

Parable of the Great Banquet

When Opportunity Calls

WEEK 8

OVERVIEW

1. Opportunity Calls
2. The Entitled Make Excuses
3. The Grateful Get a Banquet

OPENING QUESTIONS

- What are some ways God has been reaching out to me, inviting me to enjoy a closer relationship with him? How have I been responding?

INTRODUCTION

In the Parable of the Great Banquet, Jesus portrays God's Kingdom as a feast thrown by a generous man, but some of the invitees make excuses and miss out on the party.

This devotional will help us recognize excuses and entitlement in our hearts so that we don't miss out on "the banquet."

1. OPPORTUNITY CALLS

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

– Acts 17:26-27 NIV

- **We are important to God;** he goes to great lengths so that we find him.
- **Life with God is incredible.** In the Parable of the Great Banquet, Jesus portrays God's Kingdom as a feast thrown by a generous man. The party is unearned and undeserved; the host doesn't want anything in return, just for his guests to come and enjoy being with him.

A man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, "What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!" Jesus replied with this story: "A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations."

– Luke 14:15-16 NLT

- **God is generous:** He gives all-access invitations to know him and be part of his Kingdom, and being with him is a great feast.
- **God's Kingdom isn't about following rules** that restrict us from having fun and enjoying our lives.
- **How does this relate to me?** Responding to God's invitation sometimes involves giving up other things we are doing (which seem good but really don't give us the life we desire).
- **These decisions require faith.** We have to believe that living life God's way really is a feast. Without faith, our fears take over, and we think that if we do what God wants, bad things will happen.
- **Fear turns God's feast into a set of rules** and difficult expectations.

Pause and reflect

- Do I see God's invitation as an opportunity for a relationship or rules that burden me?
- What are some fears I have about responding to God's invitation? How do these fears affect the way I view God?

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2. THE ENTITLED MAKE EXCUSES

"When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses. One said, 'I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'"

– Luke 14:17-20 NLT

- **What's wrong with these excuses?**
 1. Wouldn't you typically inspect a field *before* buying it?
 2. Wouldn't you try out your oxen *before* buying them?
 3. Does being a newly married couple mean you can't attend a feast?
- **What do these excuses tell us?** As we break down these excuses, it seems clear that the people in the story simply do not want to attend the banquet.
- **How does this relate to me?** We, too, can make excuses when we don't want to do what God wants:
 - I can't do it.
 - I don't know how to do what you're asking me.
 - I don't have time to do that.
 - I'm all alone, and I have no one to help me.
 - I'm afraid.
- **The entitlement/excuse connection:** The people in the story who received invitations don't value or appreciate who God is or what he's doing. They aren't grateful for the opportunity they are being given; if they were, they would have responded with gratitude and eagerness instead of excuses.

Pause and reflect

- What are some excuses I make when I don't want to do what God asks?
- Do I recognize any entitlement in my life? How does it affect my desire to respond to God?

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3. THE GRATEFUL GET A BANQUET

"The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, 'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' After the servant had done this, he reported, 'There is still room for more.' So his master said, 'Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.'"

– Luke 14:21-24 NLT

- **God immediately extends the invitation:** although these excuses made the master (God) furious, he didn't waste time wallowing in his emotions. He immediately extended the invitation to others, including those that society can easily exclude.
- **To God, we are all VIPs.** He wants everyone with him, regardless of what society or others may say about us.
- **The grateful get a banquet.** The people who were grateful for the opportunity were the people who got to enjoy the banquet.
- **Life can give us opportunities to become grateful.** This can come through realizing our need for forgiveness, or appreciating the love that has been shown to us by God and others.

Pause and reflect

- What opportunities do I have now to overcome entitlement and excuse-making?
- How would gratitude help me respond differently to the things God wants me to do?

Wrapping up

- The more entitled I am, the more reasons I have to be self-focused. On the other hand, when I am grateful, I am happier and motivated to be a great friend and respond to God's call.
- What would your life look like if you consistently chose gratitude over entitlement?
- What will you do with the opportunities has God put in your life?