

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 37 THE BIG PARTY

Bible Base: Luke 14: 25-33

Key Christian Belief: The kingdom of heaven is like a party

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus invites us to know the joy of being loved by God

You will need:

- an invitation of some kind
- a large sheet of card, designed to look like a party invitation, with the words 'Come - everything is ready!' and the letters RSVP on it.

Introduction

Show your invitation and talk about something special you have been invited to in the past. Ask the children if they have ever had a special invitation.

The famous singer, Sir Cliff Richard, was invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen - but he says he once had an invitation that was even better than that. This is the invitation we are going to think about today.

Story

Choose - or have ready in advance - three volunteers to help you tell the story. At several points in the story you will ask them to decide what happens next - so they need to be good at making things up. Proceed to tell the story as follows.

Lord Ponsonby-Smythe lived in a large castle on a hill overlooking a sleepy little village. He was thinking one day how sad it was that he had lots of rooms in the castle and lots of gardens and fields around it, but no one from the village ever came to visit him. Suddenly, he had a great idea. 'I know what I'll do!' he thought. 'I'll have a great big party here in the castle and I'll invite everyone from the village to come to it. I will make it the best party they have ever had in their lives!'

Now Lord Ponsonby-Smythe had lots of servants. He called three of them over one day. (*Call your three volunteers over beside you.*) He told them he was planning to have a party for everyone in the village and that he wanted it to be the best party ever.

'We'll need to decorate the castle' he said. 'What do you think we should use?' (*Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.*)

'All right then' he said. 'That sounds great. You three order as many balloons, banners, coloured lights, glitter balls and streamers as you think we need. Remember, money is no object. I will pay for everything. Just make sure you get the best there is!'

'Now' he said. 'My guests will need to have something to do. Remember there are lots of rooms in the castle and plenty of grounds outside. We want them all to have a really good time. What do you think they would like to do?' (*Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.*)

'Excellent!' said Lord Ponsonby-Smythe. 'See that all of this is ready when the guests arrive - a bouncy castle, volley ball, football and races outside; party games, a play

station or two, table tennis, snooker and a disco indoors. And remember, money is no object. I'll pay for everything. Just make sure there will be lots of fun for everyone!

'Now - most important of all' said His Lordship 'is food. We need good food and lots of it. Who do you think we could ask to cook it?' *(Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)*

'All right then - see if Jamie Oliver and Mary Berry are free and tell them they are hired. No expense spared. We want the best! What do you think should be on the menu?' *(Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)*

'Great - in that case, let's make sure we have lots of burgers, chips, sausages and pizza all cooked to perfection by Jamie Oliver. And let's have lots of different puddings and cakes all made by Mary Berry. And while you are at it order bucket loads of ice cream, all flavours, and lots of different kinds of juice for people to drink. And what about a chocolate fountain? We've GOT to have a chocolate fountain... And remember, money is no object. I'll pay for it all. Just order as much as you need!'

'And finally' said Lord Ponsonby-Smythe excitedly 'we need some entertainment. After dinner we could have a big concert and maybe invite some comedians, some singers, a band or two and maybe a magician to take part. Who do you think our guests would like to see on stage in the ballroom?' *(Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)*

'Fantastic!' he said. 'Let's invite them all...and let's see if Ant and Dec are free to host it. This is going to be the best party ever!'

So the three servants went off to organise everything - the decorations, the games, the food and the concert. Meanwhile Lord Ponsonby-Smythe put up large posters around the village telling everyone that they were invited to a party in his castle on a certain day in about a month's time. There would be lots of fun and lots to eat and it was all free!

The day of the big party arrived. The decorations were all up, the games were ready, One Direction were rehearsing in the ballroom and the smell of burgers being cooked came wafting through the castle.

Lord Ponsonby-Smythe had organised a luxury coach to go down into the village and bring everyone up to the party. When the time came, he sent his three servants into the village with the coach driver to tell everyone: 'Come, everything is ready!'

When they got to the village, however, there was no one waiting for the coach. So the servants went round, knocking on everyone's door. 'Come - everything is ready!' they said. But the villagers had forgotten all about the party. They had seen the posters, but they hadn't thought any more about it. They were too busy with other things. So one by one they began to make excuses. *(Ask each of your three volunteers in turn to finish off the sentences below.)*

The first one said: 'I'm so sorry. I'm afraid I can't come because...

Another one said: 'I can't come either. I have to...

A third one said: 'I'm afraid today's no good for me because...'

Not one of the people who lived in the village were coming to the party. Sadly, the three servants went back and reported this to Lord Ponsonby-Smythe.

‘What?’ he said, shocked. ‘You mean we have all these games to play, Jamie Oliver is cooking burgers in the kitchen and Ant and Dec are getting ready to host a concert in the ballroom and no one wants to come? Well - we can’t let all this go to waste! Drive out into the streets and lanes beyond the village and tell everyone you meet about the party. Anyone who wants can come!’

So that’s what they did and it wasn’t long before the coach was full of homeless people and others who had never been invited to a party in their lives. And do you know what? They had a great time - and for all I know the party might still be going on - while those from the village who had been invited, and who could have been there, missed out. It’s almost as if they didn’t realise what a wonderful invitation they had been given!

### Exploring Christian Belief

Display the large poster with the words ‘Come - everything is ready!’ on it. This is what the servants in the story were to say to the people in the village. It is also, I believe, what would be written on the invitation that Jesus gives to each one of us. And this is the invitation Sir Cliff was talking about - the one that was even better than being invited to meet the Queen.

Christians believe that Jesus invites each of us to know the joy of being God’s friends. He wants us to have the privilege of belonging to God’s family and of enjoying His perfect love in our lives now and forever. The Bible says that Jesus has done everything that is needed to be done to make this possible for us. Everything is ready. All we need to do is to come!

Point to the letters RSVP and ask if anyone knows what they mean. Normally, when you get an invitation, the person inviting you expects you to reply. You need to make up your mind whether to accept the invitation or not.

Christians believe that the choice to follow Jesus or not is one we all have to make for ourselves and it is important to think carefully about it. The problem with the people in the village wasn’t that they thought about the party and decided not to come; rather, they didn’t think about it at all! They ignored the invitation completely and as a result missed out on something far better than they could ever have dreamed of.

As Christians we would encourage you not to do this with the invitation Jesus gives you. Don’t just ignore it, or forget about it. Rather - check it out, think carefully about it and make up your own mind about it. How will you reply?

### Reflection and Prayer

Hold the invitation up and invite those who wish to do so to pray silently, expressing their response to Jesus. Suggest that this could be any of the following, for example:

‘I don’t know enough about this yet. I want to find out more about it.’

‘I’m not sure yet - I want to think about it for a little longer.’

‘Thank you for loving me. I want to follow you.’

Finish with a prayer asking God to help everyone understand more about this invitation to enjoy His love and friendship in their lives and be ready to say ‘yes’ to it.