

Semicontinuous  
**Jer. 2:4–13**  
**Ps. 81:1, 10–16**  
 Complementary  
**Sir. 10:12–18 or**  
**Prov. 25:6–7**  
**Ps. 112**  
**Heb. 13:1–8, 15–16**  
**Luke 14:1, 7–14**

# Barrier-Breaking Hospitality

## Goal for the Session

*Youth will consider God's kingdom as a party and be challenged to welcome and affirm those whom God invites.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Luke 14:1, 7–14

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

Verses 12–14 also continue this counterintuitive message, telling us that our own tables should be surrounded by strangers, who are the “poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind,” in essence. We should populate our tables with those who are at the greatest social disadvantage. Although this instruction is patently this-worldly in its orientation, it says something about the nature of God's reign as well; it lets the hearer know that the attributes ascribing favor in this world are not the same as those that do so at the coming feast. Those viewed as lower are to be treated with greater respect, to receive greater favor, and to enjoy places of honor in our own lives!

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Emilie M. Townes

The realm of God is also about how God offers an invitation in our lives to receive a genuine blessing when we learn that it is crassly unfaithful to store up spiritual points to note our goodness and then make it worse by ostentatious displays of that goodness. Receiving a blessing that invites us to grow into a deeper relationship with God is not something we can work our way into through acts designed to display our worth. No. God asks us to live into our createdness through our everyday acts toward each other and in and through our relationship with God and creation. Jesus wants us to understand that our all-too-human drive to seek the best seat in the house or at the party will not mark genuine participation in God's mercy or love.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Charles E. Raynal

Luke gives beautiful testimony to this barrier-breaking hospitality in the account of the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where she gives birth and lays Jesus in a manger “because there was no place for them in the inn” (2:1–7). The birth of Jesus thus breaches the blockade of welcome for the babe at the inn and embodies royal David's line in an unexpected way. The hospitality of the manger becomes a paradigm for Luke's particular emphasis on the welcome of the stranger and the communion at table that breaks down the barriers at the borders to human community and overcomes the constrictive exclusions of fear and loathing in the world.

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Ronald P. Byars

Jesus' challenge reaches across boundaries of place and time, calling us to be more aware of those from whom we are inclined to avert our eyes, and to follow him rather than those who baptize common prejudices as virtues. We who “have been baptized into Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:3) are called to conform to him and to his ways. To live into our baptism is to be ever mindful of those who are typically left out. (“Do not be conformed to this world” [Rom. 12:2].)

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 14:1, 7–14**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Younger teens are probably not yet discriminating about whom they hang out with. As they move through adolescence, though, teenagers become more image conscious and may worry about whether they are part of the “in” crowd. They begin caring about whom they are seen with and how this will affect their status and reputation among their peers. Many join or form cliques of friends; those considered “outsiders” don’t stand a chance of being included. It can take a lot of self-confidence and courage for a teen to reach out to those on the margins of their society. Help the youth expand their circles of friends in response to today’s Scripture.

*Faithful God, may I demonstrate the extravagant welcome that Jesus taught, creating a welcoming and affirming space for the youth. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- ☐ food and drink
- ☐ dishes
- ☐ candles
- ☐ matches
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1 and 2

For Responding:

- ☐ option 1: newsprint, markers
- ☐ option 2: paper, pens; option: Internet-connected device
- ☐ option 3: roll of newsprint, art supplies

For Video Connection:

- ☐ Internet-connected device

## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session,* prepare a “banquet” table with fancy cloth, candles, dishes, goblets, special snack food, and drink. Copy the invitation on the bottom of Resource Sheet 1 (Hospitality 101) onto colored paper and cut out, making one per person; write the name of each group member on an invitation.

Welcome youth and distribute the prepared invitations. Gather around the banquet table. Light the candles, enjoy the food, and drink together. As they eat, invite youth to talk about memorable meals they’ve attended (for example, a wedding, an awards banquet). Talk about what they noticed regarding seating arrangements, kinds of food, who was included at the meal. Discuss how people are invited to these kinds of gatherings. Discuss:

✠ Have you ever been somewhere you didn’t feel welcomed? What happened?

Explain that in today’s Bible reading Jesus uses the example of a banquet to make an important point. Invite youth to remain at their banquet table for the Exploring section of the session.

Pray:

*Welcoming God, be present among us today that our time together might be blessed by your grace. Amen.*

## EXPLORING

Today's reading describes an occasion when Jesus ate dinner at the home of a Pharisee (religious leader). Explain that dinners in those days were important social occasions. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Hospitality 101) and take turns reading aloud the protocols for meals during the time of Jesus. When people were invited to a meal, they could find out who else was on the guest list. If they thought the "wrong" people would be there, they might turn down the invitation.

Jesus uses the invitation as a chance to teach people something about God's reign. Distribute Bibles and invite youth to read together Luke 14:1. Ask:

✠ What do you think people hoped to see as they watched Jesus closely?

Read Luke 14:7–14 in a round-robin style, with each person taking turns reading a verse at a time. Discuss, referring to the information on Resource Sheet 1:

✠ What message did Jesus want the invited guests to hear?

✠ What do you think the "humble will be exalted" (verse 11) means?

✠ According to verses 12 and 13, which kinds of people are welcome at God's kingdom party?

Read the lyrics as you listen to the song "Come to the Banquet" found at [bit.ly/FayWBanquet](https://bit.ly/FayWBanquet). Ask:

✠ According to the song's lyrics, who is invited to the banquet in the song?

✠ How does the invitation in the song echo Jesus' words (v. 13)?

✠ If Jesus hosted a dinner party for us, who else would he want us to invite and welcome?

✠ How can you be more welcoming and hospitable?

✠ What one thing can you do to be more welcoming of people who are different?

As you move to Responding, ask the youth to keep in mind those God invites and welcomes to the kingdom party.

## RESPONDING

Choose one of the following learning activities:

- 1. Serving** Youth will participate in the congregation's ministry of hospitality. Invite youth to list on newsprint ways that your congregation makes people feel welcome (greeters, ushers, a children's play area, pastoral care visits to seniors, an accessible Web site, and so on). Brainstorm ways in which participants could help with these activities. Have youth write their names beside hospitality activities they'd like to try. Help them connect with activity leaders.

EASY  
PREP

2. **Song Lyrics** Youth will explore the welcome of God's kingdom. Read the lyrics as you watch the video at [bit.ly/FayWBanquet](https://bit.ly/FayWBanquet). Distribute Resource Sheet 2 (Come to the Banquet) and listen to the song again. Challenge the youth to write new lyrics beginning with, "Come to the banquet there's a place for you . . ." Have the youth imagine how different groups of people (teenagers, migrant workers, people who are homeless, or seniors) might experience inclusive welcome and affirmation. Read the finished lyrics aloud. Consider singing the song for a future worship service as an invitation to the communion table.
3. **Mural** Youth will consider God's kingdom as a party where all people are welcomed and affirmed. Spread out a length of newsprint. Have youth gather along the edges of the paper and draw a banquet table in the middle of the paper. Add images depicting all God's people—the groups of people mentioned on Resource Sheet 2 (Come to the Banquet)—and God's welcome—symbols, shapes, and designs to illustrate the hospitality of God's kingdom. Invite youth to add names or drawings of friends who regularly experience being left out as a sign of God's welcome. Label the mural "Come to the Banquet" and display it in a well-trafficked area of the church building. Ask volunteer youth to stand with the display and play a recorded version of "Come to the Banquet."

## CLOSING

Have youth collect their invitations from the banquet table. Call them to take turns naming one thing that they've learned about God's hospitality and welcome. Encourage them to name things that make them feel welcome in their faith community.

Form a circle. Invite each person to offer an affirmation to the person on the right, naming what he or she appreciates or enjoys about that person.

Close the session:

*We pray for your blessing, O God. Help us to be inclusive and welcoming in every place. Amen.*

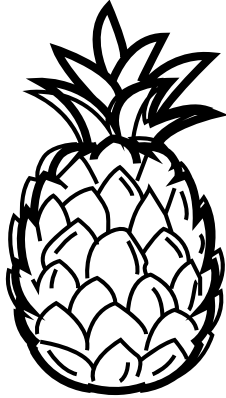
## ■ ENHANCEMENT

### VIDEO CONNECTION

At the Baytown Pay It Forward Diner in Texas, customers can prepurchase a meal for those in need. Meals are redeemed with a heart from the wall in the restaurant. Invite youth to watch the video at [bit.ly/PIFdiner](https://bit.ly/PIFdiner) and discuss:

- ✂ What inspired the owners to start this diner?
- ✂ How do Baytown Pay It Forward Diner's guests express the kind of hospitality Jesus describes in today's story?

## Hospitality 101



- Rule number one: hospitality is an important social obligation.
- If anyone—friend or stranger—asks for help, give it. No questions asked.
- Only invite your social equals to dinner.
- If you eat at someone's house, you must invite them to your house for a meal.
- If you are unable to entertain in a similar manner, don't accept the invitation in the first place.
- Guests are not equal. Serve different kinds and amounts of food and wine to people of different ranks.
- Important meals are always served with doors and windows open so everyone in the street can see who came to dinner.
- The people outside can watch you eat and listen to your conversation.



## Come to the Banquet

*Come to the banquet,  
there's a place for you.*

*Come to the banquet, there's a place for you.*

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