

Jesus' Parties

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Theme: Jesus' Parties

Partying is not usually associated with Jesus' followers. Christians are more often accused of spoiling the fun or being boring. A glance at the Gospels shows this was not true of Jesus. He was often at parties, feasts and dinners. Why? Because people wanted Jesus at their parties.

The parties Jesus was invited to were varied and unexpected, often upsetting the religious leaders and crowds. Jesus also threw some parties of His own, similarly unconventional and surprising. Whether Jesus was invited or organising, He prioritised parties in unusual places and with unexpected people. No one was off limits because of their gender, religion, past, job, health or age. He welcomed and sought out everyone.

Jesus wanted to hang out at all these different people's parties because He wants relationship with us and is willing to meet us where we are. Wherever we are on our journey of getting to know God, He wants to step in.

Kids love parties. As lockdown lifts and we are allowed to party again we can show kids that God likes to party too. This series explores 5 different parties: a night-time celebration in a field, a dinner with outcasts, a dinner with religious leaders, a huge picnic on the side of a mountain and a great banquet. Each session will look at what Jesus said or did, unpacking what happened as a result. We will see how Jesus parties and remarkably we will also discover that whoever we are, whatever we have done, Jesus wants to step in and meet us where we are.

Jesus comes to our parties AND wants us at His.

- Night-time celebration: A party with 1000's angels. Jesus is a reason to party, and we are all invited to find out more.
- Dinner with outcasts: A party with traitors and cheats. Jesus was criticised for going to this party, but He meets us where we are.
- Dinner with leaders: A party with the religious elite. Jesus welcomed the gate crasher, we can come as we are, He knows each of us.
- Picnic on a mountain: A party with 5,000 people. Jesus had a problem. We can bring our doubts and questions to Him.
- A huge banquet: A party with an RSVP. Jesus gets everything ready; everyone is invited.

Recommended Itinerary for full day camp (please adjust to your setting)

| What? | How? | Top Tips |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Warm up game | | |
| Introduction | A Grumpy Ref who hates parties introduces each session. The Ref never celebrates, he* even punishes players who smile! Each session the Ref finds an invite (see Appendix 1) to a surprising party that points the kids to one of Jesus' parties. To begin with the Ref scoffs at the invites, discounting himself (and the kids) from attending. But little does he know the journey he is on! | A Grumpy Ref costume is easy to create: black shorts & t shirt, a whistle, red/yellow cards (A4 for more impact). |
| Football | | |
| Game | | |
| 1Verse | <i>"I will never turn away anyone who comes to me." John 6:37, GNT.</i> This amazing promise is unpacked over the 5 sessions using simple open-ended questions. | A game to help kids remember the verse is included. |
| Game | | |
| 1Story | The Ref returns still pondering the Intro party invite, when he bumps into a character from the bible story and initiates a chat. To begin with the Ref is reluctant to hear about the party, but as the days progress he becomes more interested. The chat unpacks what happened at the party, explaining the often-surprising things Jesus said and did. | Simple dress-up and prop ideas are suggested for the character from the bible story. |
| Show N Tell | Two points are made every session. 1. Explores why/how/what Jesus partied. 2. Unpacks the key theme of the session. | Keep it short, avoid jargon & always use a visual prop. |
| Response | The response takes everyone on a journey over the 5 sessions; unpacking the incredible reality that God still wants to party with us; stepping in to meet us where we are. Each day talking and listening to God will become more familiar as everyone is encouraged to watch, copy and have a go. | Practical activities and possible prayers for coaches to say are included for each day. |
| Lunch | | |
| Coaches vs Kids | A challenge where you have coaches verse the kids, in the past we have done kick ups, crossbar challenge, saying the verse the fastest, headers etc. You can make up your own, but remember to keep the scores close and make the challenges easier for the kids if needed. | |
| Hot Seat | The personal testimony of a coach will confirm God still wants to come to our parties and wants us at His; stepping in and meet us where we are. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where were you when you first heard about Jesus? (Age? Where did you live?) When and why did you decide to find out more about Jesus? Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you? You can get the children to ask their own questions. | Additional questions linked to the daily theme are included in the leader's notes. |
| Matches | | |

* For ease of reading the Grumpy Ref is always referred to as a 'he' in the content, however a female Grumpy Ref should not be discounted.

NIGHT-TIME CELEBRATION

What's the point? We can find out more.

Read this first:

Jesus' birth launches the first party in the New Testament. The arrival of Jesus on earth prompted the biggest angelic party ever seen on this planet. It was as if heaven could not contain its joy. He had arrived! A great army of angels sang and danced, praising God. Who was invited to this party? A bunch of lowly disreputable shepherds. The angels were clear their message was good news for everyone and invited the shepherds to find out more. The shepherds decided to investigate the angels astonishing claim, saying, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us." (v15). Today we will discover that Jesus is still worth celebrating and, like the shepherds, we can find out more.

Intro: The Ref does not celebrate

The Ref arrives angrily blowing his whistle, holding the party invite and showing a yellow card to anyone who dares to smile. He reads the invite aloud and announces that he obviously needs to set some ground rules. NO CELEBRATING and NO FUN whilst he is around. A quick inspection of the coaches and kids is disappointing. They are all having way too much fun. The Ref pulls a coach to the front to interrogate. Has anyone cheered on a teammate or celebrated a goal? All those who have are immediately shown a yellow card. The Ref screws up the invite and tosses it away. Whoever heard of an angel party? Celebrating is overrated. He exits declaring there will be NO PARTIES whilst he is around.

1Verse: "I will never turn away anyone who comes to me." John 6:37, GNT.

- This verse from the bible is a promise Jesus gave to His friends the disciples. It is a big claim. We will discover more about this verse over the week.
- Game: Peg the words along string, kid's limbo underneath and pull off a word with their teeth. Shout the verse after each limbo.

Story: What happened at the party? The shepherds and the angels, Luke 2:8-20, GNT/MSG

The Ref returns carrying the red/yellow cards and still determined to clamp down on any kind of celebrating. A smiling shepherd [tea towel on head and carrying a sheep] arrives and is immediately shown a yellow card. The shepherd defends the smile...

Shepherd: You would be smiling too if you had been to a party with angels!

Ref: What? Oh yes, I found the invite. Impossible!

Shepherd: No, it is true. It was the middle of the night. We were in the fields dozing whilst we watched the sheep. SUDDENLY an angel appeared. We were terrified!

Ref: Hmmm, why would an angel visit YOU! [looks shepherd up and down]

Shepherd: The angel had a message. He said, 'A baby has been born.'

Ref: Why would an angel be bothered about a baby? Or telling you?

Shepherd: The angel said this baby was special. He was good news...for everyone.

Ref: Huh! That's a big claim. Did the angel have any proof?

Shepherd: Yes. He said we would find the baby lying in an animal feeding trough. Then 1000's of angels appeared in the sky singing and dancing.

Ref: 1000's? Singing and dancing? [looking a bit more interested] What did you do?

Shepherd: When the angels left, we talked it over and decided to investigate. To find out more. We ran to Bethlehem and... it was exactly as the angels had said!

Ref: Well, I suppose, maybe it was worth finding out more!

Show N Tell: Jesus parties...We can find out more

- New baby card/balloon: We celebrate when babies are born by giving a card/ balloon. But have you ever seen the birth of a baby celebrated with 1000's angels singing and dancing? When Jesus was born God was so excited, He sent 1000's of singing angels to tell the shepherds. Jesus being born was happy news for EVERYONE. Jesus parties.
- Crumpled invite: The angels told the shepherds they could find the proof of this good news. The proof was a baby lying in an animal feeding trough. The shepherds had a choice to make. They could go and find out more or stay in the field. The Ref said he did not want to find out more about the party and threw away the invite. Later he changed his mind. We can find out more.

Response: Watching/listening Prayers.

The shepherds were surprised by the angels appearing in the middle of the night and telling them about Jesus. Today we might be feeling a bit surprised. We might be wondering why Jesus is worth celebrating or even talking about. Whatever we think, we can find out more, just like the shepherds.

Have you ever talked to God? It is called praying. I am going to talk to Him now. If you have never seen a Christian talk to God you might like to watch and listen, like the shepherds did with the angels. You can join in if you want.

'Thank you, God, that you sent singing and dancing angels to tell the shepherds about Jesus. They knew He was good news for everyone. You invited the shepherds to find out more about Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that you are still good news for everyone, and you invite us all to find out more about you this week.'

Hot Seat Questions:

- Where were you when you first heard about Jesus? (Age? Where did you live?)
- When and why did you decide to find out more about Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus is worth celebrating?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

DINNER WITH OUTCASTS

What's the point? Jesus meets us where we are

Read this first:

This party was a big feast in Jesus' honour. It sounds amazing until the venue and guest list is unveiled. The big feast was at Levi's house. No one liked Levi or his mates, and for good reason. They were tax collectors, working for the Roman enemy. Tax collectors brought their own people under Roman rule and then stole money from them (similar to the French who collaborated with Nazis in WW2). Levi was a *"...a collaborator, a traitor, a white-collar criminal. A scumbag..."* (Glen Scrivener). Levi was working in his office when Jesus invited him to, "Follow me." Levi responded by getting up, leaving his job and following Jesus. He then threw a big party and invited all his dodgy friends to meet Jesus. People looking on were surprised and disgusted. Why would Jesus go to a party with liars, cheats and traitors? Today we will discover that Jesus meets us where we are.

Intro: The Ref hates liars and cheats!

The Ref arrives angrily blowing his whistle, holding the party invite and showing a yellow card to anyone who dares to smile. He reads the invite aloud and questions why anyone would want to have dinner with liars and cheats. He sees enough of them on the pitch. The Ref scrutinises the coaches and pulls a few to the front. Have they ever lied or cheated in a match? A hand ball. A fake injury? A dishonest appeal to the Ref? If the coaches admit they have the Ref immediately sends them away with a red card. The Ref screws up the invite and tosses it away. He exits wondering who would want to go to a party with liars and cheats?

1Verse: "I will never turn away anyone who comes to me." John 6:37, GNT.

- What do you think Jesus meant when He said, never turn away? Have you ever turned someone away or been turned away?
- Game: Peg the words along string. Kids take it in turns to shoot off a word using a super soaker water gun. Shout the verse after each word is shot off.

Story: What happened at the party? Jesus calls Levi, Luke 5:27-32, NIV/MSG

The Ref returns carrying the red/yellow cards. An indignant Pharisee [wearing a dressing gown robe and checking a big book] walks past muttering about liars and cheats. The Ref's attention is caught, and he questions the Pharisee,

Ref: Were you at that party with the liars and cheats?

Pharisee: NO! And I could not believe my eyes when I saw Jesus there, with Levi.

Ref: Oh yes [sympathetically] who would want to go to a party with liars and cheats?

Pharisee: Exactly. I've kept all the rules [show book], Jesus could have come to my house, but instead he chose to go to Levi's party with traitors, cheats and liars.

Ref: But why did Levi even invite Jesus?

Pharisee: Jesus asked Levi to follow him, and Levi said yes! Levi was a tax collector, a man who worked for the Roman enemy, stealing and cheating his own people to get rich.

Ref: What! Jesus asked a liar and cheat to follow him, and the man said yes?

Pharisee: Exactly! Then Levi organised a big feast and invited all his horrible friends to meet Jesus...and Jesus went! He sat and ate and drank and talked with the scum!

Ref: It is shocking. But why?

Pharisee: Exactly. Why? When he could have been at my house. Jesus has a bad reputation now. People are saying he is friends with sinners and drunks!

Ref: I wonder why Jesus went to a party with liars and cheats?

Show N Tell: Jesus parties... He meets us where we are

- Fake money: Levi and his friends were rich because they used their jobs as tax collectors to cheat and steal money from people. No one wanted to be seen with them. But Jesus asked Levi to follow Him and then went to dinner at his house, even though it gave him a bad reputation. Jesus parties.
- Fantasy football list: Who would you pick for your perfect football team [list a few possible players/coaches and say why]? Jesus did not pick people because they were fit, beautiful or good. When Jesus invited Levi to follow Him the religious leaders were really cross and complained because Levi was a dishonest traitor. That did not stop Jesus. Jesus meets us where we are.

Response: Exercise prayers

Time everyone to see how many star jumps/push ups they can do in one minute. Ask for a show of hands for under 20, 30-40, 50-60, etc. Whether we did 10, 30 a 100, or even if we lied about it, Jesus wants to meet us where we are!

Have you ever talked to Jesus? It is very easy. We can talk to Jesus today. We can talk to Him in our heads, so only He can hear. Nod after each sentence to show you have finished. Everyone close their eyes.

Tell Jesus how old you are. Tell Him how many star jumps/push ups you did. Jesus does not pick people because they are fit, beautiful, good or honest! He meets us where we are. Tell Him what you think about that.

“Thank you, Jesus, that you do not wait for us to become fit, beautiful, good or even honest, you want to meet us where we are. You never turn anyone away. Thank you we can meet with you, here, today.”

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when you first heard about Jesus? (Age? Where did you live?)
- When and why did you decide to find out more about Jesus?
- What sort of things were you doing wrong when Jesus met you?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

DINNER WITH LEADERS

What's the point? Jesus knows you

Read this first:

This party is at Simon the Pharisee's house. The Pharisees were a group of religious leaders who followed the law of God precisely, even tithing their herbs. A woman gate crashed the party, "*The woman was a big sinner, and everyone knew it. (It was easy to see- after all she had broken the rules and done bad things).*" The Jesus Storybook Bible, p280. Uninvited, the woman stood on the edge, then becoming braver she sat by Jesus' feet and began crying. Her tears wet his feet, so she dried them with her hair. She then kissed and poured perfume on them. It was an act of intimacy, emotion and worship, the response of a grateful heart. Simon was outraged. Did Jesus know who the woman was or what she had done? Jesus knew, He did not stop her, instead He praised her. Today we will discover Jesus knows us all.

Intro: The Ref is never invited.

The Ref arrives angrily blowing his whistle, holding the party invite and showing a yellow card to anyone who dares to smile. He reads the invite aloud even though he is getting fed up with finding them every day. The Ref pulls a coach to the front and asks why the invite is always addressed to the kids, not him. No one ever invites the Ref. The Ref explains how he is never picked for a team, asked to play football or invited to a party. The coach is surprised. They had no idea the Ref would want to play! The Ref is about to screw up the invite when he hesitates and decides to keep it. If 1 uninvited guest can get into this party, maybe another could? He exits thinking he wouldn't mind meeting this uninvited guest.

1Verse: "I will never turn away anyone who comes to me." John 6:37, GNT.

- What did Jesus mean by come to me? How do we come to Jesus?
- Game: Mallets mallet. 2 kids stand facing each other. Say alternate words. Hesitate/say wrong word and get hit on the head with an inflatable or balloon.

Story: What happened at the party? Jesus anointed, Luke 7:36-50, GNT/MSG

The Ref returns carrying the red/yellow cards and on the look-out for the uninvited guest. A beaming Mary [carrying a broken bottle/jar] arrives and the Ref timidly asks if she is the uninvited guest.

Mary: Yes, I never get invited to parties.

Ref: Oh, me too! I'm never invited to anything. Why are you not invited?

Mary: I'm never invited because I've broken the rules and done bad things.

Ref: But you went. Did you not know it is very rude to go to a party uninvited?

Mary: Yes, of course! I knew I shouldn't, but I had this very expensive perfume worth £30,000 [show bottle/jar] and I wanted to give it to Jesus. I poured it on his feet.

Ref: What! Why on earth would you do that?

Mary: I was so grateful to Jesus. He was worth it.

Ref: What do you mean He was worth it?

Mary: I was so grateful that Jesus loved and accepted me. He was worth more to me than my most precious possession.

Ref: Did Jesus know who you were. That you had broken rules and done bad things?

Mary: Yes, Jesus knew who I was, but He did not stop me. The religious leaders said it was a waste. I could have sold the perfume and given the money to the poor. But Jesus said I had done a beautiful thing.

Ref: I wonder if Jesus knows who I am?

Show N Tell: Jesus parties... He knows you

- Goal celebration: Demo your favourite goal celebration. Invite a few kids/coaches to demo theirs. Some goal celebrations are a bit embarrassing or over the top. But the player is so pleased about the goal, they do not care. Most people at the party today thought Mary wasted her perfume, they were embarrassed and thought she had gone too far. But Jesus didn't think it was a waste or too much. Jesus praised Mary. Jesus parties.
- List of rules: The Pharisees at the party were looking at Mary and comparing her to their list of rules. They knew she had broken the rules and done bad things. So, they didn't want her at the party. They thought Jesus didn't know. But He did. Jesus knows us completely. He wants us to come as we are. No need to pretend. Jesus knows you.

Response: What's in the bag Prayers

God will never stop loving me, God knows me, God is near, I can talk to God, God listens, God wants to talk to me, God counts the hairs on my head, I can trust God, God helps me, God has a plan, God cannot be shocked, God chooses me, God never gives up.

Print the words above (see Appendix 2) and place in a box/bag. Everyone (incl. coaches) sit in a circle. Sometimes God can feel far away. We can think He does not know or care about us. Everyone is on a journey of getting to know God, some of us know Him more than others, but even the coaches (who have been following Him for years) are discovering new things about God all the time. God wants us to leave today understanding a little bit more about who He is and what He thinks about us.

Pass the box/bag around the circle. Everyone chooses a piece of paper. Support those needing help to read. Whatever is written on our paper is something God wants us to know today.

'Thank you, Jesus, that you know us completely. You know the good and the bad. We can come to you just as we are. Thank you that we can get to know you.'

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when you first heard about Jesus? (Age? Where did you live?)
- When and why did you decide to find out more about Jesus?
- What changed when you realised/understood Jesus knows you?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

PICNIC ON A MOUNTAIN

What's the point? We can ask questions

Read this first:

Today Jesus is not attending someone else's party, instead He is throwing one of His own! A big picnic outside with 5000 hungry people. Jesus had been out on the mountain teaching and healing a huge crowd all day. It was getting late, and people were hungry. Jesus asks his disciples. 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' It was a difficult question. There were no shops, and no one had the money to feed so many. Jesus' disciples were keen to send everyone home, but Jesus disagreed. Then *"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"* It was in no way an answer, and Andrew's question shows us he wondered why he had spoken up. But Jesus did not laugh or disregard what Andrew said. He used it to perform one of His most famous miracles. Today we will discover that we can tell Jesus what we are thinking, He welcomes our doubts and questions.

Intro: The Ref has questions

The Ref arrives angrily blowing their whistle, holding the party invite and showing a yellow card to anyone who dares to smile. He wearily opens and reads the fourth invite aloud, pausing dramatically at the first line. This invite is different! The Ref sceptically continues reading. This is a party Jesus is throwing, and He is inviting the Ref! The Ref is unprepared for this, has he finally been invited to a party? The Ref pulls a coach to the front because he has lots of doubts and questions. Is he really invited? Why? Could it be true that God does really know him? How can he find out more? The coach suggests the Ref finds a person who has been to the picnic. He exits with the invite in his pocket and looking for the nearest mountain!

1Verse: "I will never turn away anyone who comes to me." John 6:37, GNT.

- Never and anyone? It sounds too good to be true! What does it make you think?
- Game: Stand in 2 lines. Whisper the memory verse down the line. The first line to pass it to the end wins.

Story: What happened at the party? Jesus feeds 5000, John 6v1-14, GNT/MSG

The Ref returns carrying the red/yellow cards and still pondering the party invite. A boy munching on a piece of bread walks past. The Ref waylays him to show the invite and ask about the party.

Ref: Excuse me, I found this [show invite], and I have a few questions.

Boy: Great, I've come from that picnic and there were a lot of questions (and food!).

Ref: Really. Why? What kind of questions?

Boy: Well, there was a massive crowd of over 5,000 people, and they had been with Jesus out on the mountain all day. It was getting late, and everyone was hungry. Jesus asked his friends the disciples how they could feed everyone.

Ref: Impossible! Feed 5,000 people! It would cost £1000's. Send them home.

Boy: Yes! That is what His friends said. Then one of them showed Jesus all the food they had. It was my lunch! 5 rolls and 2 fish. But he was not sure why he gave it to Jesus. He asked Jesus how something so small could feed so many people.

Ref: That is a very good question! I bet Jesus didn't like that. An impossible challenge. What did He say?

Boy: Oh, Jesus doesn't mind people asking Him questions. He told everyone to sit in groups. He thanked God for the food and gave it out. Everyone had enough to eat and there were leftovers!

Ref: What! [spluttering] Well, if Jesus likes questions. I have a few to ask Him!

Show N Tell: Jesus parties... we can ask questions.

- Calculator: There are ___ people here today. The picnic Jesus organised had over 5,000 people. That was [work out answer on calculator] x ___ the number of people here. Everyone was very hungry. Jesus' friends the disciples wanted to send everyone home. Jesus understood how hungry the people were and did not want to send them away. Instead, He fed everyone and had leftovers. Jesus parties.
- Rolls and fish: How could such a small amount feed so many people? It would not even feed all the people here! Understandably Jesus' friends the disciples had questions and doubts. They were honest with Jesus. He did not laugh at what they said or dismiss their questions and worries. We can ask questions.

Response: Question Time

Over the last 4 days we have talked a lot about Jesus. We have been invited to find out more and seen that Jesus knows us and meets us where we are. We can even talk and listen to Him. Today we discovered that we can bring our questions to Jesus. The Ref has doubts and questions. Maybe we have doubts and questions? Question Time is an opportunity to ask ANY question.

Everyone (including coaches) sit in a circle. Form more than one circle if there are 10+ kids. Put 10 minutes on a clearly visible count down timer (phone or egg timer). Anyone holding the football can talk. Kids signal they want to talk by thumbs up. Who has a question? Who has a reply? The reply is not necessary an answer. It might be an observation, another question or a discussion point. Give opportunity to talk. Leaders step in when necessary (with a thumbs up).

'Thank you, Jesus, that you welcome our doubts and questions. You do not laugh or dismiss what we have to say. Nothing is too big or too small.'

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when you first heard about Jesus? (Age? Where did you live?)
- When and why did you decide to find out more about Jesus?
- What questions have you asked Jesus? What was the answer?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

HUGE BANQUET

What's the point? We are all invited

Read this first:

The last party is found in a parable. Jesus was at a dinner being “*carefully watched*” by his host, a “*prominent Pharisee*”. One of the men sitting at the table commented with some pride and self-satisfaction, “*How happy are those who sit down at a feast in the Kingdom of God!*” (v15). Jesus’ response was to tell this story about a host who prepares a great banquet and invites many guests, but when it is time to come his guests make excuses. Their possessions, money and family are more important. The host is upset and angry but refuses to cancel the party. Instead, he invites people from the streets and alleys, even the poor, crippled, blind and lame. Jesus is suggesting that it might surprise us who ends up at the party God is organising in honour of His son. The Parable is clear, people can refuse God’s invite, they will make excuses and decide not to come. But this does not stop the party. Today we will show the kids that Jesus gets the party ready, and we are all invited.

Intro: The Ref needs to make a decision

The Ref arrives smiling, holding the party invite and laying down his overused red/yellow cards. He cheerfully reads the last party invite aloud and is delighted to point out that this one has his name on it too! The Ref folds up the invite and puts it in his pocket as he calls a coach to the front. What does RSVP mean? The coach explains that the Ref needs to reply. He needs to let the party organiser know if he is going or not. The Ref is unsure. What a journey he has been on, he hated celebrating and parties just a few days ago. Now, he has a decision to make. Should He go or not? He’s never been to a party. Does he need to take something? Should he dress up? The Ref asks the kids what they think. Thumbs up for yes, thumbs down for no. He exits still undecided.

Story: What happened at the party? Jesus feeds 5000, John 6v1-14, GNT/MSG

- How does Jesus’ promise make you feel?
- Game: Split into two teams and have a ‘verse-off’. Which team/individual can say the verse loudest/clearest/fastest/best accent/gargle it/burp it/backwards...

Story: What happened at the party? The Great Banquet, Luke 14v15-24, GNT/MSG

The Ref returns carrying the party invite and still wondering if he should go or not. A busy waiter/waitress [wearing an apron and carrying a tray] rushes past. The Ref waylays them to show the invite and ask about the party.

Waiter: How can I help you?

Ref: [show invite] Well I found this, and wondered... Am I really invited? I was invited to a picnic yesterday, but no one has ever invited me to a banquet or party before.

Waiter: Well sir, this is my bosses great banquet, and you are most definitely invited. Everyone is. You see there is plenty of room.

Ref: Oh, why so much room?

Waiter: Well, the first lot of guests didn’t want to come. They made excuses. Some were too busy working, others had family issues or stuff to sort out.

Ref: So, your boss has invited everyone?

Waiter: Yes, anyone. Everyone is welcome.

Ref: But I do not know what to do or what to bring.

Waiter: You do not need to bring anything. The party is organised and ready to go. Just say yes and bring yourself.

Ref: Everything organised, and everyone is invited! It sounds too good to be true! What shall I do?

Show N Tell: Jesus parties... everyone is invited.

- Party paraphernalia: It takes a lot of time, effort and stuff [show paraphernalia] to plan a good party. The party in today's story was organised and ready. The Ref did not need to bring anything. God is organising a party, a party at the end of time, to celebrate Jesus. Just like the waiters boss God has got everything ready. Jesus chose to be born and He lived a perfect life. Jesus died on the cross and was punished for all the wrong we have done. He did all this so we can get to know God. It was why the angels were so excited at the night-time party. Jesus has got everything ready. Now we can know God. Jesus parties.
- RSVP: The RSVP at the bottom of an invite is asking if we want to go to a party or not. Today everyone is invited to get to know God, but we can choose if we want to or not. What will the Ref decide to do? What will you decide? Everyone is invited.

Response: Emoji prayers.

Scatter printed emojis (see Appendix 3) on the floor. This week we have been hearing about parties Jesus went too, and parties He organised. We have seen that Jesus meets people where they are, He knows us, He welcomes questions, and He invites everyone to know Him. Jesus was born, lived and died so we can know God.

Finding out about Jesus can make different people feel different things. How do you feel? Happy, shocked, scared, pleased, angry, surprised, hopeful, questioning or unsure? Encourage everyone to choose 1 or 2 emojis that reflect how they feel. We can tell Jesus how we are feeling today. It is very easy. We will talk to Him in our heads, so only He can hear you. Nod after each sentence to show you have finished. Everyone closes their eyes.

Tell Jesus how playing football makes you feel. Tell Him something you have enjoyed about the Football Academy this week. Look at the emoji in your hand. Jesus has got everything ready so we can know God. Tell Jesus what you think about that.

“Thank you, Jesus, that you were born, lived and died so we can know God. You are worth celebrating. We can invite you to our parties and you want us at yours. You meet us where we are, know us, welcome our questions and invite us all to know you more whatever we are feeling.”

You can ask the kids if they want to invite Jesus into their lives if appropriate to your setting

Hot Seat:

- Where were you when you first heard about Jesus? (Age? Where did you live?)
- When and why did you decide to find out more about Jesus?
- When and why did you make a decision to follow Jesus?
- Meeting Jesus changed the people in our stories. What changed for you?

SUNDAY SERVICE FINALE

What's the point? Jesus parties and everyone is invited.

Read this first:

Jesus' Parties has explored 5 different parties Jesus went to or organised. Partying is not usually associated with Jesus' followers, but we have seen that Jesus was often at parties, feasts and dinners. Why? Because people wanted Jesus at their parties. Jesus wanted to hang out at all the different parties because He wants relationship with us and is willing to meet us where we are. Wherever we are on our journey of getting to know God, He wants to step in. Today we will briefly recap the 5 sessions for parents and carers. We will also discover that God is preparing a big party at the end of time and everyone is invited.

Introduction: Jesus shows us God.

The Grumpy Ref arrives happily blowing his whistle, brandishing the 5 party invites and showing a yellow card to anyone who is NOT smiling! Today he is not wanting to spoil everyone's fun with his red and yellow cards. He thinks every kid who played this week deserves to celebrate. BUT he is wondering why we have spent the last week finding out about Jesus' parties. Why is it important? A coach explains that Jesus shows us God; what He felt, said and did show us what God feels, says and does. Looking at all the different parties Jesus went to or organised, and what He said and did at them will show us what God thinks about parties and what God thinks about us. The Ref admits that is important and exits happily.

Story: What happened at the party? Jesus feeds 5000, John 6v1-14, GNT/MSG

- This verse from the bible is a promise Jesus gave to His friends the disciples. It is a big claim. We have unpacked it this week.
- Kids can present and explain the 1Verse to parents and carers. And/or challenge parents and carers to a 'verse-off', adults vs kids.

Story:

Through the stories this week we have discovered the parties Jesus was invited to were varied and unexpected, often upsetting the religious leaders and crowds. Jesus also threw some parties of His own, similarly unconventional and surprising. Whether Jesus was invited or organising, He prioritised parties in unusual places and with unexpected people. Each day we looked at what Jesus said or did, unpacking what happened as a result.

- Night-time celebration: A party with 1000's angels. Jesus is a reason to party, and we are all invited to find out more.
- Dinner with outcasts: A party with traitors and cheats. Jesus was criticised for going to this party, but He meets us where we are.
- Dinner with leaders: A party with the religious elite. Jesus welcomed the gate crasher, we can come as we are, He knows each of us.
- Picnic on a mountain: A party with 5,000 people. Jesus had a problem. We can bring our doubts and questions to Him.
- A huge banquet: A party with an RSVP. Jesus gets everything ready; everyone is invited.

Show N Tell: We are all invited.

A coach arrives weighed down with party paraphernalia (balloons, banners, invites, pinatas, decorations, poppers etc). Parents and carers will know it takes a lot of time, effort and stuff [pop a party popper] to plan a good party. Do they know God is organising a party? A party at the end of time, to celebrate Jesus. The party is organised and ready. God has got everything ready. Like every good party there was a cost. Thankfully Jesus paid for us. He died on the cross and was punished for all the wrong, we have done. Jesus has got everything ready and paid the price. Now we can know God. We are all invited.

Response: RSVP.

This week we have been hearing about parties Jesus went too, and parties He organised. We have seen that Jesus meets people where they are, He knows us, He welcomes questions, and He invites everyone to know Him.

The RSVP at the bottom of an invite is asking if we want to go to a party or not. Today everyone is invited to get to know God, but we can choose if we want to or not. What will you decide?

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KIDS!

You are invited to a night-time celebration.

It is the biggest angel party ever to take place on planet earth.

Venue: A field and a stable

Time: Middle of the night

Other Guests: Baby

Jesus, dodgy shepherds and a flock of sheep

KIDS!

You are invited to a dinner
with outcasts.

Do not take any valuables
and trust no one.

Venue: Levi the tax
collectors big house

Time: Lunch time

Other Guests: Jesus, liars,
cheats, traitors, spies!

KIDS!

You are invited to a dinner
with leaders

It is a party with an
uninvited guest, a party
crasher!

Venue: Simon the Pharisees
house

Time: Dinner time

Other Guests: Jesus,
religious leaders, 1
uninvited guest

KIDS & REF!

You are invited to an
enormous picnic
(Jesus is hosting this one)

Bring your doubts and
questions

Venue: Outside on a
mountain

Time: Late in the afternoon

Other Guests: Over 5,000
very hungry people

KIDS and REF!

You are invited to a huge
banquet

Everything is ready but do
you want to go?

Venue: The home of a very
generous person

Time: Today

Other Guests: Everyone is
invited.

RSVP

**God will never stop
loving me**

God knows me

God is near

I can talk to God

God listens

God wants to talk to me

**God counts the hairs
on my head**

I can trust God

God helps me

God has a plan

God chooses me

God never gives up

APPENDIX 3





