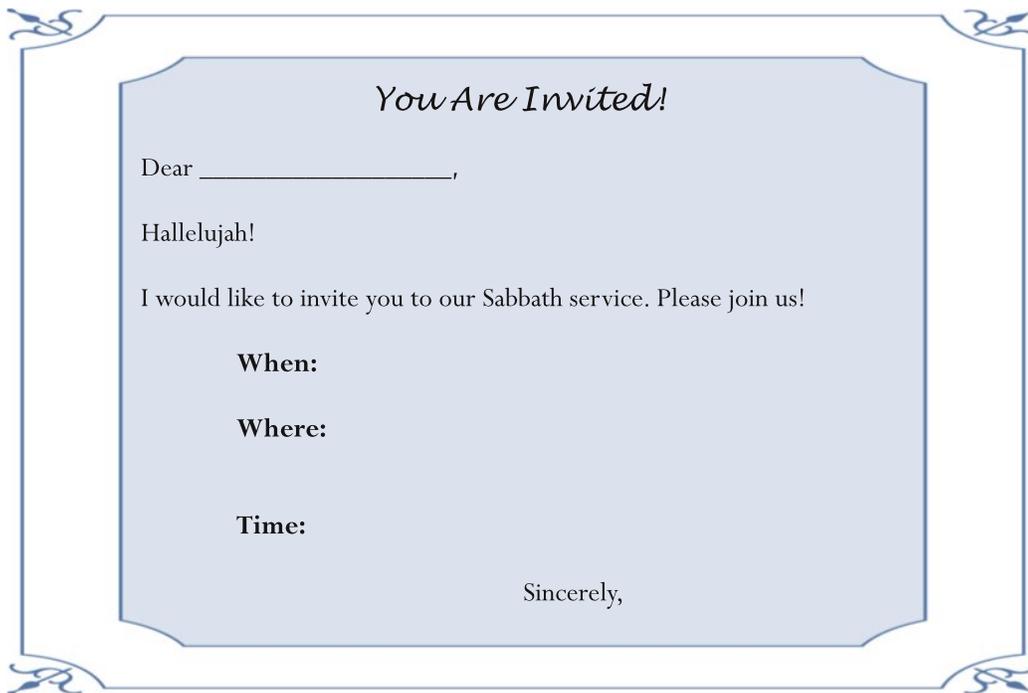
I would like to invite you to our Sabbath service. Please join us!

When:

Where:

Time:

Sincerely,



You Are Invited!

Dear _____,

Hallelujah!

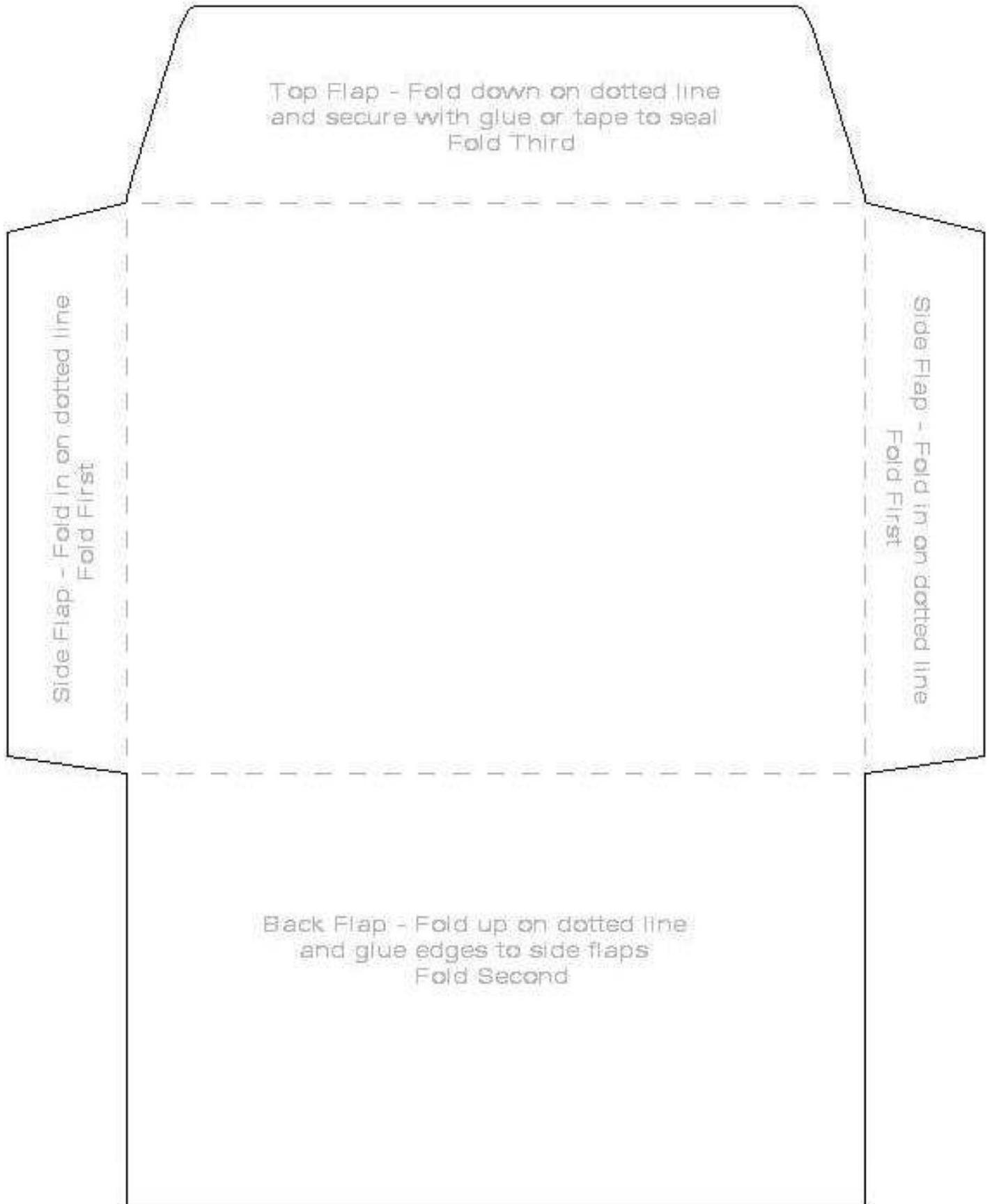
I would like to invite you to our Sabbath service. Please join us!

When:

Where:

Time:

Sincerely,



EXCUSES, EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Objective: To understand why we shouldn't make excuses for not accepting God's invitation to become part of His family.

Give the students time to read through the chart and fill out the last column of "good answers" on their worksheet. Then, once they've finished, spend time discussing their answers, and share the "God's Answer" column with them, referring to the Bible verses if you have time.

GOD'S INVITATION	EXCUSE	GOD'S ANSWER
God invites us to seek Him on Sabbath day.	I don't like going to church on Saturday morning because it's always too early in the morning for me. I like to stay home and watch cartoons. Sometimes, my friends have parties on Saturdays, and I also need to work on my schoolwork.	<p><i>Observing the Sabbath is a commandment. God shows kindness and love to all people. He wants us to rest on the Sabbath by coming to church and listening to the words of God.</i></p> <p>(Mk 2:27)</p>
God invites us to believe in His word.	I don't understand God's words. Sometimes they're confusing. Plus I am too busy to think about God and study the Bible anyway. I have too many things to do.	<p><i>Don't wait to think about being part of God's family. God's love and grace will help you every day!</i></p> <p>(Ps 55:17; 1 Chr 16:11)</p>
God invites us to pray to Him.	God knows everything; I don't need to pray to him all the time.	<p><i>Prayer is always needed when we need God's help. There are certain things that require prayer and, sometimes, even fasting and prayer.</i></p> <p>(Mk 9:29; Mt 21:22)</p>
God invites us to be baptized.	I don't want to get baptized right now. I don't like going into the water either. What's so good about it anyway? Baptism is for grown-ups. I should wait until I'm older.	<p><i>God loves children and He treats them just as important as grown-ups. He wants everyone to be part of His family. Jesus also tells us that we must be born of water and the Spirit if we want to go to heaven.</i></p> <p>(Mk 10:13-16; Jn 3:5)</p>
God invites us to spread His word.	I'm not good at preaching to others. I don't speak very well. My friends don't like to listen to my preaching. I'm afraid of being rejected when I preach.	<p><i>God wants us to preach the gospel to everyone in all places of the world. It doesn't matter if others reject us. We just move on. But we must always continue to preach.</i></p> <p>(Mt 24:14; Mt 10:14; Mk 16:15)</p>

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

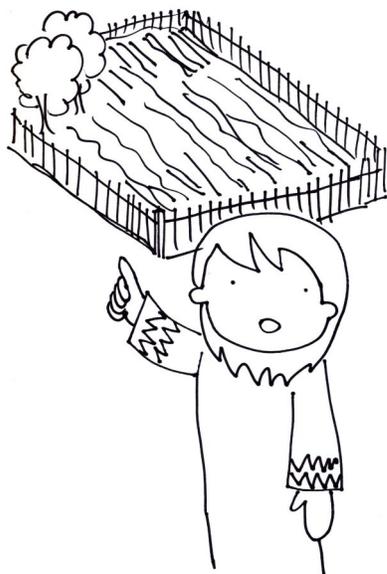
Instructions: Summarize today's Bible story by illustrating it in the boxes below. Use eight panels to show the story in order, and then write a caption below each panel to tell the story.

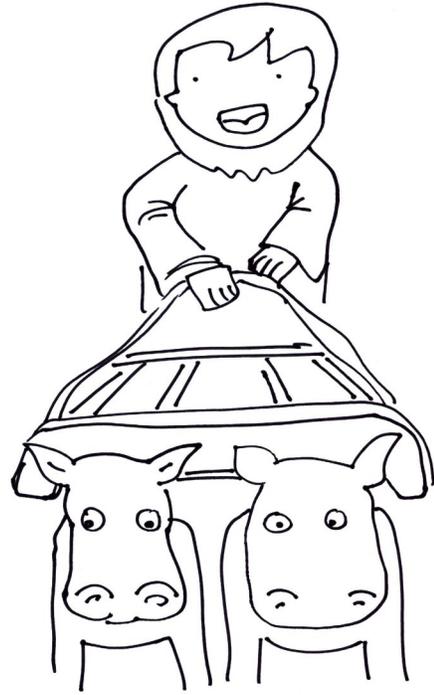
1

2

3

4





5

6

7

8

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT HEAVEN?

God has invited us to be with Him in heaven one day. But what's so great about heaven? Why would we want to go there?

The Bible doesn't give us an abundance of details as to what heaven will be like, but it does tell us what we need to know.

HEAVEN
is a
Wonderful
PLACE
WHERE WE WILL BE
WITH GOD
forever

Fill in the blanks below by looking up the verses.

1. Heaven will be a paradise. (Luke 23:43)

"And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in _____.'"

2. Heaven will be full of spiritual joy. (Romans 14:17)

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and _____ in the _____."

3. God will be with us forever. (Revelation 21:3)

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will _____, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

4. There will be no more pain or sorrow. (Revelation 21:4)

"And God will wipe away every _____ from their eyes; there shall be no more _____, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more _____, for the former things have passed away."

5. Heaven is beautiful. (Revelation 21:18-21)

"The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure _____, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass."

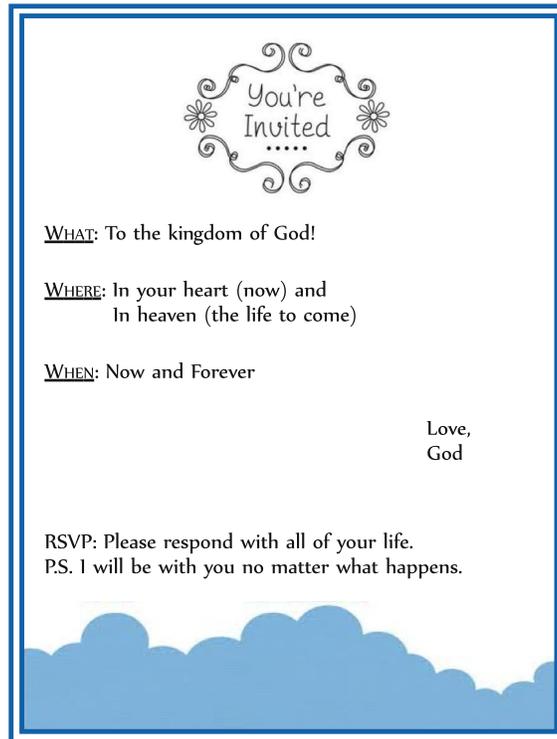
NO MORE
CURSE
NO MORE
SIN

6. There will be no more sin. (Revelation 22:3)

"And there shall be no more _____, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His _____ servants shall serve Him."

YOU'RE INVITED!

There are many ways we can accept God's invitation, and the least of these is spending time with God on Sabbath day. What are some other ways we can show God our acceptance of His invitation? Are there any habits in your daily life that you can change or cultivate? What about your relationship with your parents or your siblings? Perhaps there are additional things you can do to help out in church. Think of some things you think you can do, and then fill out the RSVP letter below.



R.S.V.P.

Dear God,

I, _____ (your name), humbly accept Your invitation to the heavenly kingdom. In acceptance of this invitation, I will gladly set aside the worries of my daily life and spend time with You on the Sabbath day. I also pray to You so that I can be filled with the Holy Spirit and be prepared for the coming banquet.

In addition to the above, I also plan to...

Yours lovingly,

EXCUSES, EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Examine the following excuses some people may make for not accepting God's invitation to become part of His family. Then, fill in the "Good Answer" column by describing how you would answer the person if you were their friend.

GOD'S INVITATION	EXCUSE	GOOD ANSWER
<p>God invites us to seek Him on Sabbath day.</p>	<p>I don't like going to church on Saturday morning because it's always too early in the morning for me. I like to stay home and watch cartoons. Sometimes, my friends have parties on Saturdays, and I also need to work on my schoolwork.</p>	
<p>God invites us to believe in His word.</p>	<p>I don't understand God's words. Sometimes they're confusing. Plus I am too busy to think about God and study the Bible anyway. I have too many things to do.</p>	
<p>God invites us to pray to Him.</p>	<p>God knows everything; I don't need to pray to him all the time.</p>	
<p>God invites us to be baptized.</p>	<p>I don't want to get baptized right now. I don't like going into the water either. What's so good about it anyway? Baptism is for grown-ups. I should wait until I'm older.</p>	
<p>God invites us to spread His word.</p>	<p>I'm not good at preaching to others. I don't speak very well. My friends don't like to listen to my preaching. I'm afraid of being rejected when I preach.</p>	

E2 Year 2 Book 2 Lesson 11—The Parable of the Great Banquet

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Weekly Bible Reading: _____

Bible Reading: Check each box when you complete that day's reading.

Prayer: Check each box after you pray to God that day.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Read							
Pray							

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____

2. _____

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse. **(Revelation 3:20)**

Word Scramble

Unscramble the words in parentheses to fill in the blanks.

1. These people were invited to a _____ (uqteban). But, when it came time for the banquet, they gave _____ (seesuxc) as to why they couldn't attend.
2. One said, "I can't come; I've bought a _____." (ifled)
3. Another said, "I can't come; I want to try out my new _____." (neox)
4. Still another replied, "I can't come; I now have a _____." (fiwe)

Short Answer

5. Who was invited after the servants reported the excuses given?
6. What does the banquet represent?
7. Who does the host represent?
8. How do we accept God's invitation?
9. How do we sometimes decline His invitation?