THIS IS
JESUS

UNIT ONE: THE MESSIAH NAMED JESUS
PART 3: THE MESSIAH IS CALLING

Lesson 4: A Call To Celebrate

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That God not only calls us to celebrate with Him in eternity, but He also provides us with the correct clothing for the occasion.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To examine their own response to the invitation of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Matthew 22:1-14

KEY TAKEAWAY: God invites all people, regardless of background, to join His Kingdom.

OVERVIEW:

In Matthew 22, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God may be compared to a king giving a wedding banquet for his son. In our own context, going to a wedding holds the same excitement as it would have thousands of years ago- the joy, the food, the opportunity to celebrate a couple. However, there is one huge difference in how we prepare for the weddings we attend today. While we may spend time worrying over the right thing to wear to a wedding today, the wedding guests mentioned in Jesus' parable would have understood that it was the king who provided the appropriate attire. Their response to the wedding invitation would have meant showing up and receiving his offer, just as we are called to receive the offer of Jesus.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Matthew

- *Author*: Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50s or 60s A.D., though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THE SETTING

In Matthew 22, Jesus spoke with the religious leaders. The religious leaders would probably have been the same group that Matthew calls the chief priests and the Pharisees. Jesus had just told other parables condemning their attitudes and actions (21:28-46). The parable of the wedding banquet picks up at that point. Jesus told a parable comparing the Kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast. The invited guests refused to come, so the king invited other guests to join the celebration in their place.

THE MAIN POINT

God is gracious to have invited sinful man to celebrate an eternal wedding feast. This invitation to join Him is sent out to everyone, regardless of their status or background. He has provided clothes of righteousness to all who desire to come to this wedding feast, and when we arrive, we are called to accept His generous offer and celebrate alongside Him!

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In;* the Bible Study section called *The Main Event;* and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word.*

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To introduce the idea of a wedding and how we respond to the invitation.
- *Set-Up:* None needed.

FIRST, welcome students. Ask students to raise their hands if they've ever been to a wedding. Take a moment to ask a few students to share what their favorite part of the wedding was. (If none of your students have been to a wedding recently, ask them to share what parts of the wedding they would be most excited to experience.)

THEN, explain that some people love to go to weddings; other people, however, make excuses when they get a wedding invitation. **Say something like:**

- **In our culture, the happy couple typically starts their wedding journey by picking a date for the wedding and setting their guest list. Each person on the guest list typically gets a card in the mail or an electronic invitation that says RSVP.**

Ask students:

- **Does anyone know what RSVP stands for?**
    - *Answer:* Répondez s'il vous plait (It's very possible students will not know this.)

Explain that RSVP stands for Répondez s'il vous plait (ray-pohn-day seel voo play), which is actually French for "Please Respond." Because couples often need to know exactly how many guests they will need seats and food for, it's important that they are given a yes/no answer by a certain date. **Ask students:**

- **What are some reasons that someone might decline their invitation?**
    - *Answers will vary.* Examples: They live far away, they have another event, they struggle in big crowds, etc.

- **Most of the time, the reasons that people have for RSVP'ing no are good ones. However, sometimes people RSVP yes, and then can't make it on the day of the wedding. What reasons might they have?**
    - *Answers will vary.* Examples: Their car broke down, they caught a stomach bug, they forgot, etc.

FINALLY, **say something like:**

- **Most of us have very few people in our lives that we would overcome these obstacles for. If you are invited to the wedding for your third cousin that you have met twice in your life, you probably won't sweat it if you can't make it or if something happens the day of. But if your best friend is getting married, you would change any previous plans to make sure you could RSVP yes. And if your car breaks down the day of the wedding, you find a bus or Uber to come and get you, right? The point is, we make the adjustments we need to make when one or both of the people getting married are important to us. Today, we will be learning about another wedding invitation that has been sent to all of us. As we read, I want you to think about how you plan to RSVP.**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To help students understand the call of God to join Him in eternity, and how our reception of His offer plays a role.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, have students open their Bibles to Matthew 22. While they are preparing, it may be beneficial to share some context from the Bible Background. Once everyone is ready, read or have a student read Matthew 22:1-7.

THEN, explain that a wedding banquet thrown by a king for his son is not the same as a wedding reception we would attend today. This feast would have been an elaborate celebration, the most exquisite event. In Jesus' parable, people had already been invited to the wedding. When the king's servants approached them, it was not the first time they heard about the event. The servants were sent "to those who had been invited." The wedding banquet had been on the calendar, and no invited guest would have been caught by surprise. The guests simply refused to attend. **Say something like:**

- **So the king has sent out invites, and on the day of the wedding, he sees that none of the people invited have arrived. One thing that might be helpful to note is that Jesus doesn't waste time telling us how the king felt about that. It's easy for us to imagine, even 2,000 years later, that the king was incredibly disappointed. Here he was, calling his people to celebrate with him, and they couldn't even bother to show up? Something must be wrong! So, in a very gracious move, he sends out the messengers to check on them.**

Ask students:

- **What happens when the messengers go to see the invited guests?**
    - *Answer:* Those invited not only ignore the call, but they actually kill the messengers.

NEXT, explain to students that this portion of the parable was meant to be a clear comparison to what happened in the Old Testament, when God sent messengers (prophets) to His people (the Israelites) to call them back to life with Him. They had completely abandoned God to the point that they wouldn't even bother to show up when called for something as extravagant as an eternal wedding banquet! This resulted in the destruction of them and their city. No longer was the wedding feast for a select few. The wedding feast was for everyone.

THEN, read or have a student read Matthew 22:8-10. **Ask:**

- **Imagine that you are visiting your aunt, who lives on the other side of this kingdom. You didn't realize that this grand event was prepared; you were just trying to take the main road through. And suddenly, a servant of the king invites YOU to his son's wedding! How would you respond?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

Encourage students to imagine how exciting it would have been for many people to be pulled into this great ceremony. What might have sounded like a fairytale had just become their reality. Explain that the servants of the king extended the invitation to anyone they could find. This was meant to be representative of the inclusion of the Gentiles, or non-Jewish people, in the offer of eternal salvation. They would be able to feast at the wedding banquet and enjoy the privileges of being Kingdom members! **Say something like:**

- **This offer was new to the Gentiles. Under God's covenant with Israel, they were His chosen people. But through Jesus, the offer became universal. The idea of a select group was over. God declared that all people are His chosen people. Good and evil, rich and poor, Samaritan and Gentile… all are offered a place in God's Kingdom. However, the parable does not end there. Just because the invite has been extended to everyone does not mean that all will be joining the wedding feast.**

NEXT, briefly explain that this invitation comes with a warning. It was not enough to have been invited to the celebration. And it was not enough simply to attend. To be the king's guest at the wedding feast for his son, the guest had to have more than just an invitation. He had to be dressed appropriately for the king's presence: in wedding clothes.

Read or have a student read Matthew 22:11-14. **Ask students:**

- **At first glance, this seems really unfair. How was this guy supposed to prepare his wedding clothes if he never expected to be invited in the first place?**
    - *Answers will vary.* Encourage students to sit with this discomfort for a moment.

THEN, **say something like:**

- **Before we make excuses for this gentleman's lack of preparation, keep in mind that NOBODY was prepared. Everyone who was invited the second time would have been caught unaware. They didn't have the invitation like the first group did. So, where did they get their wedding garbs from? This is where our own cultural understanding of weddings gets in the way. When we go to a wedding, we pick something from our own closet to wear, or we go shopping for something. But in ancient times, if you were invited to a wedding put on by a king, it was the king who gave each guest their special garment. The guests wouldn't have worried about what to wear. They simply would have accepted what was offered to them at the door.**

Ask students:

- **How does that change your understanding of the man who was found without a garment?**
    - *Answers will vary.*

Help guide students to note that the inappropriately dressed guest was speechless. Some commentators argue that his silence made him guilty, indicating that he was unwilling to attend on the king's terms. Although he had the knowledge, the man gave no regard to responding properly to the king's invitation.

FINALLY, explain to students that the warning in this last portion of the parable is that being called involves our reception of what Jesus is offering. If we do not accept the 'wedding clothes,' then we are not able to take part in the wedding itself. Encourage students to think about how simple the idea of accepting a wedding garb is. The man thrown out of the wedding was invited just the same as everyone else. Yet, he deliberately rejected what was offered to him and still expected a slice of wedding cake. As followers of Jesus, that cannot be our story. **Say something like:**

- **Attending church or acknowledging God's existence is not enough. We must respond properly to God's invitation. Only those clothed in righteousness, or in the case of this parable, the wedding clothes, will be allowed to feast eternally with the Son. Through His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus has provided us with "wedding clothes." We don't have to rent a tux or debate the nuance of "formal wear" at the outlet mall with our friends. Jesus has prepared the way for us. Our only call is to accept what He offers.**

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students visualize the parable that Jesus shared in Matthew 22.
- *Set-Up:* Bring several canvases or large pieces of paper. Also, bring plenty of art supplies for students to draw from.

FIRST, explain to students that throughout history, many artists have attempted to capture moments from the Bible by painting or drawing them. (If you have a few examples in your room of this, take a moment to point them out!) To end your lesson, you are going to pass the art supplies and allow students the chance to make their contribution to biblical art history. **Say something like:**

- **Your goal is to paint or draw the three types of guests that were invited to the wedding in today's parable. The first guest is the one who was invited but did not come. The second was the one who was called in from the**

main road, showed up, but declined the wedding clothes offered to them. The third is the wedding guest who was called in from the main road and who happily accepted the wedding clothes offered by the king.

THEN, determine if this activity can be done in groups or individually. This will depend on your group size, spacing, and the amount of art supplies you have. (If you need to group up students, consider dividing them into three teams and assigning each team one of the wedding guests.)

Allow students time to plan and create their art. Once they are done, ask students to share their art, and allow them to point out why they depicted the three guests the way that they did.

FINALLY, **say something like:**

- **Great work, everyone! Hopefully, while you were creating these masterpieces, you were also thinking about which category you fit in. If you aren't really sure, know that we can always schedule some time to talk more about it. The one thing that each of these guests has in common is that they were all called to join God. Each of you is called to join God as well!**

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.