

Although Jesus didn't come to invite the righteous to repent, according to Romans 3:10 no one is righteous, which means Jesus has come to call all of us to repent.

Romans 3:10 NLT - 10 As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous--not even one.

When Matthew invited his fellow tax collectors to the table, he was continuing Jesus' mission to "go to the world and preach the Good News." The church is also called to continue that mission.

Mark 16:15 NLT - 15 And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.

What needs to change for your life to be more "on mission" for Jesus? Is there someone you can be praying for between now and Easter?

WRAP-UP

Jesus didn't hesitate to invite sinners to sit down, share a meal and become His followers. And through God's Holy Spirit, the church is empowered to continue that mission. We can extend an invitation to all who recognize their need for a savior to join us at God's table- now that's Good News!

Memory Verse

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge-

On April 11 New Life will be hosting a Seder. Save the date and plan to attend, with your Life Group if possible, and consider inviting someone.

"Banquet at Levi's House"

Farm to Table #1

INTRODUCTION

In Jesus' day the table was one of the most important places where relationships developed. When people gathered at the table, they declared an invitation to move from being strangers to friends. In the book of Luke, we often find Jesus at the table with the very people who questioned whether they could be Jesus' friend - sinners, tax collectors, low social status, pompous religious leaders and people of questionable reputation. It is from these unlikely individuals that Jesus transformed lives and built his community of believers. The first encounter we study takes place at the home of Matthew (aka Levi) the tax collector.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

How often do you share a meal with family or friends?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. A Relationship with God

God has always desired a relationship with us. God placed Man in the Garden of Eden, where food was abundant, and there He walked with Adam— until sin separated man from God. But even after that, we often find the table was present where God sought to establish a relationship with us.

Both Psalms and The Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) help us to understand what motivates God to bring us to the table. What do they say is demonstrated to us at God's table?

Psalm 23:5 NLT - 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

Song of Songs 2:4 NLT - 4 He escorts me to the banquet hall; it's obvious how much he loves me.

So, God has always been on a mission to bless us and bring us into a loving relationship with Him. And one place we enjoy this relationship is at His table.

Sometimes we have a special opportunity to reflect on our relationship with God at the table. Have you participated in a meal designed around honoring our relationship God (maybe a Seder or Thanksgiving)? What was it like?

2. The Guest List

Luke 5:27-28 NLT - 27 Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. 28 So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

The tax collector in our story is referred to both as Levi and Matthew, but whatever name you call him, he was not a very popular guy. Although he was a Hebrew, as a tax collector he was viewed as a turncoat who was loyal to Rome and a swindler who cheated his people to make himself rich. Needless to say, he didn't have many "friends", except of course other tax collectors and sinners.

Why do you think he was willing to leave everything and respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him? What would you say are some things you had to give up in order to follow Jesus?

Luke 5:29 NLT - 29 Later, Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests also ate with them.

After following Jesus for some time, Matthew knew what it meant to be freed from sin and guilt, and so he decided to hold a banquet to honor Jesus, the one who freed him.

Who did Matthew invite to the banquet? Why do you think they were at the top of his guest list rather than the other disciples and followers of Jesus?

Each of us has a unique salvation story. Maybe you came from a strong Christian family and accepting God's forgiveness and love was an obvious choice. Or possibly God rescued you from desperate circumstances. Whatever your experience was in meeting Jesus, there are others like you who can relate to your story.

Discuss with your group the kinds of people you think can relate to your salvation story. Is there any way you might be able to "invite them to the table" where Jesus is honored? This doesn't have to be a meal at your house, it could be as simple as a meeting at a coffee shop or on the patio at church.

3. Jesus on Mission

Luke 5:30-32 NLT - 30 But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with such scum?" 31 Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor--sick people do. 32 I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."

Jesus knew sinners would respond to him but not the self-righteous. So, when He gathered around the table with sinners He was under the scrutiny of others, many of whom didn't approve of the company He kept.

In this passage Jesus refers to himself as a physician and those who need him as being "sick". Skim the verses in Luke 5 leading up to this statement. What kinds of physical sicknesses had Jesus already healed?

One of the diseases Jesus healed was leprosy. This disease was devastating to its victim. Leprosy numbs the affected parts. People with leprosy couldn't hide their disease, in fact they were required to announce it so as not to infect others, and that made lepers outcasts. And because there was no treatment, leprosy lead to death.

In Luke 5:32 Jesus declares that he has come to invite sinners to repent. What parallels do you find between sin and leprosy?