

TEXT Luke 14:15-24

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to relate that everyone is called by God, but that any excuse we give will keep us from Heaven.

MEMORY VERSE Come; for all things are now ready. — Luke 14:17

The Men Who Made Excuses

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

COME — Beckoning motion, using both arms.

FOR ALL THINGS — With right hand flat, palm down, make large circle horizontal and clockwise.

ARE NOW READY — Cross middle and index fingers on both hands and move hands, palms down, from left to right.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

The visual illustration for this week's verse is the figure of Jesus standing beside a table. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Arrange the pieces on your display board a section at a time as your students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Open your class time by putting out a number of supplies pertaining to having a party. Show your students the nice invitations you have selected, discuss the menu you have planned, the treats you will provide for your guests, the entertainment you have planned. Emphasize how excited you are about the party and how much you hope everyone will be able to come. Then ask them how they think you would feel if **everyone** you invited refused to come.

1. A certain man prepared a feast and sent out invitations.
2. One by one, those who were invited offered excuses, and said they wouldn't be able to come.
3. Others were invited to take their places.
4. Those who received the original invitation were not able to come to the supper.

Climax: This parable is a comparison to the invitation God has sent out to invite people to the good things He is preparing in Heaven. Compare the excuses offered to the excuses people give today for not serving the Lord.

Conclusion: When the Gospel call is heard, we must be sure to respond and not make any excuses, for the excuses will be accepted and we will miss Heaven.

Response: The students will be able to name some of the excuses offered for not serving God, and will be able to explain why it is important to answer God's call.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As with many of Christ's parables this one, too, was directed toward the Pharisees. (See Luke 14:1.) The Pharisees were trusting in their religion, heritage, and self-righteousness to save them, but by this parable Jesus was trying to show them the only hope of salvation was to accept God's invitation. And what was the invitation? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

The excuses given by the men in the parable showed a lack of desire. The first was more interested in his possessions, the second more interested in his business and the third more interested in his human relationships. While none of these interests may be sinful in themselves, your students need to see that nothing should assume such importance in our lives that we use it as an excuse for neglecting to accept the Lord's invitation.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Ask your students to pretend with you that you are planning a big party. Tell them you have some invitations to a birthday party where they can play games, eat pizza, cake and ice cream. Hand out invitations to some but not all of the children. After encouraging their enthusiasm, ask them if they will come. Some will say they can't because they didn't get an invitation. You can elaborate on this. You ran out or didn't want everyone to come, etc. Go on to explain about the call of God, how He calls (or invites) us to come to Him. He doesn't just call some but calls all. At the end, hand out an invitation from God to each of the children.

Have some invitations to events, but make excuses why you could not go to them. Make the excuses really silly and unreasonable. Ask the children if they feel that the excuses are plausible. If they are silly enough the class will tell you "no." Tell how everyone is invited to Heaven but some people are making excuses not to go; they feel other things are more important than going to Heaven.

Bring a church invitation to class. Cut people figures

from a magazine or catalog, back with heavy paper and glue stands on each. Pretend these are the people who receive invitations. Invent excuses for each, and cut other pictures from catalogs to go with the excuses; for example, a tent for one who planned to go camping, sports equipment for one who was going to a game, washing machine for one who had to do housework. Compare to the excuses given in the Bible.

Toss a ball to your students. When they catch it, they must tell one excuse people might make for not getting ready for Jesus' coming.

QUESTIONS

Why is it important to come to Sunday school every Sunday?

Name some things that might happen to keep you away from Sunday school.

If you are having a busy day, is it okay to skip reading and praying? Why?

What excuses do people make today that keep them from coming to church?

What special supper (dinner) is Jesus Himself preparing?

For whom is He preparing this dinner?

How do you get an invitation to attend this dinner?

Does Jesus invite everyone to enjoy His blessings and salvation?

What happens to Christians who get too busy to pray?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Use hand puppets to illustrate situations in a family where someone made an excuse instead of doing what they were supposed to do. Explain that at home we may be given another chance, or sometimes we have heard, "You have to have a better excuse than that!" But in today's lesson, none of those who made excuses were given another opportunity. (The puppets could illustrate the lesson story too.) God invites us all to Heaven; He wants us all to be with Him someday. But if we put off praying, saying, "I was too busy"; "I had something else I wanted to do"; "I didn't know when Jesus was coming"; whatever — Jesus will invite some-

one else instead, and we will miss out on all the good things that Jesus has prepared for us in Heaven.

Make a happy-face beanbag. Toss it to your little ones. When they catch it, have them say, "I want to go to Heaven," or "I love Jesus." If they are old enough, at their turn let them tell one reason why they want to go to Heaven.

Make a copy of the table setting (see Patterns) for each child. Have them draw what the men who made excuses might have missed since they didn't go to the dinner.

REVIEW IDEAS

Use the students in your class to help you dramatize a person's inviting others to Sunday school and the various excuses given. Utilize props and costume details to go with each excuse. Some examples: a boy with baseball cap and mitt would rather go to play ball; a girl wheeling on a bicycle would rather go for a bike ride; a girl with a big pair of glasses and a book would rather read a new book; two kids with a game would rather play; a child looking through a TV guide would rather watch a favorite program. These things should **not** be used as excuses for not going to Sunday school or church.

Dramatize preparations for a party: Hang streamers, put a cloth and decorated plates on a table, wrap gifts, set up games, inflate balloons, etc. As you are doing this, talk about the party you are planning and who has been invited. Have a phone ring. Someone calls giving an excuse. Repeat this several times, acting sadder and sadder as the excuses are given. Conclude by comparing this scene with how Jesus feels when people give excuses.

Make an overhead review showing present-day excuses for not serving the Lord: party (no time), family (they don't want to go to church), games (other things I'd rather do), money (I really can't afford it), etc. Make an orange flame overlay, and as each of the above excuses is given, put the orange flames over it and ask whether it will look like a good excuse in eternity.

COORDINATING SONGS

"Wise Man and the Foolish Man"

"Climb Up Sunshine Mountain"

"Gospel Bus"

MEMORY VERSE SONG



Come for all things now are ready, Come for all things now are ready, Come for all things now are ready.



Luke fourteen seventeen.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

