



# the visual **faith** project

## A Visual Faith Experience **Are Excuses Accepted Here?**

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**Theme:** Are Excuses Accepted Here? (Luke 14:15-24)

### **Intended Audience**

Small groups of youth, young adults, adults, or senior adults. If you have more people for your experience, divide them into two or more small groups. Intergenerational groups and ethnic diversity are always most helpful because of the variety of their experiences and customs.

### **Outcome of Experience**

Participants will learn from the discussions of the images they have chosen and the connection with the Scripture text of the broad expanse of God's grace and love. They will also learn that there are consequences to our decisions concerning God's invitation to grace. The participants will explore action that they can take in expanding the broad cast of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

### **Introduce Experience**

When we receive an invitation to a party, a meal, or an event, there are two obvious responses that we can make—saying “yes” or no.” But many times we choose a third response of an excuse. The excuse seems like a great way to make a decision without fracturing the relationship with the one who gave the invitation. Despite our excuses there are consequences to the decisions we make. There are times we missed a great event.

### **Image Selection**

Think about the best excuse you have ever given to not attend an event, meal, or party. Go to the tables with the variety of images and choose two that express your best excuse.

### **Image Packs**

We recommend the Youth Pack (set of 100 printed images) for use with this experience or other images that you may already have. You can find the Youth Pack at: <https://vibrantfaith.org/shop/visualfaithcards>



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## Are Excuses Accepted Here? continued...

### Facilitator Questions To Guide Group Discussion

1. How do the images you have chosen connect to your best excuse?
2. What were some of the feelings you experienced when you gave your best excuse?
3. What makes it difficult to simply respond, “Yes” or “No?”
4. Have you ever excused yourself from an event that you later regretted missing?
5. An excuse is part of a decision. In what way(s) is a person accountable for the decision she or he makes?

### Scripture (Luke 14:15-24)

*15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” 16 Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 17 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ 19 Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ 20 Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ 21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ 22 And the slave said, ‘Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’ 23 Then the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.’”*

### Image Selection

Give each participant a copy of this text of Scripture or provide Bibles for all so they can look up the passage. Ask all the participants to carefully read this Scripture lesson. Then invite one person to read this story with the emotions of the storyteller. Instruct the participants to choose one image that displays the meaning or feeling expressed in the phrase “please accept my regrets.” They should choose a second image that connects with the emotions of those who were surprised to attend the great dinner or the emotions of those who did not attend the dinner.

### Questions to Connect Chosen Image with Scriptures

1. Each of you, using the image you have chosen, share the meaning of the phrase, “please accept my regrets.”
2. What might be some emotions or even strategy for adding, “please accept my regrets” to the person’s excuse?
3. What emotions might Jesus, the storyteller, have experienced in telling this story?
4. In what way does this Scripture text connect to you?
5. How does the second image you have chosen express emotions or feelings of the people who attended the great meal?
6. How does the second image you have chosen show emotions of those who did not attend the dinner?



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## Are Excuses Accepted Here? continued...

### Application

- The care of the poor and marginalized people is an important theme throughout Luke's Gospel. We are responsible and accountable for the decisions we make regarding God's call to us to move forward in our faith in action to care for the poor, be an advocate for those who have no voice, seek justice and equality for all people. How have you responded to God's call?
- Have you made an excuse or excuses as to why you have not accepted God's call for specific action to give voice, care, justice, and equality to a person or a specific group of people? What was or is your excuse or what do you regret?
- Some people think that this Scripture only points to one's spiritual life and does not connect to a physical response. What is your opinion and how does that connect with your faith?

### Prayer

As the facilitator, create a holy space for the individuals and group to engage in prayer. Place a cross in the center of a small table and place a large bowl or basket on the table near the cross.

For this interactive confession/forgiveness prayer time each person will need one sheet of paper and a pencil. For the confession part of the prayer exercise instruct each participant to think about the excuses and regrets that she or he has given in relationship to God's call to action from faith and to write those on the piece of paper. Ask them to do this action in prayer. When they have finished the confession exercise, instruct them to place their confessions in the bowl or basket.

When all have placed their confession in the bowl or basket, say the following prayer (or use one of your own):  
(L = Leader; R = Response)

L: For our excuses to not become involved in your invitation to us Gracious God;

R: Forgive us and change our hearts.

L: For our feelings of regret for our lack of action from our faith;

R: Forgive us and change our hearts.

L: For opportunities to engage in ministries to the poor and marginalized in our community;

R: Empower us and fill our hearts with love.

For the forgiveness part of this prayer the Leader will need a paper shredder or if done outside, a safe place like a fire pit to burn the confessions. The Leader will stand by the cross or hold the cross with one hand and with the other places all the confessions in the shredder (or, if outside, in the fire pit) and say:

L: Through the cross of Jesus Christ our gracious God forgives us for all of our excuses and takes away our regrets. We are freed to serve God by being active in caring for the poor and marginalized. Let us make a difference in the lives of others for the sake of Christ. Amen.