Lesson Foundation
(This page is for use with teacher preparation.)

Bible Lesson: Parable of The Great Banquet
Luke 14:16-24
Matthew 22:1-14

Bible Verse: Revelation 3:20a NIV
Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.

Lesson Objectives:
In this lesson students will come to KNOW:
• That just as guests were invited to accept the master’s invitation to the feast, God invites them to accept his great invitation of salvation through Christ.

Students will be invited to DO the following:
• Accept God’s invitation of salvation through Christ and choose to follow him.

Prepare Your Heart
When did you first hear God’s invitation to know Christ and follow him? Were you young? Were you an adult?
For children participating in today’s event, this could be the beginning of new life with Christ – if only they understand and comprehend his amazing invitation. You have an exciting part in clearly presenting the good news to kids.
Pray for the Holy Spirit to draw children to respond to his love today.

Before Class
• PRAY for God’s guidance as you prepare.
• READ through the lesson and scriptures.
• CHOOSE which activities to present (you may not be able to do them all).
• GATHER MATERIALS for all activities.
• ENJOY the children!

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Welcome & Introduction (15 minutes)

WELCOME & ACTIVITY
Materials: Erasable board; chalk or markers

Welcome students warmly. Introduce yourself and the other leaders.

Plan a Celebration: Ask children to help you plan a celebration. Use the following questions as a guide. Write their answers on a board, if available. Enjoy.

- What would you eat?
- Where would you want it to be held?
- What special entertainment would you want?
- What activities would you plan?
- Whom would you invite?
- How would you invite them?

The party sounds like a lot of fun! Today, we will learn about the Greatest Invitation ever given. The invitation comes from God to us. What is God’s invitation to us? We will talk about it more today.

MUSIC
Optional Materials: Musical instruments
Music player
Song words

Start by singing several favorite songs that children can learn easily, even if they are not familiar with church.

Choose songs …
- about Jesus and salvation
- that feel like a celebration
- that relate to the party/invitation theme

OPENING PRAYER
Invite students to bow their heads and sit quietly while you talk to God. Ask him to help you and your students as you learn about the Great Invitation.

“Anywhere” Note
Realize that party plans vary greatly in cultures around the world. Be sure to listen carefully, first.

DEMOnstration activity: Piñata
Materials: Colorful piñata filled with treats
Blindfold
Large stick

Before Class: Find a sturdy paper or plastic bag, or use a large sheet of newspaper and string. Fill it with treats that students will enjoy (candy). Seal the bag and attach a sturdy string so it can be hung. Decorate the bag colorfully. Hang the piñata before class.

OR: Buy a piñata if available in your area.

Show the piñata to students. Do you know what this is for? It is a piñata. People in Mexico use it to play a party game. Children are blindfolded, turned around to make them a little dizzy, then given a chance to hit the bag with a stick. Several children take turns. When the bag breaks and candy spills to the ground, children rush forward to receive some of the candy that falls. Let’s play the game.

Blindfold one student at a time, giving them a turn to try to break the piñata. Do this until the candy scatters.

In some ways, this reminds us of what Jesus did for us. He planned something wonderful for us (like the piñata surprise): heaven. It is a wonderful place where God lives and rules. But something worse than the blindfold keeps us from knowing God: our sin. God is holy and cannot be close to sin. We can’t be holy enough to earn our way into heaven. It is a big problem.

Jesus knew we needed help. He knew he was the only perfect one who could do this.

He allowed himself to be hung on a cross, to be beaten, broken and killed. He was treated much worse than the piñata. He did this to take the punishment for our sin.

As a result … we have the most amazing gift: salvation. When Jesus died, he paid the price for our sin to be forgiven forever, making a way for us to be close to God both now and forever in heaven.

Lesson Note: Have you heard about God’s invitation of salvation through Jesus before? We will have a chance to learn more.
Drama Skit (10-15 minutes)

Costumes & Props (these are optional)
Simple costumes for master, servant (robes, sheets)
Table with banquet setting items (near the guests who accept invitation)

Actors:
The master
The servant
Invited guests (half of class)
Guests invited at end (the other half of class)

Before class:
• Actors must read and meditate on the story. Notice key scene changes.
• They act out points in the story in pantomime. This allows more emotion, passion and humor to show. Practice well.
• If teacher/actors are not available, older students may be willing to present this skit.

PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET
Narrator: Jesus taught his disciples important truths using stories. We have some people who will be sharing one of these stories for us – without using words.

We have a part to play. Half of us will be invited guests to a feast. We will be fine people. When invited, we smile, but refuse to come. We have excuses.

The other half will be invited later. They have troubles, disabilities, no homes, etc. These are plain people, but they accept with joy. (Do not leave your seats. Only pretend to go to the feast.)

SCENE 1: Preparing the banquet.
• Master orders servant to prepare for a GREAT banquet.
• Servant goes about preparing table and invitation list; checks with master often.

SCENE 2: Invitations given.
• Servant goes to find guests to invite them. They refuse to come. Servant persists. (This should feel humorous.)
• Servant is puzzled and frustrated.

SCENE 3: Servant reports to the master.
• Servant acts out responses he or she received to the invitations.
• Master becomes furious. Wonders why people refuse his generosity.
• Master angrily orders servant to go out and invite anyone he finds.

SCENE 4: Inviting everyone.
• Servant rushes to invite new guests.
• All accept the invitation.
• They are guided to enjoy the banquet table.
• There is much joy for servant and master.
• The people enjoy the party, too!

QUESTIONS
(Narrator leads this discussion.)
• What did the master do?
• How did people respond?
• What was the main lesson of this story?

Lesson Note: We will talk more about this story when we have our lesson from God’s Word. We already know: it is all about God’s Great Invitation.

Bible Verse (15-20 minutes)

Materials: Bible Verse Cards (page 7)
Fasteners (tape or tacks)
Three boxes with lid flaps/doors (label these #1, #2, #3)

Today we will learn a Bible verse from God’s Word (the Bible). The Bible was written by many different people, who wrote the words God gave them. It contains important stories and messages to help us understand God, his plans and his love for us. Let’s look at one Bible verse today about the Great Invitation.

TEACH & EXPLAIN: Revelation 3:20a
(Read the verse.)
Here I am – Jesus said these words in a vision experienced by John, one of his closest followers. Many people think of God as being far away, removed from their lives, and uninterested in them. But this is not true. Jesus’ words show us that God is “here.” But what does he want from us?
I stand at the door and knock – We know that God is invisible. He is doing this in an invisible place: the door to our hearts. This is not just an organ in our body; it is the deep inside place where our most important thoughts and feelings live. This verse tells us that Jesus is very close, knocking on the door of our hearts.

If anyone hears my voice – Who is “anyone?”
You, me or any other person in the whole world – who hears his invitation. How do we hear him talk to us? Some people wait for God to speak in a loud voice. But the Bible tells us he usually speaks quietly, by his Holy Spirit, in the secret place of our hearts. Have you ever heard God’s voice? If you have ever thought about doing something wrong, and then felt a strong feeling on the inside that stopped you … that might be God’s voice. His Holy Spirit reminds people when they are doing wrong. This is one way people often hear his voice.

And opens the door – When someone knocks on the door of your house, what do you do? Open the door. Jesus invites us to do so.
I will come in – Do you hear Jesus knocking on the door of your heart, asking to come in and be part of your life forever? What will you do about his invitation?

REMEMBER THE VERSE
Fasten Bible Verse Cards (page 7) on a wall or board. Instruct students to repeat the verse, with volunteers removing one or two words after each repetition. Do this until kids repeat the verse from memory. Choose volunteers to remove words in fun ways related to today’s verse:
• One who names the last person who knocked on the door of your house.
• One who names a voice they have heard.
• One who names a country of the world with people who might need to hear this invitation.

REVIEW FUN: Door 1, 2 or 3
Use Bible Verse Cards from activity above. Prepare boxes with lid flaps to act like doors. Distribute verse cards among boxes. One at a time, a student chooses a box, “knocks” on the door, opens it and takes a word from inside. He or she tries to place this word in the right place on the wall so the verse will be in order when finished. The next student does the same. When all words are out and in order, repeat the verse one last time.

Lesson Note – Is Jesus knocking on the door of your heart? What will you do?

Bible Lesson (20-25 minutes)
Materials: A Bible and your lesson notes
“The Great Invitation” (page 8)
Gospel booklets (if available)

Bible References: Luke 14:16-24
Matthew 22:1-14

Bible Background
Jesus came first to his own people, the Jews. However, they refused to receive him. Several versions of this parable are told in the Gospels. All point to the great efforts by God to invite these “insiders” first into fellowship with him. As the story unfolds, we see God’s heart for all people to know him. Enjoy sharing this incredible invitation with children today.

PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET
INTRODUCTION (for students)
Jesus told stories with lessons. They were called parables. We have already seen this parable acted out, but it is time for us to tell the story and talk about what it means to us.

(Open your Bible to this story. Present the lesson in your own words. Read 1-2 verses to emphasize story points.)

1. A king planned a great banquet.
• A king/master prepared for a great banquet. He chose guests. He chose great food. He planned activities. Have you ever been to a party? What did you eat? What did you do? What made it great?
• His servant helped him to prepare.
• This king’s party was going to be the best one ever!

2. Many guests were invited.
• The servant was sent to invite the guests. How do you feel when you are invited to a great party?
• The guests all refused the invitation. Why might you refuse an invitation?
• Perhaps you have another obligation. Perhaps you will be in another city.
• Their refusal might be understood if this were an ordinary celebration. But this was the most important, ever.
• The servant reported to the master.
• The master became upset. How would you feel? Like people didn’t care.
3. **Strangers were invited ... and came!**
   - The king ordered his servant to go out and invite everyone else: strangers, the homeless, the needy, anyone.
   - They all accepted the invitation. **Why do you think they accepted?**
   - It was a marvelous celebration.

4. **This story teaches us about God's invitation to us.**
   - God, the Father, has prepared a great place for us in heaven. He wants all people to be close to him there.
   - He first invited the Jews to accept his invitation. They would not come.
   - He opened up the invitation to all people, everywhere.
   - Every person who hears the invitation must **choose** whether to accept or reject it.
   - Jesus is the one who provides us the way. When he died on the cross, he paid the price for our sin to be forgiven forever.
   - We are invited to ask for and receive forgiveness of our sin through Christ. We must believe in him as our Savior. Then we have permission to participate in the celebration and to be close to God now and forever.

**PERSONAL TESTIMONY (optional)**
Before finishing in prayer, ask one leader or helper to briefly share the story of how he or she came to accept God's invitation of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- What was life like before?
- How was decision made? (the story)
- What is life like now?

**PERSONAL APPLICATION & INVITATION**
**For unbelieving children:**
- End by reading the Greatest Invitation to students (see page 8). *(Offer to give students a copy as they go home today, if you wish.)*
- **Would you like to accept God's invitation of salvation through Jesus Christ?** Now is the time to choose.
- If you want to choose to accept this invitation, you can pray to God yourself. Tell him you want him close. Ask him to forgive your sin through Jesus. Ask him to help you live for him for the rest of your life.

**For believing children:**
- **Have you already accepted God's invitation of salvation through Jesus?**
- **Are you telling others about this incredible invitation?** You can share this Great Invitation with others too!

**PRAYER**
Close this lesson with prayer. Thank God for his incredible invitation. Thank him for sending Jesus to pay the price for our sin to be forgiven.

(As students bow heads in prayer, invite those who want to accept God's Great Invitation of salvation through Jesus to raise their head and look you in the eye.)

Lead students in a prayer of acceptance. Thank God for each student choosing to follow him, and for the others who have already done so. Pray that God will help them all grow strong in their relationship with him now and forever.

**Counseling Note:** While children move onto other classroom activities, meet in pairs or small groups with kids who have newly received Christ. Talk with them about their decision and new life. Return to classroom activities as soon as finished.
LESSON 1  The Greatest Invitation  Ten Children's Outreach Lessons

Games & Activities  (10-15 min each)

GAME:  Set the Table Relay  
Materials:  Tablecloth for each team  
Chair or table for each team  
Two sets of place setting items  (one set per team)  
Small treats for prizes (optional)  

(NOTE: Place settings must have the same number of items. They might include: plate, cup, fork, spoon, napkin, candle, flowers or other items to set at a table.)

Before Class:  Gather materials; consider safety issues for children.

• Divide the students into two teams. If your group is large and space is limited, choose 5-6 students for each team and play the game while others cheer them on.
• Arrange each team behind a starting line. On the opposite end of the relay playing area, set up the two tables (or chairs, or boxes, whatever you have).
• Before running the race, show how the table should look when finished.
• Give each team a set of table supplies. Each team member races to the table with one item, sets it in order and runs back to their team. The next student does the same, until all items are placed. (Always start with tablecloth.)
• Ready? Go! Enjoy the race.
• Offer praise (or a small treat) as a reward for the winning team.

Lesson Note:  God has prepared a wonderful place for us in heaven, where we can be close to him forever. It is even better than a banquet or party. If we accept his Great Invitation of salvation through Christ, we can begin living our lives in relationship with him now, too!

GAME:  Find the Invitation  
Materials:  One small folded paper representing the invitation  
Music player or drums  
Blindfold (optional)

• Show the invitation to students. Explain that one person will be “it.” Their task will be to find the invitation.
• Arrange students in one large circle. This person stands in the center with eyes closed tight. (Use a blindfold, if necessary.)
• Music starts. While music plays, students pass the invitation around the circle as quickly as possible. When the music stops, whoever is holding the paper must quickly close their hand around it, trying to hide it from the player in the center. When the music stops, the center player opens his or her eyes and tries to see the invitation.
• If the invitation is found, the center player gets another turn in the center. If the invitation is not found, the student holding the invitation gets to be in the center.
• Play many rounds. Enjoy.

Lesson Note:  Everyone received an invitation, but not everyone came. What will you do about God’s Greatest Invitation?

Closing  (5 minutes)

• Summarize what children have learned today; reminder of God’s Great Invitation.
• Close in prayer.
• Send home papers, treats or other take-home items as children are dismissed.
• Let children know you enjoyed them.
• Invite them to any upcoming events.
**Bible Verse Cards**

Copy this page with a photocopier, or handwrite these words onto slips of paper or cards to use with the Bible Verse lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Here I am</th>
<th>I stand</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at the door</td>
<td>and knock</td>
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<tr>
<td>If anyone</td>
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You are lovingly invited to

- Come close to God and become best friends
- Have all your sins forgiven
- Learn to live and love like Jesus, God’s only perfect Son
- Spend forever with God in heaven

**TIME:** Anytime you believe

**PLACE:** Starts in your heart
Continues forever in heaven

Your response is required
Call out anytime, day or night

Love,

Jesus

(for directions, read John 1:12, Romans 6:23 and John 3:16)

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