

JESUS CALLED MATTHEW (LEVI)

Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Matthew and Jesus

Key-locations: Tax booth and Matthew's house in Galilee

Key-repetitions:

- Sinful people: Peter in the context (Lk 5:8); Jesus associates with sinful people (Lk 5:30); Jesus came to save the sinful people (Lk 5:32).
- Tax collector(s) (Lk 5:27, 29).

Key-attitudes:

- Matthew's humble attitude.
- Matthew's willingness to obey.
- Pharisees' insensitivity.
- Jesus' compassion.
- Pharisees' arrogance.

Initial-situation:

Jesus was at the beginning of the second year of his public ministry. Jesus had performed several miracles and had called four fishermen to follow him.

Initial-problem:

Jesus invited Matthew the tax collector to follow him. (*Tax collectors were social outcasts.*)

Final-situation:

Jesus defended himself to the religious leaders by saying he came to call sinners to repentance.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Matthew sitting at his tax booth. (*Matthew was also called Levi. Tax collectors were Jewish citizens who collaborated with the Roman occupying forces. They were despised and called traitors by fellow Jews.*) Jesus invited Matthew the tax collector, "Follow me." Matthew got up, left everything and followed Jesus.

Matthew gave a large banquet for Jesus at his house. A large crowd of tax collectors and others with bad reputations were his guests. The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses complained to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor. Sick people need a doctor. I didn't come to invite the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:27-32).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who were the tax collectors in Jesus' day?
2. What did Matthew do immediately after beginning to follow Jesus?
3. Why did religious leaders criticize Jesus?
4. How did Jesus answer their criticism?
5. Who are some of the wealthy and/or popular people with questionable reputations in our society today who could damage our reputations?
6. How should the church reach out to people who are social outcasts?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus came to call even those who are considered by society as bad people.** Jesus invited Matthew (Levi) to follow him (Lk 5:27-32). Matthew had a lucrative, though dishonest, tax collecting business for the occupying Roman government. Fellow citizens considered him a social outcast who was a traitor to their nation.
2. **To follow Jesus requires renouncement.** Matthew abandoned his work as a tax collector (Lk 5:28).
3. **Believers in Jesus should invite their friends to meet Jesus.** When Matthew began to follow Jesus, he gave a banquet in his house for acquaintances and co-workers so they could meet Jesus (Lk 5:29).
4. **Sometimes, religious leaders oppose God's work.** Religious leaders criticized Jesus for associating with known sinners who were social outcasts (Lk 5:30).
5. **The prejudice of self-righteous people creates barriers that hinder people from receiving Jesus' teaching.** The religious leaders were self-righteous and were prejudiced against people who did not live as they did. They criticized Jesus for associating with wealthy social outcasts (Lk 5:30).
6. **Self-righteous people can't accept people with a known sinful past who have now come to Jesus.** The religious leaders could not accept that Matthew, who had

been a despised tax collector, had repented and was now a servant of God (Lk 5:30-32).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Tableau:**

1st Tell the story of Jesus' invitation to Matthew (Luke 5:27-32).

2nd Ask volunteers to dramatize with a frozen image the scene where Jewish religious leaders ask Jesus' disciples "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Assign volunteers to represent the following characters in the story:

- Jesus.
- Matthew (also called Levi).
- A tax collector.
- A woman with a bad reputation, who is a guest at Matthew's banquet.
- One of Jesus' disciples.
- A religious leader.

3rd Retell the Bible story of Jesus' invitation to Matthew through the event where Jewish religious leaders ask the disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?". Then the storyteller stops narrating and drama participants step onto the performance area to interpret the scene by making a frozen image with their bodies.

2. **Role-playing Drama:**

Have different volunteers tell the story from the viewpoint of:

- Matthew.
- Religious leader.
- Disciple concerned about Jesus' reputation.
- Woman guest at Matthew's party. The woman would do anything to party with rich men.