

BACKPACKERS 2011: Let's Party!

Introduction to this year's theme

At Backpackers 2011 we will be looking at the theme of Party! The party theme pops up in several places in the Bible and is often a picture of what it means to be in the right relationship with God. Over the four days together we will be focusing on four "party" stories from Luke's gospel to discover who Jesus is, and the kinds of people Jesus wants as his friends.

The following table gives the heading for each day, the key Bible passage we will be exploring, and the big idea that we want each child to take away with them:

Day	Bible Passage	Title	Big Idea
Day 1	Luke 2:8-20	<i>Birthday Party</i> – the Shepherds welcome Baby Jesus	Jesus came to save ordinary people...
Day 2	Luke 19:1-10	<i>Surprise Party</i> – Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' house	Because we are lost...
Day 3	Luke 7:36-50	<i>Dinner Party</i> – Jesus at the home of Simon the Pharisee	And need forgiving.
Day 4	Luke 14:15-24	<i>Open house</i> – The parable of the great feast	We need to say yes to the invitation

Our memory verse for the week comes from the second of the four Bible passages and encapsulates Jesus' purpose in coming into the world and reveals the people that he is looking for as his friends:

"The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them." Luke 19:10.

If you have any questions about the teaching material please get in touch with Andrew Patterson (andrew.patterson@tiscali.co.uk, Tel: 01494 785809).

The teaching structure of each day:

Broadly this fits previous years and includes the following elements:

<i>Name of element</i>	<i>Length of time</i>	<i>Ingredients</i>
Way In	15 minutes	Welcome and registration of group members. Short activities involving minimal supervision for children as they arrive
All Together Time (1)	25 minutes	All together time. David Heath-Whyte's first teaching slot. Includes songs, notices, prayer and an introduction to the day's theme
Group Teaching Time (1)	45 minutes	Time in groups to look together at the passage for the day and develop an understanding of it. Also to include toilet break and snack.
All Together Time (2)	25 minutes	Second slot all together (minus Deep Blues). A session with songs and quiz/games that reinforce the day's big theme. May also include some "show and tell."
Group Teaching Time (2)	45 minutes	The slot where we can think a little more about the day's theme and it's application in our groups.
All Together Time (3)	20 minutes	To include music, a basic recap/summary, show and tell, and prayer. Some setting of the scene for the following day.
Group Prayer Time	15 minutes	Rounding up and praying in our groups before children are collected.

Group Leader's Preparation:

The main Bible passage for each day is provided for you in a modern, child-friendly version. (At the end of this booklet there is an even simpler version of each passage that might be more accessible/appropriate for the youngest children's groups). One of your most important jobs is to spend time looking carefully at the passage and getting to grips with it. The "Big Idea" will be a helpful guide to ensure that you and your groups don't stray too far from the main point!

For each passage you will find some background notes to help you understand the story and its significance. One of your tasks will be to come up with some age-appropriate questions that will help your group unlock the passage and its main theme(s).

We will be exploring the same Bible passages in our groups that David Heath-Whyte will use in his up-front sessions, so there is potential for repetition and overlap. Don't worry too much about this, as it is an important way of ensuring that the day's "Big Idea" sticks!

As well as developing your own questions it will be good to allow time to address questions that the up-front sessions are raising in the minds of your children. Here you will find that the more you have worked at understanding the Bible passage yourself, the more able you will be to respond to those questions as they arise.

In previous years some have found it helpful to use the first group time to focus on the key teaching points from the main Bible passage and first up-front session, and to use the afternoon to focus more on "response" and "application."

Alongside the group Bible times – you will need to plan some group activities that will in some way reinforce or develop the key teaching points from the morning teaching session. You may also want to plan a daily activity that connects to the theme of "Party." One simple suggestion is to include a popular party game in one of your group times each day. You may also want to have some sort of activity for your children to work on as they start to arrive at the start of the day. This will give you time to welcome new arrivals, take registers, etc. Suggestions and ideas for all these activities are included in this resource. You will need to look at the resources suggested for each day and determine which might be useful and appropriate for your group. You will discover there are more resources than you can use, so please be selective!

Do ensure that you allocate enough time to pray in your groups. It would be good to pray briefly as you first come to look at the Bible together. The short time you have in groups before the children leave at the end of each day would be a good time to "pray in" some of the things they have been learning during the day. Again there are resources provided to help you pray creatively. You may want to produce a prayer banner that reflects what you pray for over the four days, or you might produce a sheet that each child fills in over the week on which they add their prayers each day.

The last session may be a good time to ensure that your group has learnt the memory verse.

And finally...

One of the most important ways of preparing for Backpackers as a leader is to pray. Do commit the whole week to God, praying especially for David, for the children in your group and for your own leadership. It is important that the children learn both from what is taught and from the example of those who teach and lead them.

Resources for Days 1-4:

For each day you will find the following:

- ✦ **Main teaching point – ‘Big Idea’:** This statement summarises what we want the children to grasp each day. It is provided to give us all a common teaching point to aim for. How deeply you explore this aim will vary according to the age, personality and background of the children in your group.
- ✦ **Today’s passage:** The passage for each day is printed in full from the International Children’s Bible. Unless you are teaching the youngest children, to avoid confusion, please use this version in your teaching preparation. A simpler version of the passage can be found at the end of this teaching resource if required. [Do note that the New Century Version (NCV) available on-line from www.biblegateway.com is NOT the same as NCV International Children’s Bible]. You can get an electronic copy of these notes, and so the bible passage, from the Backpackers’ web site: <http://www.backpackers-online.org.uk/>.
- ✦ **Bible notes and background:** Following the passages are some notes for you to use to help you ‘get to grips’ with the bible before you plan your times with the children. You will also find some useful background detail.
- ✦ **Additional passage:** Many of the key themes in the main passage are found elsewhere in Luke’s gospel. For most groups it is not the intention that these passages are studied, but they may provide useful background or illustration. For Deep Blues, this extra passage may be worth exploring in their extra group time slot.
- ✦ **Group Time Ideas:** These are suggestions and ideas that you might use in your group times. Some ideas have a corresponding resource sheet that you can find at the end of this section. They are broadly categorized according to the group time they may work best in and age group they are likely to suit. Don’t be constrained by these suggestions, but also bear in mind that with toilet breaks and snacks you will probably need 2-3 ideas. *Do not try to do everything!*
- ✦ **Group Time Resources:** These are the activity resource sheets that correspond to the ideas found under “Group Time Ideas.”

Day 1: Birthday Party!

✦ **Main teaching point – ‘Big Idea’:** Jesus came to save ordinary people – like us.

✦ **Today’s passage:** Luke 2: 8-20.

Some Shepherds Hear About Jesus

⁸ That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching the sheep. ⁹ An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. ¹⁰ The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, because I bring you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. ¹¹ Today your Saviour was born in David’s town. He is Christ, the Lord. ¹² This is how you will know him: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box.”

¹³ Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:

¹⁴ “Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God.”

¹⁵ Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. We will see this thing that the Lord told us about.”

¹⁶ So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. ¹⁷ And the shepherds saw the baby laying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. ¹⁸ Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ Mary hid these things in her heart; she continued to think about them. ²⁰ Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

Bible notes and background:

The Party:

The first party we will look at is Jesus' birthday party - the first Christmas. Jesus God's Son is born – and born in a stable! It is the most significant birth ever, and we discover that God sends out invitations by divine messenger service to the people he wants to celebrate this great event.

What about Jesus?

- *The man* - Jesus is the birthday boy and the angels tell us a lot about how great the new baby is. The very fact of the angels' appearance shows that this is no ordinary birth. His birth is a very joyful event v10 - but it is more than the earthly joy that accompanies the birth of a normal baby. Jesus is the Saviour that God's people have been waiting for who will bring great joy to all people. He is Christ, the Lord - the promised king, born as promised in King David's city of Bethlehem.
- *The mission* - Jesus' birth shows us how great he is, but also what kind of saviour he will be. Jesus was the Son of God, but he was born in a stable not in a palace. He identifies with very ordinary people, not the high and mighty (although the account of the visit of the magi in Matthew shows he came for them too). Jesus is *THE* saviour for *ALL* the people.

His Guests:

- Jesus starts his life by welcoming the most unlikely people. Shepherds lived on the edge of society as they had to spend so much time on the hillsides with their animals. They would have been unable to fulfil many of their religious obligations due to their lifestyle and certainly would not have been on the guest list for a society party. But they are the first to see Jesus and go back praising God and telling everyone what has happened.
- On the other hand shepherds have a very good press in the Bible. God is the shepherd of Israel - Psalm 23 etc, and surely there is some significance in the fact that shepherds were the first visitors to baby Jesus who called himself "the good shepherd."
- The shepherds visiting Jesus show his acceptance of all types of people however society views them, and also points towards his own ministry. Jesus will grow up to be the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

What about us?

This is a great chance to teach the truths of the Christmas story when the children are not too excited about presents, crackers etc! Jesus is great, but he came as a baby so that he could save the whole world. The first guests were the ordinary shepherds - he came for ordinary people like all of us. What this "salvation" means will become clearer as the week goes on.

✚ Additional Passage(s):

- Luke 5:1-11. Here we have Jesus choosing his first disciples or followers. It is clear from this story that Jesus isn't choosing the most impressive or likely of people – in this case just ordinary fishermen. The story also makes clear that basis for his choice of followers/disciples is not found in us, but in himself.
- Luke is keen to emphasise that those that are welcomed by Jesus are not those we might expect. One way you might bring that out is to look at those people that Jesus does welcome/help, or and ask the children to think about why they were unlikely. Here are some of Jesus' encounters that make this point in Luke's gospel: Luke 5:12 (the man with leprosy); Luke 5:17+ (the paralysed man); Luke 5:27 (the tax collector and traitor); Luke 7:1 (the Roman soldier); Luke 7:11 (the widow); Luke 7:36 (the woman with the dodgy past); Luke 8:26 (the man controlled by evil); Luke 18:15 (little children) etc.

✚ Group Time Ideas: Luke 2:8-20:

- **Jesus came to save ordinary people**

INTRO/ WAY IN activities:

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
101	Name badges. Using a template that relates to the day's story, the children could make and decorate badges.	1	Y R G
102	Count the Sheep. Work out how many sheep are in the picture.	1A	Y R
103	Colouring sheet. Get the children to colour/decorate the shepherds.	1B	Y R
104	Word Jumble.	1C	R G B
105	Shepherd's maze.	1D	R G B
106	Spot the difference.	1E	R G B
107	Memory verse activity	M1	ALL

TEACHING SESSION: opening up the Bible passage:

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
108	Read the passage together. You might want to think of creative ways of doing this by giving children different parts to read out from the story. Ask questions that relate to the passage to help to observe and reflect upon what they have read and unlock its significance.		ALL
109	Story Board. Use the resource sheet to visualise and retell the story.	1F+1G	ALL
110	Drama: Either Act out the story, using simple props and clothing; or Use models of the characters in the story (e.g. Playmobil characters) to retell/act out the story.		ALL
111	Quiz – you can use the quiz provided or adapt for your group. If your quiz is a multiple choice you could inject some humour by including some outrageous answers alongside some more plausible ones.	1H	ALL

112	Story Sheet. Use the picture entitled “what the angel said” to help children observe what is happening.	1J	ALL
113	News Article. Get the children to write their own version of the story as a newspaper article/BBC Newsround interview – and use it to bring out some of the shocks and surprises of the story.	1K	R? G B

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – games

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
114	Party game: Pin the tail on the sheep. Draw a picture of a sheep on a large piece of paper and mark an ‘X’ where the tail should be. Cut out a separate tail, blindfold each child in turn and see who can stick the tail closest to the ‘x’ with blutac. Give a prize to the winner.		ALL
115	Pairs game. Create a set of cards from the resource sheet, divide the children into teams and get them to find matching pairs; when found ask the children to say what happens in the picture.	1L, 1M	Y R G
116	Party game: Pass the parcel: A piece of the story or part of the memory verse found in each layer for them to put together. For the youngest children the story could be in picture form. As each element is unwrapped the children have to retell that part of the story.		ALL
117	Baby Gifts game. Adapt the classic memory game “I went to the supermarket and bought” to become “I visited the new baby and took...” Each child needs to come up with a gift a newborn might receive (rattle, teddy, etc). How many items can be added before a part of the list is forgotten. Reflect on the fact that Jesus was a very special baby, but didn’t have any of these things. It also provides the opportunity to think about why Jesus’ birth was such a humble one.		R G B
118	Manger game. Make a manger out of a shoe box; divide the children into teams; each team has a rolled up newspaper and a number of cotton wool balls as sheep; place small obstacles along the way. Each team must sweep/herd the “sheep” into the manger.		Y R G

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – activities

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
119	Get the Word Out. If Jesus came today, how would you get the message across to other people? You might want to write a rap, poem, text message, email, sky-writing message.		R G B
120	Name badges. Mary and Joseph were told to give their new baby the name “Jesus” - because he would save his people from their sins. Everyone is given a special name when they are born – what’s yours? Stick named stickers to shapes in the group’s colour. Decorate and attach safety pins. If you can find a “baby names” book you might work out what the children’s names mean and decide whether you think they suit them.		G B
121	Pop up card. Copy the template onto thin card; colour and cut out; fold along lines – an angel will pop-up when you open card.	1N	Y R G

122	Name matching. One of the things parents have to do when they are waiting for a new baby is to choose a name. Can the children match up the famous people with the names they chose for their children? God chose Jesus' name very carefully to tell us what he came for – to save us. Other parents are less kind!		G B
123	Walking shepherds. You will need the template and some split pins. Copy onto thin card, cut out and make shepherds 'walk to Bethlehem'.	10	Y R G
124	Make a mobile. Copy the template onto thin card, cut out and colour/decorate with words 'Jesus came to save us'.	1P	Y R
125	Invitations. Each day we will see some of the unlikely people that Jesus "invited to his party." Either make 4 separate poster invitations or one large poster divided into 4 sections. Today write "Dear...., you are invited to Jesus' birthday party." Ask who the children would be expected to be invited. Decorate the edges of the invitations with cut out balloon shapes, pictures of birthday cake etc. Fill in the gap with the word "shepherds" and explain how amazing it was that such ordinary people should have been the first people to visit the baby.		G B
126	What's in a name? Using a book of names, look up the meaning of each of the children's names; what does Jesus mean? God told Mary and Joseph to call the baby Jesus.		ALL
127	Famous baby photos: Guess which famous people these babies grew up to be? No-one knew when they were born what they would or what they would become. But ordinary shepherds are told at Jesus' birth who this baby was and what he would do.		G B

RESPONSE TIME PRAYERS

Possible prayer time reflection: Jesus came into the world as an ordinary baby. This means that he can understand what we are going through. He has been a child too – so we can talk to him about anything.

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
128	Prayer banner/sheet. Many groups may wish to produce a banner which visually displays the prayers of the group over the four days (see resource sheet). Alternatively you might provide each child with a sheet on which they add their prayers for each day (and can take home at the end of the week).	P1	ALL
129	Prayer banner. Write a prayer on a sheet to add to the banner. Younger children could draw something that reflects their prayer.	P2	ALL
130	Visual Prayer: Jesus was born into a normal family. Get the children to draw a picture of their family. Thank Jesus for their families and then ask the children silently to ask Jesus to look after them, particularly if anyone is ill etc...		Y R
131	Pray: If children are reluctant to pray a prayer of their own you might want to have a short prayer written out that they could pray. It should be simple and connect to the day's theme: e.g. "Dear God, thank you that you sent Jesus so that ordinary people could be friends with you..."		ALL

Day 2: Surprise Party!

✚ **Main teaching point – ‘Big Idea’:** Jesus came to save ordinary people like us – *because we are lost.*

✚ **Today’s passage:** Luke 19: 1-10.

Zacchaeus

¹ Jesus was going through the city of Jericho. ² In Jericho there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a wealthy, very important tax collector. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was too short to see above the crowd. ⁴ He ran ahead to a place where he knew Jesus would come. He climbed a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus. ⁵ When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and saw Zacchaeus in the tree. He said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today.”

⁶ Zacchaeus came down quickly. He was pleased to have Jesus in his house. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to complain: “Look at the kind of man Jesus stays with. Zacchaeus is a sinner!”

⁸ But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, “I will give half of my money to the poor. If I have cheated anyone, I will pay that person back four times more!”

⁹ Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house today. This man truly belongs to the family of Abraham. ¹⁰ The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them.”

Bible notes and background:

The Party:

Today Jesus throws a “surprise party” for Zacchaeus - at Zacchaeus’ own house. Jesus is visiting Jericho, Zac’s home town. Out of the blue, Jesus calls Zac down from the tree where he is perched to get a better view, and asks himself round to his house.

What about Jesus?

- *The man* - We learn a lot about Jesus as an adult from this passage. By now he is clearly a famous teacher and healer. On his way to Jericho he has healed a blind beggar - which explains the large crowd waiting for him when he enters the town. Despite the crush he still has time to notice Zacchaeus and to call him by name. Jesus always took time for individuals, particularly those nobody else had time for. Jesus also shows considerable authority, calling Zac down from the tree and inviting himself round - knowing that Zac would accept.
- *The mission* - Jesus again shows why he has come - to seek and save the lost. He saves Zacchaeus v9 - accepts and loves him and wants him as his friend.

His Guest:

- Zacchaeus is the guest at today’s surprise party. Whereas the shepherds were poor outcasts, Zac is a rich outcast. He is a rich tax collector v2, but is shunned as a sinner v7 because he has clearly used his position to cheat others out of their money v8. He is lost. At that time all tax collectors were also despised as collaborators with the hated Roman occupying force. When Zac can’t see Jesus because he is too small, nobody lets him through. When Jesus goes to his house Jesus’ own reputation is also damaged by associating with such an unscrupulous and unpopular man.
- Zacchaeus responds to Jesus’ invitation with great joy. He repents of his old, corrupt way of life and pays back what he has stolen and gives half of his possessions to the poor. Jesus has shown what it means to seek and save the lost - he calls Zac to him and transforms his life.

What about us?

Jesus calls each of us by name and wants us to welcome him so that he can accept us and change us. Without Jesus we are lost too. Jesus has come for us too if we will accept his invitation.

Additional Passage(s):

- Luke 15: 1-7 (the parable of the lost sheep); Luke 15: 8-10 (the parable of the lost coin). Both these stories demonstrate the great lengths to which the individuals concerned go to recover what was lost. There is also a strong theme of celebration as what was lost is found and recovered. The first of these parables may also provide a means of exploring the reason why we choose to become lost (sheep and people have a lot in common!)
- Luke 15: 11-32 (the parable of the two lost sons). As in the two previous parables the celebration over the lost being recovered is very strong. There is literally a huge party as the younger son comes home. This parable lends itself to thinking more about the ways in which we choose to get lost and is helpfully pictured in "relationship" language. *Both* the two sons are lost - revealed in the nature of the relationship they have with the father. The younger son is clearly a "rebel" and wants to be as far from the father and from home as possible. The older brother reveals that he is equally estranged as he describes his relationship with the father as "slavery." We can be "rebels" or "dutiful" but still be lost. This is a longer parable with some more complex themes and would work best with older groups.

✚ Group Time Ideas: Luke 19:1-10:

- Jesus came to save ordinary people like us – *because we are lost*.

INTRO/ WAY IN activities:

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
201	Name badges. Children create badges related to the day's story using the template.	2	Y R G
202	Colouring sheet from the story of Zacchaeus.	2A	Y R
203	Zacchaeus tree maze.	2B	Y R G
204	Spot the difference.	2C	R G B
205	Spot the deliberate mistake (2 versions)/ spot the animals.	2D or 2E	G B Y R
206	Word search - words from the story of Zacchaeus.	2F or 2G	R G B
207	Tree rubbings. Get the children to do rubbings of a collection of leaves and stick on a tree; then use later as a prop with Zacchaeus hidden behind a leaf.		Y R
208	Invitation. Today write "Dear..... You are invited to a party with Jesus." Leave space to fill in other details during your Bible time. At the bottom write RSVP. Decorate.		R G B
209	Memory Verse activity:	M2	ALL

TEACHING SESSION: opening up the Bible passage

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
210	Read the passage together. You might want to think of creative ways of doing this by giving children different parts to read out from the story. Ask questions that relate to the passage to help to observe and reflect upon what they have read and unlock its significance, e.g. Why did the people think that Zacchaeus should be ignored and excluded?" Why did Zacchaeus end up in a tree? etc.		ALL
211	Quiz: Use/adapt the quiz and use the questions/answers to reflect on the story and its meaning.	2H	R G B
212	Zac in rhyme. Read the poem out (or get a child to do it if they can). Reflect on some of the ideas and themes that it brings out.	2J	R G B
213	One of the crowd. Read out the story giving the children a chance to participate with the crowd. Draw out the changing emotions as the story develops (e.g. excitement at Jesus coming, anger at Zacchaeus being welcomed, shock at his transformation – and possible wonder at who Jesus is). This activity would work best in the afternoon when the children are familiar with the story.	2K	Y R G
214	News Article. Get the children to write their own version of the story as a newspaper article/ BBC Newsround interview.	2L	G B
215	Story sheet. Use the sheet to introduce the story by getting the children to comment on what they think is happening.	2M	ALL
216	Opposites story. Read out the story and change the details and ask the children to spot the mistakes and add the correct words.	2N	ALL
217	Power Point: go to www.sermons4kids.com/zaccheus.ppt		ALL

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – games

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
218	Musical mats/chairs/hoops. Use hoops/chairs/mats/paper. After playing, discuss how it feels to be out or excluded.		ALL
219	Feely bag. Put a number of items in a bag or box, get the children to feel them and guess what they are. Make sure one of the items has a surprise element and direct them to the surprises of the bible story.		ALL
220	Pass the parcel. Musical game with a piece of the story found in each layer (for younger children could be pictures). The children have to recount what's happening in the story.		ALL

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – activities

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
221	Acrostic. Use the letters in FRIEND to think of a word or phrase relating to what a true friend should be like e.g. fun, reliable. Some of the letters are more challenging than others and you might want to think in advance of some possible answers. The children could work in teams.		R G B

222	Make a tree. Use cut paper towel roll, paint, fill top with tissue paper leaves and make a 'Zacchaeus' to fit in the tree. Put memory verse around the bottom of the tree.	2O	Y R G
223	Feelings. Get children to draw or show on their faces how they would feel in certain situations (e.g. when they are ill, when it's their birthday, when they are scared, when no-one wants to play with them, when they are the only one in their class invited to a really special party. Connect this with the story of Zacchaeus and how he felt before and after he met Jesus		G B
224	Money can't buy love. Make 2 sets of cards from resource sheet and put them in two piles; get the children in turn to select a card from one pile and decide whether to keep it or give it away	2P	ALL
225	'What about' resource sheet. A chance to reflect that Jesus knows us and the things we have done.	2Q	R G B
226	Pop up Zacchaeus. Using a plastic cup and the relevant resource sheet. Decorate the cup with the memory verse (alternative to 'make a tree')	2R	Y R
227	Missing words. Re-arrange the letters to find the missing words	2S	R G B
228	Put Jesus in your heart. 2 pieces of square paper and a straw for each child. Get the children to draw a red heart on one piece and JESUS on the other; stick together with the straw between the pieces of paper. Then show the children that by rubbing their hands over the straw JESUS appears to be in the heart. Reflect on the difference it would make having Jesus in charge of our lives. Link to the story.		ALL
229	Five steps to Jesus. Give each child a sycamore leaf shape; the leaf has five points. Think about the steps that Zacchaeus took, e.g.: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He went to a place where he could see Jesus and find out more about him. 2. He heard Jesus and responded to His call. 3. He welcomed Jesus into his home. 4. He acknowledged he had done wrong. 5. He showed that he was under "new management" by repaying what he had cheated. Look for parallels that relate to the children e.g. coming to Backpackers to find out more about Jesus. Admitting things that we have done wrong. Seeking to let Jesus take charge etc.		R G B

RESPONSE TIME PRAYERS

Possible Prayer Time Reflection: Jesus knew Zacchaeus' name and all about him. Remind the children that Jesus knows our names too, and all about us – including the wrong/bad things we do. Use the time to thank God for still wanting to be our friend.

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
230	Prayer banner. Write a prayer on a leaf and add to banner	P3	ALL
231	Prayer Hearts: Give each child a heart template (on pink/red paper) then write or draw a prayer to say PLEASE help us be more like Jesus	P4	Y R

232	Suggestions for a prayer. Jesus knew all about Zacchaeus – including the wrong things he had done. Thank Jesus for still wanting to be our friends and to welcome us to his party.		ALL
233	Pray: Have a short prayer written out that could be used by those who are more reluctant to pray out loud. Hopefully over the week the children will become more confident to pray e.g. Thank you Jesus for still wanting to be my friend, even though I get things wrong.		ALL

Day 3: Dinner Party

✚ **Main teaching point – ‘Big Idea’:** Jesus came to save ordinary people like us because we are lost – *and need forgiving.*

✚ **Today’s passage:** Luke 7:36-50

Simon the Pharisee

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. Jesus went into the Pharisee’s house and sat at the table. ³⁷ A sinful woman in the town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house. So she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ She stood at Jesus’ feet, crying, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She dried his feet with her hair, kissed them many times and rubbed them with the perfume. ³⁹ The Pharisee who asked Jesus to come to his house saw this. He thought to himself, “If Jesus were a prophet he would know that the woman who is touching him is a sinner.

⁴⁰ Jesus said to the Pharisee, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

Simon said, “Teacher, tell me.”

⁴¹ Jesus said, “There were two men. Both men owed money to the same banker. One man owed the banker 500 silver coins. The other man owed the banker 50 silver coins. ⁴² The men had no money; so they could not pay what they owed. But the banker told the men that they did not have to pay him. Which one of the two men will love the banker more?”

⁴³ Simon the Pharisee, answered, “I think it would be the one who owed him the most money.”

Jesus said to Simon, “You are right.” ⁴⁴ Then Jesus turned towards the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet. But she washed my feet with her tears and dried my feet with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not kiss me, but she has been kissing my feet since I came in! ⁴⁶ You did not rub my head with oil, but she rubbed my feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ I tell you that her many sins are forgiven. This is clear because she showed great love. But the person who has only a little to be forgiven will feel only a little love.”

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹ The people sitting at the table began to think to themselves, “Who is this man? How can he forgive sins?”

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, “Because you believed, you are saved from your sins. Go in peace.”

Bible notes:

The Party:

Today Jesus is invited to a smart dinner party, attended probably by some of the religious elite, as the host is Simon the Pharisee.

What about Jesus?

- *The man.* In relation to Simon: once again we see that Jesus is a bit of a celebrity. Simon, a religious leader has invited Jesus to dinner. However Jesus does not appear to be the guest of honour, as his feet are not washed and his head is not anointed v44-5. Jesus does not mention this oversight until Simon himself criticizes Jesus' acceptance of the "sinful woman". At this point Jesus firmly and clearly puts Simon in his place. Simon's treatment of Jesus shows a lack of understanding of how great he really is. A polite interest is not enough.
- *In relation to the woman:* again we see Jesus accepting someone whom others despised. He accepts her devotion without embarrassment as his due.
- *The mission:* the central part of Jesus mission is made explicit here. Jesus came to forgive people, and as the other guests realise v49 - only God can forgive.

His Guest:

- The woman appreciates Jesus in a way Simon does not. She is a sinful woman who knows her need of forgiveness, as the self-righteous Pharisee does not. She was publically known as a sinful woman, so was perhaps a prostitute, who would not have been welcome in a Pharisee's house. But knowing that Jesus alone can forgive her she goes to Simon's house and is unselfconscious and extravagant in her show of love for Jesus. Her behaviour may be socially unacceptable, but what matters to her is showing how much Jesus means to her.

What about us?

We are all sinful people, but some of us are like Simon and won't admit it. If we realise how far we fall short of God's standards we, like the woman, will see that we need the forgiveness that only Jesus can offer. If we really realise how much Jesus has done for us we will want to show our love for him like the woman does. If we are like Simon we might be religious and vaguely interested in Jesus, but we will never have Jesus say v48 "Your sins are forgiven" or v50 "Your faith has saved you go in peace"

✚ Additional Passage(s):

- Luke 18: 9-14. The story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector is a powerful warning that failure to acknowledge our sin and our need of forgiveness will mean we miss out on the very forgiveness that Jesus came to bring. This story illustrates some of the ways we can deceive ourselves about our true need (cataloguing all the “good things” we do, comparing ourselves with those we think are worse than us etc). Positively, the story acts as a great encouragement for any of us who will “come clean” before God. [Note: justified is a term from the law courts. It is used to describe someone who has been cleared of guilt and declared innocent – and points to the work of Jesus in taking our guilt and punishment in our place].

✚ Group Time Ideas: Luke 7:36-50:

- Jesus came to save ordinary people like us because we are lost – *and need forgiving*.

INTRO/ WAY IN activities:

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
301	Name badges. Children create badges related to the day's story using template.	3	Y R G
302	Word search.	3A	R G B
303	Spot the pairs. Identify the identical perfume jars.	3B	Y R
304	Colouring sheet.	3C	Y R
305	Guest list. If you could invite anyone you liked to a party, who would it be? How would you look after them? What would you give them? Simon invited Jesus but didn't realise how special he was.		R G B
306	Memory verse activity:	M3	ALL

TEACHING SESSION: opening up the Bible passage

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
307	Read the passage together. You might want to think of creative ways of doing this by giving children different parts to read out from the story. Ask questions that relate to the passage to help to observe and reflect upon what they have read and unlock its significance.		ALL
308	Story sheet. Use the picture to get the children to observe what is happening.	3D	ALL
309	Act it out. Drama sheet with simple instructions.	3E	ALL
310	Quiz time. See resource sheet.	3F	ALL
311	Story with actions. Tell the story from the resource sheet. Get the children to listen out for certain words and do the actions for it.	3G	Y R

312	News Article. Get the children to write their own version of the story as a newspaper article/ BBC Newsround interview.	3H	G B
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REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – games

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
313	Simon says. Adapt party game to include links to the story e.g. 'wash your feet', 'rub your eyes', 'eat your dinner'		ALL
314	Obstacle course. Set up a mini course where the children have to dress for dinner party (include adult sized items so children can throw things on quickly) . Space articles apart so they have to run from one to the next – large beads, wig, hat, smart gloves, smart shoes. Could do it in pairs? Could time them with stopwatch? If there is not enough space to race then just place all items in a box/bag and see how quickly the children can put them on.		Y R
315	Smell test. Fill little pots with strong smelling substances e.g. pot-pourri, chopped onion etc; guess the contents and discuss like and dislikes.		ALL

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – activities

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
316	Make perfume. Each child will need a screw top jar or beaker with lid, some water, pot-pourri, food colouring etc – children can decorate with their own label. Use these when re-telling the story.		Y R G
317	Thumbs up! Need resource sheet; Are the children in the scenarios giving their best? If you think they are giving their best give a thumbs up – if Jesus is getting the leftovers give a 'thumbs down'.	3J	G B
318	Invitations: Write the word "bad woman" on the invitation. Add in other details of when and where the party will happen as you read the story – "at the Pharisee's house" etc. The woman was not invited to the party – she was not the kind of woman a religious Pharisee would have had in the house – but Jesus' welcomed her.		G B
319	Marble feet. See resource sheet. Get the children to draw round each other's shoe and cut out; make a hole in the top and tie thread through; dip cut out feet in water to which has been added marble ink.	3K	Y R G
320	Menu mania. See resource sheet. If the group had the most amazing person in the universe to dinner, what would be on the menu? Either write on the menu plan with their smartest writing or draw pictures of the food they would eat. We don't know what Jesus ate at the Pharisee's house, but we do know that the host did not treat Jesus very well. You could talk about the ways we often treat Jesus and fail to recognise that he is special.	3L	R G B

321	Good manners. How good are the children's manners? See questionnaire 'how polite are you?' Simon, the host in today's story, didn't even give Jesus water to wash his feet! Good manners show that you value other people. In today's story Jesus host does not even give him water to wash his feet (a basic courtesy in a hot, dusty country where people wore sandals). The host should have realised how special Jesus was. We don't need to use "posh etiquette" like we would with the queen when it comes to Jesus, but our actions should reflect how important and amazing he is (like the woman with the perfume).	3M	ALL
322	Thank you Jesus. Draw a large heart – then think of reasons why Jesus is so great and why we might like to thank him. Alternatively, give the children individual heart shapes and ask them to write down ways they can give their love to Jesus e.g. praying, being kind, going to church, doing their best at school.		R G B
323	Forgiveness acrostic. Using the letters of the words forgiveness, think of words for things that Jesus needs to forgive us for e.g. f = fighting, O=only thinking of me, etc. It would be good to come up with some ideas of your own, especially if the children struggle for words. The woman in the story loved Jesus so much because she knew she had been forgiven so much. Only Jesus can forgive us, and we will only realise how great he is when we realise how much we need his help and forgiveness		G B
324	Cheer for Jesus! Get the children to work in groups and make up a cheer about putting Jesus first (could have props such as pom-poms, streamers)		ALL

RESPONSE TIME PRAYERS

Prayer time: The woman loved Jesus so much because she knew just how much Jesus had forgiven her. Each one of us needs to be forgiven so that we can be God's friends. We need to say sorry to God for things we have done wrong (ignoring him, living our own way, etc.). Spend some time thinking of things that we want to say sorry to God for. You might link this to the acrostic activity

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
325	Prayer banner. Write a prayer on a perfume jar or foot template. Think of things that we need to say sorry to God for – focusing on the ways we fail to treat Jesus for the special person that he is.	P5, P6	ALL
326	Pray: Write out a simple prayer to encourage those who are more shy to pray. It could be along the lines of: "Dear Jesus, I'm sorry when I don't treat you as special. Thank you that you came to forgive me."		ALL

Day 4: Open House

✚ **Main teaching point – ‘Big Idea’:** Jesus came to save ordinary people like us because we are lost and need forgiving – *and we just have to say “yes!”*

✚ **Today’s passage:** Luke 14: 15-24

A Story About a Big Banquet

¹⁵ One of the men sitting at the table with Jesus heard these things. The man said to Jesus, “The people who will eat a meal in God’s kingdom are blessed.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to him, “A man gave a big banquet and invited many people. ¹⁷ When it was time to eat, the man sent his servants to tell the guests, ‘Come! Everything is ready!’

¹⁸ But all the guests said that they could not come. Each man made an excuse. The first one said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and look at it. Please excuse me’. ¹⁹ Another man said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen; I must go and try them. Please excuse me’. ²⁰ A third man said, ‘I just got married; so I can’t come’. ²¹ So the servant returned. He told his master what had happened. Then the master became angry and said, ‘Go at once into the streets and alleys of the town. Bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame’. ²² Later the servant said to him, ‘Master, I did what you told me to do, but we still have places for more people’. ²³ The master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes. Tell the people there to come. I want my house to be full! ²⁴ None of those men that I invited will ever eat with me!’ ”

Bible notes:

The Party:

Today's story is a parable Jesus told, rather than an event. The feast is a picture of being with Jesus in heaven. It is a great feast and many are invited v16 - however the invited guests make excuses not to come and not surprisingly the host is furious v21. In the end the feast is filled with an extraordinary collection of the poor, disabled and v23 any one who will come.

What about Jesus?

- *The man* - Jesus here is telling a story. He is once again at someone's house for dinner v7-14 and uses the opportunity to teach a fellow guest about what God's kingdom is like and who will be in it. Jesus would not have been a comfortable dinner guest!
- *The mission* - This parable illustrates what Jesus' mission is. He is the host with authority to invite people to his feast, to be with him in paradise Luke 23:43, to know what it means to be saved by Jesus. Many are invited, but even though the invitation is very special, they don't want to go to the feast for a variety of reasons. The invitation is extended to all those who want to go - and it seems these are largely the outcasts and needy who realise the privilege of being invited - people like the shepherds, Zacchaeus and the sinful woman. Through Jesus the way is open for anyone and everyone who wants to go to God's great banquet - as long as they accept.

His Guests:

- Jesus' guests here are a motley crew. The point is made very clearly that they are not Jesus' guests because they are better or smarter than anyone else. In fact they appear to be less so. They are Jesus' guests because they are lost, need forgiving and say yes to Jesus. It is also clear that other people are invited, but choose for whatever reason not to accept the invitation. As we have seen in the other passages too these people are likely to be the more respectable, religious people like Simon the Pharisee, or the townsfolk of Jericho who show an interest in Jesus, but never fully understand why he has come because they don't see their need for him.

What about us?

Which will we be? Will we be like those who are a little bit interested in Jesus but never get round to replying or make excuses not to follow him? Or will we be like the crowd of people in the parable who know they don't deserve to be invited, but are thrilled with the invitation and say yes?

✚ Additional Passage(s):

- Luke 8: 4-15. The parable explores a number of responses to God's word. It would be good to think of examples of each response that would connect with your children. In some of the scenarios there seems to be a positive response initially to the message, but it proves to be short-lived. It would be good at a week like Backpackers to stress the importance of listening and obeying Jesus for the long haul and to think about ways the children might do this beyond Backpackers and the summer.

Jesus came to save ordinary people like us because we are lost and need forgiving – *and we just have to say "yes!"*

✚ Group Time Ideas: Luke 14: 15-24:

- Jesus came to save ordinary people like us because we are lost and need forgiving – *and we just have to say "yes!"*

INTRO/ WAY IN activities:

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
401	Name badges. Children create badges related to the days story; use template	4	Y R G
402	Party hats. Make party hats and decorate with shapes from the week's stories e.g. leaf, tree, perfume jar, sheep etc		ALL
403	Colouring sheet	4A	Y R
404	Streamers and shakers. Roll up thin card to make a cone, decorate and add streamers: imagine they were trumpets announcing a party.	4B	R G B
405	Wine jars. How many can you find in the picture	4C	Y R
406	Spot the difference	4D	Y R G
407	Perfect party. Ask the group to plan their perfect party under the headings – guests, place, time, food, clothes, music etc		R G B
408	Paper Bunting. Make paper bunting to decorate your party area ~ string together with colourful gift ribbon	4E	Y R
409	Invitation: Decorate the invitation - this could be used as an invitation for the afternoon party or could be the invitation which all the children will receive for the 'follow on'	4F	ALL

TEACHING SESSION: opening up the Bible passage

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
410	Read the passage together. You might want to think of creative ways of doing this by giving children different parts to read out from the story. Ask questions that relate to the passage to help to observe and reflect upon what they have read and unlock its significance.		ALL

411	Story book. Cut out the pictures and stick in the correct window on the story board	4G, 4H, 4J	ALL
412	Story sheet. Use the picture 'party' to get the children to observe what is happening	4K	Y R
413	Big party drama. Read out the 'zany' version of the story with stage directions for the parts highlighted	4L	G B
414	Act out the story. Let the children act out the story with mimes for the various excuses – milking a cow, getting married etc. You might think about modern day equivalents as regards to excuses.		Y R
415	News Article. Get the children to write their own version of the story as a sensational magazine article	4M	G B

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – games

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
416	Picture consequences. Give each child a strip of A4 paper; fold the bottom quarter of the paper and get the children to draw a silly hat along the fold; pass the paper round to the next child and draw a face; pass round again, draw a body etc; the unfolded pieces of paper should look quite strange – a bizarre collection of people just like in the story!		ALL
417	Pass the parcel. Musical game with a piece of the story found in each layer (for younger children could be pictures and children have to say what's happening).		ALL
418	Chinese whispers: Try these: "Please come to my party" "It's going to be the best party ever!" "Sorry, I can't come. I am too busy". "I have got a new cow so I can't possibly come (moo moo)". "No way man – got to plough my fields". "I can't come because I am getting married (kiss kiss)".		ALL
419	Mime Time. Get the children to think of more contemporary reasons why people might turn down the invitation to a party and to mime them or act them out. Think about the sorts of excuses they or their friends give to not being a friend and follower of Jesus. How tragic to miss out on something so special (and miss the party!).		ALL

REINFORCING THE MESSAGE – activities

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
420	Imagine heaven! Get the children to think what it will be like in heaven. Then look up what we do know from the bible (Rev 21: 1-5, 22-26; Matt 6: 19-21; John 14: 1-6)		G B
421	RSVP. Use a simple gospel outline resource (e.g. "Who will be king" or "Why did Jesus die"). Outline how we can say "yes" to Jesus' invitation in the light of what he has done for us. Think of some resource to give the children that outlines the response we need to make to Jesus and his death/resurrection		G B

422	Paper chain. Get the children to write down on strips of paper what they would want to make the 'best party ever' (good to use different coloured paper strips). Join the strips together as a paper chain to decorate the marquee		G B
423	Excuses, excuses. Using the resource sheet, get the children to find the best excuse for each situation; the people in the story all had excuses but they were excuses to get out of something they didn't want to do!	4N	ALL
424	Kim's game. Have a selection of items to the story on a tray (a toy cow, grass, an invitation, a party plate, party food etc); cover the tray with a cloth; show the children what you have and then, after covering the tray again, ask the children in teams what they remember. Use items for the tray that connect to the story.		ALL
425	Who me? Cut out pictures of all types of people (don't use just famous people but try to get a mixture). Who's invited to your party? Make the point that Jesus asks anybody and everybody – we just need to say 'yes'		ALL
426	Getting ready. Talk about getting ready for a party and the sort of things the children would need to do (send out invitations, set the table etc in front of the children or with the children). Then ask how they would feel if all their friends said no. Relate this to the story, divide the children in teams and ask the children to remember the excuses people gave.		R G B
427	Who will come to the party? Divide the children into teams; give out prepared invitations and get the children to read out their excuses e.g. my friend doesn't go to church, I'm playing football etc; now invite the children who don't have invitations.		ALL
428	Response cards. See resource sheet. Photocopy the envelope sheet onto coloured paper and cut out an invitation card for each child. The children cut out the envelope and fold it/glue it together. Get the children to write their own name on the envelope and tick the appropriate response. Get them to write down the week's memory verse on the back of the invitation and decorate if there is time.	4O, 4P	G B

RESPONSE TIME PRAYERS

Prayer time: It would be good to use this prayer time as an opportunity to respond personally to what they have heard today and over the week. If it is appropriate you could provide a "sample" prayer to help them respond to who Jesus is and what he has done

Ref	Suggested activity	Sheet	Groups
429	Prayer banner. Write a prayer on a balloon or speech bubble	P7, P8	ALL

430	<p>Response prayer. It might be appropriate to write a simple response prayer that you could read and then pray with the children. e.g. "Thank you for all that you have been teaching me this week. I am sorry for the way I ignore you and disobey you. Thank you that you sent Jesus so that I could be forgiven and be part of your great party. Please forgive me and help me to love and follow you. Amen."</p> <p>Encourage them to think carefully about the words and whether they might be ready to pray such a prayer. If they do decide to pray, it might be worth encouraging them to tell you or a friend. It would be particularly helpful to think about how you might encourage such after Backpackers is over.</p>		ALL
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More simple versions of the main Bible passages which can be used with the youngest children:

- *Luke 2:8-20. The Shepherds' Story:*

Outside on the hills, the sheep were safe in their pen. A strong stone wall, with prickly thorns on top, kept the fierce, wild animals out. And, all the night long, the shepherds watched out for danger.

All was dark. All was quiet.

Then suddenly the sky blazed with light, too bright to look at.

An angel was standing there. He spoke to the shepherds in a loud, clear voice: 'Good news! The greatest news ever! For you and the whole world! Today, in Bethlehem, your King is born. God's promised King! Go, and see for yourselves! You will find him lying in a manger!'

At once the sky was full of angel voices:
'Glory to God in heaven - and peace on earth!'

Then, once again, all was dark; all was quiet. The shepherds took a deep breath. 'We must do as the angel said. The sheep will be safe enough.' And they hurried off to Bethlehem. There they found the new born King, just as the angel had told them.

Not in a palace. Not in a house. Not even in an inn.
They found him lying in a manger, in the place where the animals slept.

The shepherds told Mary and Joseph all that had happened:
'Suddenly the sky blazed with light, and an angel spoke to us! Today, in Bethlehem, he said your King is born. God's promised King! Go and see for yourselves!'

Mary listened. This was a night to remember. She would never forget it.

The shepherds strode back through the dark streets. Soon it would be morning. They must see their sheep. The people of Bethlehem heard them go by. Deep, strong shepherd voices singing God's praise: the first Christmas carols!

- *Luke 19:1-10. The Little Man.*

Zacchaeus stretched up-up-up to the lowest branch of the tree. He could only just reach, he was such a little man. He began to climb

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. But there were so many people. They were bigger than he was, and he couldn't see past them. So he said to himself, 'If I climb that tree, I'll be able to see him from there'.

Jesus came by. Zacchaeus looked right down at him from his tree. To his surprise Jesus stopped. He looked right up at Zacchaeus.

'Come down from that tree!' Jesus said, with a big smile. 'I want to come to your house today!' he said it as if they were already friends.

Zacchaeus was very excited. He was rich, but no one wanted to be friends with him. Zacchaeus was a tax man and a cheat. When he came to collect people's tax-money, he made them pay too much.

'How can Jesus go to that man's house?' everyone grumbled. 'Zacchaeus is nothing but a nasty little cheat!'

But Zacchaeus stopped cheating. Jesus was his friend now: he wouldn't like it.

'I shall give half my money to the people who don't have enough,' he said to Jesus, later that day. 'And I'll pay back everyone I've cheated – *four times* as much as I took.'

'It's people like you I want to rescue and bring back to God,' Jesus said.

- *Luke 7:36-50: The woman who was forgiven lots.*

One of the Pharisees named Simon asked Jesus to come to his house for a dinner party. In the middle of the party a woman who had done some bad things turned up with a bottle of very expensive perfume. She stood right next to Jesus and started to wash Jesus' feet with the tears she was crying and dry them with her hair. She kept on kissing his feet and rubbed perfume on them.

Simon was shocked and horrified! "Who let *her* in?" he thought. "And why is Jesus letting this bad woman touch him like that? He should know what a bad person she is!"

Of course, Jesus knew *exactly* what Simon was thinking. "Simon," Jesus said. "Let me tell you a story. Once there were two men. One man owed the bank manager 500 silver coins. The other man owed just 50 coins. Both men didn't have any money to pay him. But the bank manager felt sorry for them and let them off. So which man would love the bank manager the most?"

Simon answered, "The one who was let off the most money."

"That's right," said Jesus. "So do you see? This woman has washed and dried my dirty feet and put perfume on them. You didn't bother to welcome me properly or wash my feet even with water. This woman has been forgiven lots – and you can see that by the way she has loved and cared for me. But someone who thinks they have been forgiven just a little bit will only love me a little.

Then Jesus said to the woman, "All the wrong things you've done are forgiven."

This got the guests at the party really cross. They didn't believe that Jesus had the right to forgive like that because they didn't realise who he really was.

Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins have been taken away – because you trusted me. You can leave now as a brand new person."

- *Luke 14:15-24. The Best Party Ever:*

One day, when Jesus was at a party, someone said to him, 'the party I really want to go to is the one in God's Kingdom. That will be the best party ever!'

Jesus was always inviting people to belong to God's Kingdom. He knew that God wanted everyone to be there and enjoy the special party. So he told this story ...

Once upon a time, a man decided to give a big party. He asked lots of people to come. Then he began to get ready. Sweep and clean! Sweep and clean! All through the house. They cooked lots of yummy, scrummy food. Sizzle, sizzle! Stir and taste!

At last everything was done. 'Go and tell the people it's time to come to my party', the man said to his servants.

But what did these people do, when they heard? One by one, they began to make excuses! They didn't want to stop what they were doing. They didn't really want to come!

The man was very angry. 'If they won't come,' he said, 'go into the town and find some people who will.'

So the servants went into the town. There were lots of hungry people there. Poor people. People who couldn't walk. People who couldn't see.

'Come to the party,' they said. And all those people came. But still there was room. So they went into the country. There were lots of hungry people there too. People tramping the roads. People with no homes to go to.

'Come to the party,' the man's servants said. And all those people came. Now the house was full of people. How they enjoyed the party! But none of the people the man asked first were there. They didn't taste a mouthful of that yummy, scrummy food. They were asked to come. But they didn't say yes. So they missed the fun of the party.