Ruling on accepting an invitation, and the conditions for doing so

Sometimes I am invited to a meal or to a party. What should I do if these gatherings are mostly filled with backbiting, slander, showing off and competing in clothes, where they make fun of those who wear simple clothes (like me)? There may also be gossip, and I have housework to do (I don ' t want to bring a servant, but nearly everyone who attends these parties has a servant so she has free time).
My husband and my house need me, and every moment I spend at home matters in sha Allaah. This is my primary mission. I also want to spend any extra time I have in reading Qur ' aan or a useful book. I don ' t want to attend worldly gatherings whose harm, as I see it, outweighs the benefits – if there are any benefits. Please advise me, how should I deal with this? What suitable excuse can I give for not attending, if I have the right not to attend?

What should I do if the hostess of the party looks down on me and enjoys seeing me in an embarrassing situation and talks about me? Do I have to accept her invitation?

Praise be to Allaah.

It was narrated in Saheeh al-Bukhaari (1164) and
Saheeh Muslim (4022) that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: " I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say: ' The rights of a Muslim over his fellow Muslim are five: returning greetings, visiting the sick, attending funerals, accepting invitations, and saying Yarhamuk Allaah (may Allaah have mercy on you) when he sneezes. ' "
The scholars divided the
invitations which the Muslim is commanded to accept into two categories:

1 – Invitation to a wedding party (waleemah). The majority of
scholars said that it is obligatory to accept such an invitation, unless

there is a legitimate shar ' i excuse – some such excuses will be mentioned below, in sha Allaah. The evidence (daleel) that it is obligatory to accept these invitations is the hadeeth narrated by al-Bukhaari (4779) and Muslim (2585) from Abu Hurayrah, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " The worst kind of food is the food of a wedding feast that is withheld from those who would come and to which people are invited who mayrefuse it. Whoever does not accept the invitation has disobeyed Allaah and His Messenger. "

2 – Invitation to various kinds of gatherings other than wedding-feasts. The majority of scholars say that accepting these invitations is mustahabb, and no one differed from that apart from some of the Shaafa ' is and Zaahiris, who said it is obligatory. If we say that it is strongly mustahabb that is close enough. And Allaah knows best.

But the scholars have stipulated conditions for accepting an invitation; if these conditions are not met then it is not obligatory or mustahabb to accept the invitation, rather it may be haraam to attend. These conditions were summed up by Shaykh Muhammad ibn ' Uthaymeen, who said:

1- There should be nothing objectionable (munkar) in the place where the party etc. is to be held. If there is something objectionable and it is possible to remove it, then it is obligatory to attend for two reasons: to accept the invitation and to change the objectionable thing. If it is not possible to remove it then it is haraam to attend.

2- The person who invited him should not be someone whom it is obligatory or Sunnah to forsake (such as one who openly commits immoral actions or sin, where forsaking him may be of benefit in bringing about his repentance).

3-
The person who invited him
should be a Muslim. If he is not, then it is not obligatory to accept the invitation, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " The rights of a Muslim over his fellow Muslim are five… "

4-
The food offered should be
permissible for us to eat.

5-
Accepting the invitation should
not lead to ignoring a more important duty; if that is the case then it is haraam to accept the invitation.

6-
It should not cause any trouble
to the person who is invited. For example, if he needs to travel or to leave his family who need him there, and so on. (al-Qawl al-Mufeed, 3/111).

Some scholars added:

7-
If the host issued a general
invitation, saying that everyone is welcome, then it is not obligatory to accept the invitation.

From the above it should be clear to you that you do not have
to accept such invitations, rather it may be haraam for you to do so, if you cannot change the reprehensible things (munkar) or if your attending the gatherings will affect your duties towards your husband and children and prevent you from taking care of them as you are supposed to do. Moreover you
will not be safe from their evil and harm. This is an excuse which frees you from having to accept invitation which you are obliged to accept, let alone those which are not obligatory at all.

Women should also note that they have to ask their husband ' s permission to go out to parties etc. to which they are invited. You should advise these sisters to try to make the best use of their time and their gatherings in ways that will benefit them either in religious or worldly terms. For the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) warned us of the consequences of attending gatherings in which Allaah is not mentioned. He (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: " No people sit in a gathering in which they do not remember Allaah or send blessings upon their Prophet, but they will regret it, if He wills He will punish them and if He wills He will forgive them. " (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 3302; he said, this is a saheeh hasan hadeeth. It was also classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 3/140)

In Sunan Abi Dawood (4214) and elsewhere it is narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: " The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ' People who get up from an assembly in which they did not remember Allaah will be just as if they had got up from a donkey ' s carcass, and it will be a cause of grief to them. " (Classed as saheeh by al-Nawawi in Riyaadh al-Saaliheen, 321, and by al-Albaani).

Convey this advice to them, either verbally or in writing. In addition, you could invite them to your house and make the most of this opportunity to hold a dhikr circle, in addition to doing some permissible things that they will like. Perhaps Allaah will make you the means of starting a good trend of benefiting from such gatherings. And Allaah is the Source of strength.