

SUPPLIES: 2 sections of String/rope, each about 15' to 20 feet long; 5 chairs, at least 1 balloon per student; 1 paper plate per student (size of plate doesn't matter); whistle; timer; an open-spaced, larger-sized room

SET-UP: Arrange four of the chairs in a + formation (one chair at each end of the line). Put the 5th chair in the middle of the four chairs. Run the rope/string from one end to the other end so that the rope/string makes the + shape more obvious. The fifth chair is there simply to provide support for the two sections of rope/string. Have about 10 balloons already blown up and a box to store them in.

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Here's the opening question: What's something that you have been invited to?
- (go around the circle)
- During this summer, we're going to be talking about parables. Parables are stories that can help us better understand an idea. For instance, I could tell you that you have to just try harder. Or, I could tell you the story of the "little engine that could" that shows us what trying harder might look like.
- The story we're going to hear now is about a dinner party. Listen for who is invited and who actually accepts the invitation.

READ Luke 14:15-24 The Great Feast

15 A dinner guest said to Jesus, "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 servant to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now.' 18 But they all 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 apology.' 19 Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apology.' 20 Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So the servant returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, "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 servant said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' 23 Then the master said to the servant, "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 first invited will taste my dinner.' "

ASK

- What was the thing that people were being invited to? (a great dinner!)
- And did the first people who were asked come to it? (no!)
- Why didn't they? (had to attend to some land, had to test drive the oxen, just got married)
- Do you think if the people *really* wanted to come, they could've made it to the dinner?
- What did the owner who was having the feast think about these reasons the people gave for not coming to the dinner? (he was angry)
- What did he then do? (he invited other people, people who didn't have excuses/reasons to not come)
- Was there lots of room for them? (yes)
- So then what did the owner do? (invite more people to join the party)
- Sounds like quite the party, doesn't it?

TELL

- In this story, Jesus is reminding us that we're going to miss out on the party that is the Kingdom of God if we're too busy cutting the lawn, driving new cars and doing what our spouse always wants us to do.
- In order to participate in the Kingdom of God (which is wherever we allow God to be King), we have to make time for God.
- In order to make time for God, we have to let go of some things, things that we might even like because if we don't, if we have too many things that we're trying to pay attention to, then we might forget what's most important.
- We're going to play a game now that will show how when there's too much happening, we sometimes forget what the most important thing is.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY Balloon Four-Square

- We need to get into four teams.
- So what we're going to do is that I'll point at you and give you a number. Remember your number. [Count 1,2,3,4 and then start the count over, pointing at each child until everyone has a number]
- If you'll look over here, you'll see four chairs with rope tied to them. The rope is about 2 feet off the ground and the rope is shaped like a + sign.
- Team 1 will be in this area (quadrant) right here.
- Team 2 will be in the next area clockwise from Team 1.
- Team 3 is in the next area and team 4 is in the last open area.
- I'm going to start with 2 balloons.
- 1 balloon will start in Team 2's area and 1 balloon will start in Team 4's square.
- On "GO" you'll pass the balloons to the next area/team as quickly as possible because when the whistle blows, whatever teams have a balloon in their area will get 1 point for each balloon they have.
- You can hit the balloons or carry the balloons, but you have to stay in your area AND everyone on your team must stay on their knees at ALL times. (depending on age and ability – you can have them stand, kneel or sit)
- We'll play a number of rounds.
- Team with the lowest score of the whole game wins.

- Any questions?

PLAY Balloon Four-Square

NOTES for Teacher:

- Each round should last from 20 to 40 seconds.
- After each round, add 3 more balloons to different quadrants.
- Once you've played enough (3 or 4) rounds and have more balloons than kids, then add a different-sized or different-colored balloon and tell the class that that particular balloon is worth 10 points instead of 1 point.
- Play two more rounds.

ASK

- When was it easiest to make sure no balloons were in your area? (when there were the least amount of balloons)
- When there were all sorts of balloons flying around, how easy was it to keep track of the 10 point balloon? Why?

TELL

- In the activity, the most important balloon gets lost because there are so many other balloons and things happening, it's hard to stay focused on the most important balloon.
- In the parable Jesus tells, the same thing is happening for some of the people. They are too busy with their own things to be able to see the more important balloon. The people are distracted.
- In order to be less distracted, the first people in the story would have to let go of some of the things they think are important so that they can agree to join the party/feast.
- We're going to play a game now where we practice having to let go of one thing so that we can go to another thing.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY Risk

- I need everyone to stand in one circle, with your shoulders touching the shoulders of your neighbor.
- And now I need you to take 5 giant steps backwards.
- As you can see I am handing out one paper plate to each of you.
- Please take the plate when I hand it to you, put it on the ground and stand on it.
- That plate is now your home.
- I, as you can see, do NOT have a plate and therefore I do not have a home.
- So I am going to stand in the middle of the circle.
- The way we play this game is by switching homes with fellow home owners.
- Only one home per person. Homes cannot be moved or picked up. They stay put.
- You know a plate is *your* home because you are standing on it.
- If you are not standing on a plate, then it is not your home.
- The reason you might not stand on a plate is because you are in the process of trading homes with someone.
- You do that by switching with someone.
- Maybe you talk to the person across the circle.

- Maybe you point.
- Or maybe while two people are switching, you take one of their homes.
- But while you or others are switching, I might step in and take one of the homes by standing on it.
- If I do that, then someone else is going to end up in the middle without a home.
- Please note that you never actually have to leave your home.
- That's why the game is called "Risk."
- In order to participate in the game, you take the risk of losing your home
- Any questions? Begin!

ASK

- Did any of you stay on one home for the whole game? Why? (didn't want to lose my house)
- For those of you who moved, why did you move? (boredom, looked fun, etc)

TELL

- In the activity we just did, called Risk, we see that in order to participate, we have to let go and move to the next place/thing.
- The same is true for us with God.
God invites ALL of us to participate in the party that is the Kingdom of God.
- In order to participate, we have to let go of and move from our own parties and things that we're doing and join God's party.
- And, as we saw in the activity today, it sure is a lot more exciting when we move instead of stay put. The same is true for us when we participate in the Kingdom of God.

CLOSING PRAYER