

TEXT Luke 14:16-24

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that although many people make excuses for not serving God, no excuse will stand under the scrutiny of the Almighty. If we persist in excusing ourselves, others will assume our responsibilities and ultimately receive our reward.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Come; for all things are now ready. — Luke 14:17

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. — Luke 14:16-18

ANSWER TITLE: The Folly of Making Excuses
SEARCH TITLE: The Great Supper

REFERENCE INFORMATION

People have been making excuses for not serving God for as long as there have been people on earth. Our first record of an excuse was when Adam blamed his wife for giving him the forbidden fruit. Eve followed her husband's example and blamed the serpent. Actually, Adam implied that God was at fault also. He said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Of course God did not accept their excuses and neither will He accept excuses today.

Many people blame God for their problems or circumstances, but the problem is sin. Circumstances may cause us to have difficulties, but God has provided a way for us to have peace in our hearts, no matter what the situation may be. In Romans 8:35-39, we learn that

nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, so if we find sin in our lives, it is because we have failed to walk with the Lord and we are without excuse. King Saul, the first king of Israel, transgressed the commandment of the Lord. Although he made an excuse, God did not accept it. God said that He would take the kingdom from Saul and give it to one after His own heart.

King Saul knew what God expected of him, but he chose to disobey. Others may not have the light that Saul had, but God states that He enlightens every man that comes into the world (John 1:9). Paul says that God's eternal power and Godhead are clearly revealed in His creation so that all men are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

YOUR OPENER

The Great Supper

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KEY VERSE: A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. — Luke 14:16-18

RESPONSES

1. Allow your students to give explanations of their choices. While all of the four may apply in some sense, the best definition possible is the fourth one. Bring out the vast difference between an excuse being offered and an excuse being accepted. Number 4 points out that the reasons given were only a pretext. In each case, the man could have made arrangements to attend the supper if that had been his true desire.

2. After listing several excuses commonly offered for not serving God, ask your students if these excuses sound any better than the ones offered in the text. Point out that they are only a poor alternative to a refusal. People who excuse themselves from serving God don't want to serve Him, so they choose to be doing something else instead.

3. Your students should pinpoint the danger of putting off getting right with the Lord, realizing that it is possible to delay until it is too late. There comes a point where the line is crossed over, and the opportunity to accept God's mercy is forever in the past. Man does not know precisely when that point will be reached in his own life; hence the urgency of preparing to meet God today. See 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Jesus had no illusions as to the general reception of His Kingdom. He knew that many, from the religious leaders of His own nation and people of the nation itself, to the distant Gentiles, would flout Him and His offer of eternal redemption. They would give the most trivial excuses, preferring for themselves the husks of the world. Webster defines the word *excuse* as "1. a plea or explanation given in defense of one's conduct, 2. a release from obligation, duty, etc., 3. something that excuses; an extenuating or justifying factor, and 4. a pretended reason for conduct; a pretext."

1. Study the definitions of *excuse*. In our parable, all who were invited requested that they be excused. Which of the four definitions best applies?

2. The man who had bought the field asked to be excused from the feast. What are some of the excuses offered today for not serving God? What is the basic reason behind all these excuses?

3. One of the most commonly offered rationalizations for making an excuse in our day is the thought, I'll do it later. What is the danger of procrastination regarding one's eternal destiny?

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. What was Adam's excuse for having eaten the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:12)? Did God excuse Adam? Why or why not?

5. The man who had married a wife said, "I cannot come. In reality, do you think he could have gone? Explain.

6. If you were a pastor, how would you want a person to react when you asked him to do something in God's service? With reference to this thought, explain 2 Corinthians 8:12.

7. What often results when one asks to be excused from doing a specific task in God's service?

8. What is the feast to which all are invited (Revelation 19:9)? What awaits those who accept the invitation to God's great feast?

4. His excuse was that his wife gave him the fruit, but God did not excuse Adam for his sin. God cannot overlook sin; this would include the sin of neglect. See Hebrews 2:3. Point out that God can see the heart's true desire in spite of the excuses offered.

5. In reality, he probably could have gone and taken his wife along with him. He could have asked if the invitation included her. Or perhaps she would not have objected to his going alone. But he apparently made no attempt to make any of these arrangements. Ask your class to define the difference between *cannot* and *will not*, bringing out that often *cannot* really means *will not*. Stress the necessity of establishing right priorities.

6. Your students' answers will no doubt bring out that a pastor would want a willing response. Allow time for them to offer their explanations of the verse, zeroing in on the thought that God accepts a man for what he is and the talents he has. He does not expect him to be something he cannot be. However, God can give grace and add talents to enable one to do more than he thought possible as he yields himself to Him. Ask students for personal examples where they said yes to God and received help to perform His will in what they considered a difficult task.

7. This question should generate considerable discussion regarding attitudes motivating the excuse. There are times when a person could be asked to fill a position which really does require more strength and attention than he is able to give. At that point, what might be considered an excuse is seen to be a valid reason. Declining the responsibility is not due to lack of desire or willingness, but rather is realistically facing one's limitations. On the other hand, a person could excuse himself because of physical restrictions or lack of time, when in truth neither of these would really be limiting factors if he had a willing attitude. One with this type of excuse will find he has also excused himself from receiving God's reward.

8. All are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Discuss the blessings that are available to those who accept responsibilities and privileges in God's service. Conclude your session by discussing the blessed hope of the Christian— that he will someday attend this great event if he remains faithful.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

In the parable, why was the man who was giving the supper angry? Was he more angry with the guests' not coming or the excuses that they made? Why?

We, like the guests, are invited and called to serve God. What excuses are many making today?

What is the main idea behind this parable? What is Jesus trying to teach us?

What do you really lose when you begin to make excuses for not doing God's work?

Did the host of the supper tell his servants to ask these guests to come a second time? What warning does this give us?

Why is it important to "hurry" in to dinner? Make a spiritual parallel.

Why is it easy to excuse yourself from something unpleasant or untimely, and just as easy to refrain from making an excuse if you will gain something?

What is an excuse? How does an excuse differ from an explanation?

How do you feel when someone makes an excuse to you?

What was wrong with the excuses that were made in the parable?

Why do sinners make excuses for not being saved?

THINGS TO DO

Have the students brainstorm on the consequences that result from making excuses. Make up situations such as doing chores at home, doing homework for school, or being summoned to appear in court. Have the students give some excuses for not doing their duties, and then figure out what would happen if they always excused themselves from duties required of them. What happens when they do the same with their duties in serving God?

Have a contest to see who can write the silliest excuse for not attending a dinner. After the students read their excuses, ask them to imagine how they would feel if they were given such excuses. How does God feel when

people offer excuses for not serving Him? Emphasize that, though the Silliest Excuse Contest was fun, God will not laugh if we make excuses for not serving Him.

Hand out a dinner invitation to each class member. Use it as an opener for this lesson. The invitation could be written as follows:

You are invited to a
GREAT SUPPER
 To be held in Heaven
 For all those who have believed
 In Jesus as their Savior.
 Please mark your response
 to this invitation below.


- Thank you for the invitation! I accept with great pleasure.
- I am sorry I cannot attend. I must go to Hell because

Answers for ANSWER

No Excuses!

Many people make excuses for not serving God but no excuse is good enough. If they continue making excuses they will receive no reward. The word list below is from our Bible text. Find each word in the word-find. Remember, they read up, down, across, and diagonally.

MAN
 BADE
 CITY
 COME
 HALT
 MANY
 OXEN
 POOR
 PRAY
 ROOM
 WIFE
 YOKE
 ANGRY
 BLIND
 GREAT
 HOUSE
 LANES
 PROVE
 READY
 TASTE
 BIDDEN
 CANNOT
 COMPEL
 FILLED
 GROUND
 HEDGES
 MAIMED
 MASTER
 SERVANT
 SUPPER
 EXCUSES
 MARRIED
 QUICKLY
 STREETS
 HIGHWAYS



S	S	E	S	U	C	X	E	J	Q	Z	F	V	J	N	A	M
E	U	J	O	X	E	N	D	F	U	B	J	F	S	J	A	
N	P	W	Y	Z	J	W	A	Z	I	L	E	P	L	Z	W	I
A	P	O	O	R	B	B	P	B	J	C	I	K	J	M	L	J
L	E	J	P	V	Z	J	Y	F	K	N	O	H	A	Z	E	
P	R	Z	C	A	N	N	O	T	L	D	V	A	S	W	Z	D
S	W	E	J	V	Z	W	J	N	V	Z	P	L	T	J	L	P
E	Z	P	A	N	G	R	Y	A	V	J	S	T	E	O	Z	J
S	J	E	V	D	Z	K	J	V	W	Y	E	Z	B	F	D	P
U	F	Z	F	W	Y	P	R	A	Y	G	D	W	J	N	V	
O	W	J	Y	J	Z	F	E	Z	V	D	J	P	Z	U	E	
H	H	I	G	H	W	A	Y	S	T	R	E	E	T	S	O	V
J	Z	W	J	P	Z	K	J	Z	A	Y	H	Z	T	J	J	R
M	A	R	R	I	E	D	W	B	S	J	K	A	Z	G	R	
P	Y	N	A	M	J	M	Y	Z	T	B	E	Z	W	T	E	P
J	R	O	O	M	Z	V	O	P	E	R	J	P	Z	W	J	
B	I	D	D	E	N	J	Z	O	G	Z	L	E	P	M	O	