

JESUS, ONE ON ONE

DINING WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS 2/5/2023

LUKE 5:27-32

MAIN POINT

LIFEGroup leaders, today is Missions Sunday! You have been given a missionary that Frisco First Baptist Church supports. This guest missionary will need an introduction to the class and 10-15 minutes to present their ministry. The goal of this time is to build a stronger relationship with the missionary and your class. The lesson is only there if needed (i.e., more time to fill). It will be a common question from the life groups to ask how they can support the missionary. Please do not offer financial support. Pastor Chuck -will be doing a general financial push for our designated missions offering, which many of our partners have benefitted from. We will have a booth for each of our missionaries so that church members can observe and ask questions about each ministry. The missionaries will have newsletters and promotional materials about their ministry. Our missionaries will be at their booths before and after the 9:30 and 11:00 am worship services to allow for more interaction with our church members. If the weather is good, these booths will be on the turf in the courtyard. If the weather does not cooperate, they will be in the north building lobby, the south building lobby, and the lobby of building 500.

Today's message will be on Jesus' personal interaction with people (From the gospel of Luke).

One person at a time, One conversation at a time, One act of kindness at a time. Jesus taught us the importance of focusing on the person before us. Throughout the gospel of Luke, we see a record of Jesus' personal interactions with various people. He demonstrated that impacting others begins by focusing on the person before you. Following His example, we learn to focus on one person at a time, engaging in one conversation at a time, and demonstrating one act of kindness at a time.

The lesson will focus on the following: Jesus came to call sinners to repentance and to do that, He spent time with them.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who are the social outcasts of our day? How do you think Jesus would have related to them? How should the church minister to them?

How might someone's status as a "sinner" keep us from befriending them? Would you be worried about what people might think?

How do people react when an infamous sinner becomes a follower of Christ? Why is it not always positive?

Jesus befriended tax collectors, and tax collectors were not highly thought of in His day. Tax collectors were Jews who collected taxes for Rome, which was seen as an oppressive regime to the Jews. Tax collectors collaborated with the enemy. On top of that, they had liberty from Caesar to collect above the required taxes so they could earn a living. So, they were viewed as traitors and extortionists. Yet, Jesus took time to eat with them and even called Matthew from tax collecting to apostleship. Yes, the tax collectors had a bad reputation, and yes, much of it was earned. However, they were people in need of grace just like everyone else, and so Jesus ministered to them. Jesus also ministered to other kinds of outcasts as well. People like prostitutes, the diseased, gentiles, and the poor. We, as the church, should figure out how to do the same so that the kingdom of Christ might grow and others can join us in worshiping Jesus Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 5:27-28.

What is so surprising about these two verses? Who is Levi?

**What led Levi to abandon everything so quickly to follow Jesus?
What did Levi abandon beside his tax booth? What have you left behind to follow Jesus?**

Levi gave up his livelihood to follow Jesus. He left a life of easy money. Jesus was not fazed by the fact that Levi was a tax collector. He called Levi anyway, and Levi, also known as the Apostle Matthew (Matt. 9:9), would prove to be a faithful apostle. The religious leaders, whom one would assume would be righteous and follow Christ, rejected Jesus.

We cannot tell how someone will respond to the invitation to follow Christ. If Levi, the tax collector, can find faith and repentance, anyone can. Levi most likely had a lot of material possessions to leave behind as well, yet he gladly gave them up for the opportunity to follow Jesus. Levi's testimony is encouraging because it demonstrates that Jesus can save anyone, and it is convicting because he so quickly and willingly left everything he had to follow Jesus.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 5:29-30.

What was the first thing that Levi did after leaving everything to follow Jesus? Why do you think he did this?

Whom did Levi invite? What are the implications for us?

The first thing that a new believer ought to want to do is to share the good news with others. Levi did just this. After leaving everything to follow Jesus, he threw a banquet for Him and invited all his friends to sit and eat with Him. It is natural for us to try to reach the community that God has put us in. For Levi, that was a community of tax collectors.

Why do you think that the Pharisees and scribes complained? What were they assuming?

The Pharisees and scribes had heard Jesus teach just as Levi had. They were following Jesus around, or they could not have known that Jesus ate at Levi's house. Despite hearing Jesus teach, they could not understand why Jesus would hang out with such "sinners." They probably expected that the Messiah would shun such persons. Instead, Jesus ate and drank with them, a kind of friendship and fellowship that one might do with an equal.

Jesus did not despise anyone. Instead, He followed His command of "just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them" (Luke 6:31). This allowed Him to spend time with great sinners, show them love, and to lead them to repentance.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 5:31-32.

Was Jesus saying He did not come to save the Pharisees and scribes? Do you think that they misunderstood Him? Who is excluded from Jesus' mission?

Who might be neglected in your community? What ministries in your church could you support to make sure that they get to hear the gospel?

Jesus did not come to save the righteous; He came to save sinners. Of course, we know that the Bible teaches us that "all have sinned and continue to fall short of God's glory" (Rom. 3:23). We also know that "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10). Therefore, Jesus came for everyone, even the Pharisees and scribes who scoffed at Him eating with sinners. They were sinners, too. They needed Jesus' grace as much as anyone, but because they thought they were righteous, they would not come to Him.

As Christians, we must know that no one is better off or worse off than we are spiritually. We all need Jesus to be saved. It doesn't matter if they are a prostitute, a drug addict, a school teacher, or a doctor. Everyone needs Jesus and hears the gospel to be saved. We ought to all be looking for the opportunity to share the gospel with anyone we have an opportunity to share with. Who knows? Maybe they will leave everything like Levi did and follow Jesus!

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Who in your immediate sphere of influence could you share the gospel with as Levi did? You may not be able to host a banquet in Jesus' honor, but could you invite a coworker or friend to your home to build a better relationship with that person to show them what Christ has done for you?

If you don't know who the "tax collectors" of your town or culture may be, could you pray this week that the Holy Spirit will show you a ministry you might get involved with to reach others with the gospel?

Search your heart this week to make sure that your bias against someone isn't preventing you from showing that person the love of Christ.

PRAYER

Close with a time of prayer. Begin by thanking Jesus for coming to save sinners by calling them to repentance. Confess that we were no better than the tax collectors of Jesus' day and that we would have perished without His love and mercy. Ask the Lord to open our eyes to help us see those who need the gospel or might otherwise be overlooked.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 5:27-32

5:27-28. One day Jesus encountered Levi. The rebel with a cause against religious power structures met the man who represented foreign power structure at its worse: a man whose profession was to collect money for the Romans. Luke took up the Markan call narrative refrain: Follow me (Mark 1:17). Levi showed how to join the proper power structure. He left everything he had: his profession, profits, and personal identity. He followed Jesus.

5:29-30. Following meant more than just wandering the countryside and listening to Jesus teach and preach. Following meant using your influence and skills for Jesus. Levi left the tax table to invite people to the supper table. Following Jesus meant telling others what Jesus had done for him. The others were friends Levi had known for a long time, not new acquaintances formed for convenience and prosperity.

5:31-32. In typical Jewish teacher fashion, Jesus cited a proverb to emphasize his message. Wellness did not drive people to the doctor. Illness did. Jesus was the spiritual doctor. He came with a message of repentance. That message seemed misdirected. It did not save Israel and the Middle East, where political confusion reigned. It saved those religious leaders considered unworthy of God's attention. Power began to reveal true positions in life. Who was sick? The tax collector's friends, people willing to work for the Roman government and thus against Israel? Or religious leaders who knew more about God than God did? The title Righteous One given to them by humans was the only title

they would ever receive. Jesus picked out the lowest social positions through which he would work.